

THIS PLACE I CALL HOME

The views of children and young people on growing up in Queensland

The big picture

This fact sheet summarises key findings from the Queensland Family and Child Commission's Growing up in Queensland project. It links the findings to the Queensland Government's Our Future State priorities.



More than 7000 Queenslanders, aged 4 to 18, told us about 'the big picture'. Through an online survey, focus groups, postcards and an art activity, they told us about the things that are of greatest importance to them and their peers.

Why is this important?

Adults have an important role to play in assisting children and young people to deal with the things that worry them. The worries young Queenslanders shared are an important source of information to help adults support them.

Children and young people worry most about:

- bullying and cyberbullying
- mental health
- drugs and alcohol
- the environment and climate change.

Work is already underway to address these issues. However, solutions can be strengthened by involving children and young people.



Bullying and cyberbullying

More than two thirds (68%) of survey respondents selected bullying and 56% selected cyberbullying as the most important issue facing young people today.

Children and young people reported whether they had experienced or perpetrated bullying or cyberbullying over the last three months. Nearly half (45%) said they had been bullied face-to-face and nearly a third (30%) reported being cyberbullied. Nearly one in five (19%) admitted to bullying and 10% admitted to cyberbullying.

During the past 12 months, 15% of children and young people reported they had experienced unfair treatment based on:

- body size or shape (23%)
- physical appearance (20%)
- thoughts or opinions shared online (17%)
- mental health (16%)
- personal relationships (16%)
- gender (15%).

What did young Queenslanders say would help?

- more support in schools and more guidance at home
- adults to be more proactive and act earlier
- peer support and training programs to give them the skills to help people their age
- easier access to information, more help options, and accessible reporting tools
- better internet protection and for adults to keep an eye on what children and young people are doing online.



Mental health and stress

Young people take mental health seriously. The importance of mental health was identified in three areas of the survey:

- 67% identified it as one of the *most important issues in Queensland today*
- 26% said physical or mental health was one of the top things that could *prevent them from achieving their future goals*
- 82% of respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning selected mental health as their top issue.

Mental health becomes more concerning to children and young people as they grow older.

They said being psychologically well and able to handle everyday things is important to achieving their goals.

What did young Queenslanders say would help?

- more balance between school and home life to reduce stress
- peers and families who have the knowledge and skills to provide support or direct them to further help
- people having a better understanding about mental health
- earlier identification of mental health issues
- less stigma, including more balanced media reporting
- more tailored mental health education.



Drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol featured in the top five issues for children and young people in all regions, regardless of their cultural or racial background.

Of survey respondents, 67% listed drugs and 59% listed alcohol as the most important issues facing children and young people today. Children and young people are particularly concerned because of the:

- perception of easy access
- social and physical consequences of substance use
- safety concerns
- impact of the behaviour of people who are affected by drugs or alcohol.

What did young Queenslanders say would help?

- factual information about drug and alcohol risks
- more information about the types of drugs and their effects
- help to manage peer pressure
- good role models.



Environment

Children and young people have a strong appreciation for the natural environment and concern for its well-being. Nearly a third (30%) of survey participants listed the environment and 23% selected climate change as one of their top issues.

Focus group participants were also very vocal about climate change, the decline of the Great Barrier Reef, urbanisation and land clearing, pollution and plastic use. Existing natural places and green spaces are important to children and young people now and considered vital for the future.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people said 'caring for country and culture' is an important part of their identity. They would like more opportunities to spend time on country learning from Elders.

What did young Queenslanders say would help?

- more thoughtful development and less land clearing
- protecting natural spaces for all species and future generations
- more renewable energy options
- reducing water consumption and the use of plastic
- more community action and better cooperation between governments, nationally and internationally
- stronger regulation and fines for littering and pollution.

RESPONDING TO WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

We know governments and communities are already responding to these issues. However, the way we respond should include the views of young Queenslanders.

Children and young people would like opportunities to have their say and be heard, and to be involved in making decisions and designing solutions.

To read the full report visit qfcc.qld.gov.au.