



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



**What can
adults
learn from
children?**

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting on a large, weathered log in a natural, wooded setting. The man, on the right, has a grey beard, wears glasses, a dark hat, and a plaid shirt. The boy, on the left, is wearing a white t-shirt and colorful shorts. They are both looking towards the right, and the boy is pointing with his right hand. In the background, there is a wooden boardwalk with railings leading through the trees.

Alternative formats

Alternative formats of this report are available. Please contact the Commissioner's office on (08) 6213 2297, country freecall 1800 072 444 or info@ccyp.wa.gov.au

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge and give our respect to all Traditional Owners and custodians across this vast state, their Elders past and present, and commit to supporting the wellbeing of the youth of today, who will be the Elders of tomorrow.



Western Australia's 610,000 children and young people have a lot to teach us.

Children and young people have different experiences and unique perspectives to adults, and the world they are growing up in is different to the past.

Over several months in 2021, my office asked children and young people to share their views on the topic: *What can adults learn from children?*

Almost 1,300 sent in their insightful responses.

A number of themes emerged. Many children and young people want adults to listen to what they have to say and expressed their frustration in not being heard. A large number also mentioned that adults could learn from children how to be more creative and have fun.

It is important to remember that our children are the adults of the future. Everyone is encouraged to listen and take notice of their great ideas and insights.

Thank you to all the children and young people for taking the time to share your views.

Jacqueline McGowan-Jones

Commissioner for Children and Young People

“While our society focuses on adults teaching children and young people throughout their childhood and adolescence, it is critically important for adults to recognise that young people have so much to share.”



Nathan

I believe adults and children should take advice from each other then there's a better understanding.

Overview

The Commissioner for Children and Young People is the independent person who works closely with children and young people, their families, community and government to make Western Australia a better place for 0 to 17 year-olds.

Through consultations, surveys, advisory committees and online platforms, the Commissioner hears from children and young people and others in the community about what children and young people need to be healthy and happy and reach their potential.

Children and young people share their views on DigiMe

DigiMe is a dedicated online space for WA children and young people to create an avatar and contribute their views on a discussion topic in a fun, safe and supportive way. The Commissioner changes the prompt question regularly throughout the year. With young people's consent, their avatar and views are published on the Commissioner's website and social media.

Over several months in 2021, children and young people shared their views with the Commissioner on the topic: *What can adults learn from children?*

The Commissioner received 1,292 responses. Around 60 per cent responded that they were in a country WA location and around 40 per cent said they were from the Perth metropolitan area.

Key themes

Responses from children and young people centred around several key themes:

- Acquiring new knowledge
- Need for a voice
- Technology
- Understanding change
- Independence
- Health and wellbeing
- Safe and supported
- Having fun

The views shared by children and young people show a progression of these themes throughout childhood and adolescence. This report presents their views according to what was most important to them at different ages.

However, across all ages, the need for them to have a voice and adults needing to have fun were clear, indicating that children and young people universally value, enjoy and are concerned about the same things – irrespective of how old they are and where they live.

These themes are broadly consistent with current and previous consultations undertaken by the Commissioner.

8-10

YEAR-OLDS

Acquiring new knowledge

Many 8 to 10 year-old children said that adults could learn a lot of new skills and knowledge from them, whether it be educational, extra-curricular or general life skills. Children enjoy teaching their parents new educational skills but were also keen to teach them fun things like skating, painting or surfing.

What adults can learn from children...



Adults can learn lots from children like maths and even sport, children can teach so much as they are still in school.



Adults can learn a lot of stuff from children. Adults learn stuff from children everyday – once when I was 2 years old my mum thought there were only 10 dinosaurs, but I told her there were more than 400 dinosaurs. She was astonished. I am a smart child, and so are you. But just remember children are smart, too.



New things they learn at school every day.



Adults can learn a lot from children because I have taught my dad things multiple times that he did not know.



Growth mindset and fixed mindset.



Things they used to know but lost knowledge of as the years went by. How to use different apps.



Surfing and surfing and surfing and surfing.



Ginnie

They can learn how children can do way more things than adults, like sports and hearing and children can learn some other stuff that their parents don't know and tell them so they can learn new stuff and everyone can learn lots more stuff. Also if in the future kids invent new stuff they can teach adults that they know how to work them.



That opals are made out of crystals and rocks. Kids can teach adults how to do big number maths. Kids can teach adults how to keep fit, like do stretches and jog properly.



