



# GROWING UP IN QUEENSLAND 2020 INTERIM REPORT

EARLY INSIGHTS: THE VOICES OF 4,000 YOUNG QUEENSLANDERS



Queensland  
**Family & Child**  
Commission



# PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

The first six months of 2020 have been like few others in memory. They began with bushfires, floods and an appalling act of family violence that killed three children and their mother in Queensland.

While the nation was struggling with these events, COVID-19 was spreading across the world. The pandemic has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide. In Queensland, effects on the economy and employment have created uncertainty and hardship, children's education has been disrupted and individuals and families have experienced physical and social isolation. However, government and the community, including children and young people, have been uniting in Queensland's recovery.

This interim report of the Growing Up in Queensland 2020 project is a story of optimism. Despite the challenges encountered in 2020, early responses to the project reveal young Queenslanders' hope and resilience. One young person tells us "It is important that young people hold...hope for their future, despite this pandemic" (female, 16). Another young Queenslander says "I am excited to see what the future brings and to see all my hard work turn into success" (female, 15).

Our data shows some young Queenslanders are less likely than others to share these positive views and that others at the time of publication simply have not had or have not taken the opportunity to be heard. This last point has led the Queensland Family and Child Commission to increase its efforts to hear from young males, young people in remote areas of Queensland and young people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander so their voices can be heard in the final Growing Up in Queensland report.

The interim report's insights and its sense of optimism and hope for the future are inspiring. I commend it to you and look forward to providing you with further updates in the final report.



**Cheryl Vardon**  
Chief Executive &  
Principal Commissioner  
Queensland **Family & Child** Commission

The Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of lands throughout Australia, and their connection to land and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



# INTRODUCTION

## GROWING UP IN QUEENSLAND 2020

The Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC's) Growing Up in Queensland 2020 (GUIQ 2020) project captures a snapshot of the lives of young Queenslanders in 2020. The project, launched in early April 2020, invites children aged 4–18 years to share their views about their communities, their hopes, and the issues they believe are important.

Children and young people's voices have the potential to inform decision-making about their communities. We will share final findings with government departments, non-government organisations and the community. We trust these stakeholders will use the findings to better understand and respond to the experiences and needs of Queensland's children.

## HOW WE ARE HEARING FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

While the world changes dramatically in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the QFCC remains committed to hearing the voices of children. To uphold this commitment while promoting safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are using online activities, rather than face-to-face interaction, to hear from children.

In response, children are engaging with online resources to share their views and experiences. The resources include a youth survey for young people aged 13–18 years, a junior survey for children aged 8–12, a postcard activity for participants aged 8–18 and an art activity for children aged 4–7.

## WHO HAS TAKEN PART?

Of the 3,985 children who have participated in the first seven weeks of GUIQ 2020, most (73 percent) were female. Participants were aged between 4 and 18 years; those aged 14–17 years made up approximately 75 percent of participants. Most lived in South East Queensland; we have also heard from children in Cape York, Central Queensland, South

West Queensland and the Queensland outback. Six percent of participants identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander.

The voices of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander young people are important in shaping the future of Queensland. Often, these voices go unheard. For this reason, quotes from these cohorts will be identified as contributions from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander young people.

## THE SOCIAL CONTEXT DURING GUIQ 2020

The first seven weeks of data collection have followed or coincided with restrictions implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19. At various points between February and May 2020, schools were student free, cinemas, skate parks and other public spaces were closed, parties were banned, and no more than two people could be together in public, unless they were from the same household. Thus, while GUIQ 2020 has been underway, children's social interactions, and their access to recreational opportunities, have been severely limited.

## THIS REPORT

By week seven of the project, nearly 4,000 children had shared their views and experiences. This interim report is based on 3,727 responses to the youth survey, 53 responses to the junior survey, 189 responses to the postcard activity and 16 responses to the art activity. This interim report describes themes in participants' contributions about their communities, their hopes, and important issues. In doing so, the report reveals the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of children and young people.

