

Community

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 people between the ages of 4 and 18 participated in the Growing up in Queensland project. They responded to an online survey and participated in workshops, focus groups and other activities to share their thoughts about life in their community and how their communities can be improved.

This understanding is important for creating and maintaining the places young Queenslanders spend time and strengthening the relationships which are valuable to them. It provides direction for investment decisions that contribute to the productivity of society as a whole and provides a solid basis for community and economic development.

What does 'community' mean to children and young people?

A strong and supportive community is important to children and young people's health and well-being. For children and young people, community is made up of *physical places* where they spend their time and the *people* they spend time with.

They described communities as places where people from different backgrounds *come together* to share culture, language and develop relationships of trust.

They said they belonged to many different communities including, sport, school, cultural, religious as well as hobby and interest groups.

A strong sense of community is important to feeling a sense of belonging, inclusion and connection.

What do children and young people enjoy about their communities?

- friendly people
- fun things to do, like community events and sports
- good parks and recreational facilities
- spending time with family.



Relationships and connection

Children and young people feel community is a place where people *support* each other. Children and young people want to feel *safe, valued, respected and included* in their communities.

They place special emphasis on the *relationships and connections* they have with people which offers reassurance, comfort and a sense of looking out for one another in good times and when things are tough.

Focus group participants said spending quality time with parents, carers and family is important to them. A majority of survey respondents (81%) said they enjoy spending time with their parents or carers.

Pets also play a particularly important role in the lives of children and young people as they *provide unconditional support and comfort*.



Community spaces, sport and recreation

Children and young people said it is important to have access to green and natural spaces, community facilities where they can be active, as well as recreational venues and retail services. These places include:

- sports facilities
- parks with equipment for children of all ages and abilities
- music, art and cultural activities
- skate parks
- cinemas
- shops.

Lack of reliable, affordable and regular public transport can be a barrier to participating in recreational and extracurricular activities.

Children and young people will also spend more of their time online or indoors at people's houses due to difficulties accessing appealing youth friendly spaces.



Safety

Children and young people's perception of crime impacts on their sense of safety, belonging and neighbourhood attachment. Wariness of people they do not know, getting lost and being kidnapped or assaulted were recurring concerns for focus group participants. Antisocial behaviours such as drinking, fighting and drug taking also have negative impacts on their sense of safety within the community.

A third (34%) of survey respondents were concerned or very concerned about family conflict and 20% about domestic violence.

The news and media influence youth perceptions of safety. Adverse media reporting of local and global events causes them to feel anxious about their safety and the safety of their family and friends.



Involvement in local issues

Children and young people are genuinely engaged in their local community and are concerned about a range of social and environmental issues.

They want adults and decision makers to listen to their views and include them in important decisions that impact their lives.



Unfair treatment

More than half (56%) of the children and young people, who responded to the survey question, said they had personally *experienced* unfair treatment in the past 12 months.

More than a quarter of survey respondents also said they had *witnessed* unfair treatment, in the past 12 months.

They said this unfair treatment was because of their:

- body size/shape
- physical appearance
- online activity
- skin colour
- sexuality
- cultural background
- disability.

Children and young people feel that better education and more services are needed to help make communities more inclusive and supportive for all people.

Responding to what we have heard

Children and young people have valuable insights into their communities and what is needed to help create more safe, supportive and inclusive places.

What did children and young people say would improve their communities?

- more green spaces and preservation of bushland and the natural environment
- playgrounds with equipment that caters for people of all ages and abilities
- affordable and accessible public transport
- safe places to spend time with friends and youth friendly facilities, particularly for teenagers
- affordable recreational activities and events
- services to support those who are less fortunate
- more opportunities for communities to come together and learn from one another
- more extracurricular activities, particularly for creative arts, in regional areas
- more support for small businesses in regional towns.

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.

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