They can learn an easier way to learn new languages by just trying out loud and fix mistakes and this applies to all things.



Go to the skate park and learn a trick like me.



A lot. I taught my Dad some maths. I mean they learn a lot. They could learn to be kind and funny around other people and not be mean.



Art, maths, football and lots of other stuff.



How to draw and clean up the house.



If an adult doesn't know a language and the kid does know they could always teach the adult that is learning the language.



Clarkey

About their home work if they do not know what it is because you learn something new every day.



New ways to solve math, work with different mind maps and find possibilities to make WA a better place.



Dodo

They can learn what children are learning in school at the modern time. They can learn what's going on in school.



We like to have fun and learn new things.



They can learn stuff that we learn from school that they didn't learn when they were in school.



Timetables writing spelling.



Random knowledge from books.



Maths technology geography.



Dre

Adults and children can teach one another like adults can teach us how to clean, cook, and write then when they're done teaching us we can do our best to do the same.

11

YEAR-OLDS

Need for a voice

A consistent theme among 11 year-old children was they want adults to listen to what they have to say and suggested it would be beneficial for the wider community to consider their thoughts, opinions and feelings when making decisions.

What adults can learn from children...



That we have a right to talk and that they are not always right!



Us kids deserve to talk. Adults need to listen to what us kids need to say.



To listen about what kids have to say if they don't like the new person that's now in the family.



Listen more often and be more cautious of their surroundings.



U might think we are not worth listening to or worth voting but take our issues seriously and LET US VOTE!! But mainly LISTEN AND ACTUALLY DO SOMETHING ABOUT OUR PROBLEMS!!



Adults can learn that sometimes we aren't okay, when we say so. As well as discouraging us when we are telling them something, we are proud of.



To listen and let us make our own business and treat us the same way we treat them and for them to remember that they were once children and to treat us the way we need to be treated.



That it's good to learn from other people's points of view! Also, just because we're kids doesn't mean our feelings aren't real. Start listening, boomers!



To Listen To Us.

Need for a voice

12
YEAR-OLDS

Technology

A number of 12 year-olds expressed their frustration with adults when trying to teach them how to use technology. They would also like adults to stop blaming technology for all of young people's problems.

What adults can learn from children...



We should have more time on technology because it is fun to play with friends.



Gaming and how to be you and just have fun.



That the online world is different from when they were younger and there's new apps designed to be addicting.



If children are better at technology, then the adults will learn from them because they can teach them. The children can teach the adults about technology.



We don't want you to look through our phones please.



That we can't be outside for 6 hours after school in 40 degrees heat and that I want to rest after school and play video games after school for at least 1 hour.



What it's like to have fun and show them that being a gamer is a job.



Amelia

That we teach them later in life how to use the latest technology.

Technology



13-14

YEAR-OLDS

Understanding Change

Many 13 to 14 year-old young people revealed their frustrations with adults and children having difficulty in understanding each other due to their differences in age and upbringing. Young people felt that adults need to know that we live in a more fast-paced world that revolves around technology.

What adults can learn from children...



Adults need to remember that we are just children and they need to remember what it was like for them when they were kids.



They can learn new things about our generation.



That life is very different now and we have grown up differently.



Not everything is the same from when you went to school.



You'll never completely understand us.



Adults could learn how to keep up with the younger generations.



Adults can learn from children that their life wasn't as easy as theirs.



Roro

They can start learning that we try to live up to their expectations especially parents and sometimes when we feel our worst we cannot get over it really quickly.



Matthew

That the world is changing and so are we, and to keep up we and our government must as well. We need radical government action on urgent issues such as climate change. They could potentially also learn to be more empathetic and tolerant towards those who may not be as efficient or who are naturally disadvantaged, and strive towards not necessarily equality, but equity. Thank you for listening!



Being able to have fun and let go of the past.



They learn more about what new things have been updated in the world.



Everything adults think – we’re babies sometimes and get to worry about normal things.



That our life sometimes isn’t all ok.



That just because we want space we are not depressed. Or just because we want to go out we are not avoiding them, or because we want to dye our hair a different colour that we aren’t trying to be a rebel.



Adults can learn a lot from a child or teenager’s perspective they just have to listen instead of ignoring them.



Adults can and need to see what we are going through.



That we try our best.



Balenciyakha

Adults can learn from children to be open minded. Since we see the world differently, if adults listen to us and consider our thoughts and opinions, they can begin to expand their minds when they have a different perspective.