These initial findings cannot be assumed to predict responses from children yet to take part. In addition, our final findings will not necessarily represent the views of all young Queenslanders. However, the view of each young Queenslanders has value. We are pleased to share with you the insights gained from the first 3,985 children and young people to participate in GUIQ 2020.

# COMMUNITY

## HOW DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THEIR COMMUNITIES?

When sharing experiences of their communities, participants describe the importance of relationships with friends, family and pets, in addition to community connection, infrastructure and public spaces for recreation. Most of these themes are evident among all age groups.

### CHILDREN AGED 4-12 YEARS

Our youngest participants' contributions about their communities focus on parents, recreation and pets. Written descriptions of children's artwork include:

*"I like to take my dog for walks around my house. He is running!"*

(Evie, 4 years)

*"I like spending time with Mummy and Daddy at the park at the bottom of the hill."*

(Joel, 4 years)

*"Summer's artwork is a picture of her and mummy at her favourite park where there are ducks and swans in a pond and she feeds them."*

(Summer, 4 years)

Like our youngest participants, older children value interpersonal relationships, public spaces for recreation and pets. However, the ways of interacting with others and using public spaces for recreation are different for older children. Specifically, children aged eight to twelve years use technology for recreation and social interaction, and use public spaces for more vigorous physical activity. Opportunities to contribute to the community is an additional theme in responses from older children.

Children aged eight to twelve years tell us they enjoy the following features of, or activities in, their communities:

*"Hanging out with my family, playing my Xbox and hanging out with my friends."*

(male, 12 years, survey)

*"Mountain biking, being with family, Minecraft and having a doggo."*

(male, 10 years, survey)

*"My favourite place to go in my town is [the] bmx track."*

(female, Aboriginal, 8 years, survey)

*"Age-friendly environments [that] enable people to stay active, connected and able to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural life in their community."*

(male, 12 years, postcard)

*"Everybody is friendly and kind."*

(female, 9 years, postcard)

*"My dog, being able to walk to school and my friend's house."*

(female, 11 years, survey)

## YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 13-18 YEARS

Like children in the younger age groups, participants aged 13–18 years appreciate family and friends, community connection and public spaces. COVID-19 has added to young people's appreciation of community and connections. Additional themes described by teenagers include appreciation of community participation, having their voices heard by community, and access to infrastructure.

Teenagers say they like the following things about where they live:

*“The welcoming atmosphere of my street.”*

(male, 13 years, survey)

*“The area is nice to exercise in, it has good access to education, public transport and shopping.”*

(male, 15 years, survey)

*“It's not too far from the shopping centre, swimming pool or park. So there's not a lot stopping us from hanging out with friends.”*

(female, 13 years, postcard)

*“The parks and walking paths.”*

(gender diverse, 17 years, survey)

*“The events we have for the whole town to participate in.”*

(female, 16 years, survey)

*“The youth is valued in community.”*

(female, 15 years, postcard)

*“The connectedness and the feeling of safety wherever I am.”*

(female, Aboriginal, 16 years, survey)

*“The social activity... even during this weird pandemic.”*

(female, 13 years, survey)

*“I live in such a close-knit community and it feels like a big extended family.”*

(female, Aboriginal, 17 years, survey)

*“I have found a community group where... [opinions] are respectfully heard.”*

(gender diverse, 18 years, survey)

*A strong sense of pride and belonging in my Aboriginal community.*

(female, Aboriginal and South Sea Islander, 17 years, survey)

# HOPES

## WHAT DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HOPE FOR?

Children and young people's descriptions of their hopes for the future reveal compassion for others, concern about the environment and hopes about future occupations. These themes are evident in responses across age groups. Some participants also describe hopes about COVID-19 recovery.