Willow

They can learn lots of stuff. Sometimes they say they know more and that they have been alive longer but that was a long time ago, don't you think? So maybe listen to a kid and they might tell you something new that you didn't know in the olden days. It's always good to listen to a kid to see what they want to say – if parents can have a say, we can too.

15

YEAR-OLDS

Independence

Independence was raised consistently by 15 year-old young people – whether that be wanting personal space or parents being less controlling about their personal and social lives.

While acknowledging that most of the time parents act out of love and care for their child’s safety, young people want this to be balanced with allowing privacy and freedom, so they can gain a sense of independence and autonomy.

What adults can learn from children...



They are not as dumb as they think.



Let us hang out with friends and boys just look after us and make sure we’re safe.



They can learn about money management or learning about responsibility that you should do at your age.



To take a step back and know they’re really not that important.



Let children speak about their struggles and not guilt trip them.



Give them opportunities.



Edyn

That they aren’t just children, they have ideas and opinions and know a lot of same things as you.

Independence

16 YEAR-OLDS

Health and wellbeing

A number of 16 year-old young people raised concerns about how pressure from their parents and society causes them a lot of stress. Some young people also mentioned adults need to relax more and give them more freedom.

What adults can learn from children...



They will know that you're very strict.



That studying is really hard and it's hard for some kids and it's easy for others so don't say your studying more so you should be better all kids learn differently.



Taking what they love won't do anything.



How to chillax and just be more easy going and give children some freedom.



We try our best, sometimes we just need some space. Our parents know we are good and responsible people so why try control us.



That yes we are young but it doesn't mean we don't get to have an opinion on things like politics, things happening in society and topics like the LGBTQ community with things like same sex marriage, the Black Lives Matter movement and other major things that are happening.



Just try to be patient and understanding as best as possible.



Don't be so tough on us and on our case.



Nothing really, just have fun and take all the time you need to find yourself and achieve your dreams.

17
YEAR-OLDS

Safe and Supported

17 year-old young people want adults to learn the importance of creating an environment that is safe, whether that's being kind to others or respectful of race, gender and sexuality. Young people have a strong sense of their right to belong, be themselves and be treated fairly and humanely.

What adults can learn from children...



The way they are experiencing happiness from everyone without any expectations.



Adults can learn about what troubles kids, they can learn about newer social trends, about communities that the adult isn't a part of, maybe even about skills that the adult didn't get to learn.



That children are very smart and can learn fast and also have fun at school.



Don't underestimate young people.



Devonte

Be open and help each other by mucking around and don't make children feel belittled by authority.

ALL AGES

Having Fun

Across all ages, this was one of the top overall themes mentioned by children and young people. Many of the responses were simply that adults could learn to have fun and relax more.

What adults can learn from children...



That being creative is good and that everyone is smart no matter the age.



Make friends with someone you bump into.



They can learn a lot from children because we are very creative!



You can always find fun even if the thing that you are doing you don't like. They can learn that they still can learn and have fun. It doesn't mean just because you are an adult you can't have fun.



The only way kids like to learn is by making it fun.



We like having fun and I like being encouraged.



Adults can learn to be carefree from children.



Justin

That children should have some time to jump around and let them have fun. Cause when I start to get bored, I always want to do something else and I don't feel like learning.



Violet

Adults can learn from children that they can still have fun, still be brave and to keep trying to find a way to have fun even when the thing that they are doing might not be their favourite thing in the world.



Adults can learn from kids to have a more fun life and to look at things from a different view.



Kids don't always follow the rules but sometimes adults should have fun.



How to have fun and stop working all day and writing emails.



I think that sometimes adults just need to slow down sometimes and take a break.



Adults can learn to have more fun and relax more.



That sometimes in life you need to calm down.



Adults can learn that children can be imaginative, clever and can definitely become something amazing.



To try not to stress out as much and just relax and have some fun.



They can learn about how they are carefree and have joy from the tiniest things.



Adults can learn how to be cool, how to fit with the generation and also how to be a kingpin kid, and also just to take it easy and have FUN!



They can learn to have imagination and to have fun.



How to be really energetic and have a lot of fun.



To have fun 😊.



Charlotte

Adults need to learn to have fun from children and to just let their hair down.



The Commissioner

It is important we all listen to what children and young people have to say – they have great ideas and insights to share.



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