### CHILDREN AGED 4-12 YEARS

Children's hopes include:

*"That the world looks after the environment so all the fish, octopus and crabs can live happily in the ocean without any rubbish."*

(Rupert, 6 years, art activity)

*"I think I would like to be a police diver."*

(male, Aboriginal, 9 years, survey)

*"That all people get to live in nice houses with toys and a bed and their friends come to visit them."*

(Jemima, 4 years, art activity)

*"Getting rid of COVID-19 and helping the poor and homeless."*

(female, 11 years, postcard)

*"No littering,[...] world peace."*

(female, 9 years, postcard)

*"Climate change - we need more electric cars."*

(male, 8 years, postcard)

*"For the COVID-19 to stop and to hopefully find a vaccine as soon as possible."*

(male, 10 years, postcard)

*"I think I would like to be a lawyer."*

(female, Aboriginal, 9 years, survey)

*To stop making more animals endangered and help the stop of COVID-19. Stop the spread!*

(female, 11 years, postcard)



## YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 13-18 YEARS

Care for others, concern for the environment and plans for further education and employment also feature in teenagers' hopes for the future. In addition, this older age group describes hopes to contribute to the community.

*Of those survey participants who are still in school, approximately 70 percent say they plan to finish school.*

*Just over half of all survey participants want to attend university.*

*55 percent of teenagers are hopeful about the future.*

## TEENAGERS' HOPES INCLUDE:

*"To finish university without any debt and to...hold a job."*

(female, 18 years, postcard)

*"More equality between social classes [and] further improvement on sustaining a clean environment."*

(female, 18 years, postcard)

*"Someday things will change for the greater good of humanity."*

(male, Aboriginal, 16 years, survey)

*"To make a fan base on social media and contribute to communities."*

(male, 15 years, postcard)

*"I'll be able to help people in need and take care of the community."*

(female, 18 years, postcard)

*"To become an architect, so I could design infrastructure for anyone in need or the health sector."*

(male, 17 years, postcard)

*"Being independent and making a living for myself."*

(female, South Sea Islander, 17 years, survey)

*"[That] all youth are able to participate in community events."*

(female, 15 years, postcard)



# BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING HOPES

Young people identify several barriers to achieving their hopes. Many young people identify money as a barrier. Other barriers are also described:

*“With the current pandemic, school has become much harder as we do not have the support we would at school. I am struggling a lot with schoolwork and am very lost.”*

(female, 17 years, survey)

*“Discrimination based on my race and sex.”*

(female, 18 years, survey)

*“My mental health issues.”*

(female, 16 years, survey)

*“Discrimination against my gender identity and sexuality.”*

(gender diverse, 13 years, survey)

*“Discrimination against me as a disabled person.”*

(female, 15 years, survey)

*“COVID-19 if my education goes down the drain.”*

(female, 17 years, survey)

*“Held back because of mental issues and COVID-19.”*

(male, 14 years, survey)

*“The interruption of COVID-19.”*

(male, 17 years, survey)

*“My mental health at the moment.”*

(female, Aboriginal, 17 years, survey)

*Giving up due to poor mental health.*

(male, 13 years, survey)

*My worst fear [is] not passing my final year of schooling due to Covid-19 and having to repeat.*

(female, Aboriginal, 17 years, survey)

*Money, racial discrimination.*

(female, Aboriginal, 16 years, survey)



# BIG ISSUES

## WHAT ISSUES DO CHILDREN THINK ARE IMPORTANT?

Children and young people were invited to describe what they believe are the most important issues for people their age, and to identify issues that adults need to take more seriously. Again, compassion for others and care for the environment feature in participants' responses. Mental health and equality also emerge as important issues for children and young people. Naturally, teenagers describe more complex issues related to these themes.

### CHILDREN AGED 8-12 YEARS

Children aged eight to twelve years say the following issues are important to people their age or require more attention from adults:

*“Global warming. Animals that need a cold place are losing their homes.”*

(female, 10 years, postcard)

*“Protecting animals.”*

(female, Aboriginal, 8 years, survey)

*“Mental health and free therapy.”*

(female, 12 years, survey)

*“Taking care of the world and not littering.”*

(female, 12 years, postcard)

*“Climbing or riding bikes and scooters. I got ran over by an electric scooter while riding my bike once. This could break bones or cause very bad injuries.”*

(female, 11 years, postcard)

*“That adults should be thinking more about adopting little kids in need or helping them on the streets or even adults that are homeless and give them some food.”*

(female, 9 years, postcard)

*“Panic buying because there is not enough food for the old people.”*

(female, 9 years, postcard)

### YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 13-18 YEARS

Young people say the following issues are important or deserve more attention from adults:

*“Climate change.”*

(female, 18 years, postcard)

*“Bullying. Family violence is also a big issue.”*

(male, 14 years, survey)

*“Bullying with school communities [...] there is certainly more that they could be doing to ensure the safety of children.”*

(female, 17 years, postcard)

*“Physical and mental domestic violence [...] this can severely traumatise a young child and affect them for the rest of their life.”*

(male, 14 years, survey)

*“Mental health... lack of support.”*

(male, 17 years, survey)

*“Mental health issues in school.  
[...] Schools should have more  
information supplied for students.”*

(female, 15 years, postcard)

*“Homelessness... Being able to  
know about support services [...] is  
important.”*

(female, 18 years, survey)

*“Social discrimination and mental  
health issues.”*

(female, 15 years, survey)

*“Discrimination.”*

(gender diverse, 14 years, survey)

*“Depression and anxiety.”*

(female, Torres Strait Islander, 16 years, survey)



*Identity, acceptance and  
mental health.*

(female, 16 years, survey)



*“Bullying, negative impacts of social  
media, climate change.”*

(female, Aboriginal, 17 years, survey)

*“Equality to prevent discrimination  
and biased systems.”*

(female, 15 years, survey)

*“Climate change and gender  
equality.”*

(female, 17 years, survey)

*“Discrimination and judgement.”*

(female, Aboriginal, 14 years, survey)



# SUMMARY

In the first seven weeks of data collection, nearly 4,000 children and young people generously shared their experiences of their community, their hopes for the future, views about what might prevent them achieving their goals and the issues they believe are important for people their age in 2020. In participants' contributions regarding these topics, three values consistently emerge: social interaction and recreation, concern about the environment, and care for others. The issues of mental health, service access and discrimination also appear in participants' responses. Children and young people's descriptions of these values and themes provide strong messages for decision-makers and other adults.

For example, participants' references to social relationships and recreation provide insights into what makes a good community. For children and young people, a good community is one that facilitates social interaction, community connection and community engagement. Communities do this through providing easily accessible public transport and outdoor and indoor spaces for recreation. Older children value opportunities to be heard and contribute to the community.

Participants' descriptions of hopes and important issues reveal their concern about the natural environment. Children and young people hope for a future in which animals and their habitats are protected. They worry about and call for action on deforestation, pollution and the resulting climate change.

Participants' hopes and their identification of important issues also portray empathic young Queenslanders who care about the wellbeing of others. For our younger participants, others' wellbeing revolves around fulfilment of basic needs (e.g. food and shelter). Older participants express concern about domestic violence, bullying, homelessness, mental health issues and access to information and services. They call for more understanding from adults and more information from schools.

Participants identify discrimination as a possible barrier to their goals. Some participants refer to the potential impact of discrimination on the basis of gender identity, mental health, disability, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status or sexuality. Discrimination also emerges in participants' identification of important issues for young people.

The insights shared during the first seven weeks of Growing Up in Queensland 2020 demonstrate the importance of seeking the views of children and young people, including when circumstances pose challenges for engagement. Despite not being able to engage with us face-to-face, children and young people have provided rich information about their lives.

Not surprisingly, COVID-19 features in many contributions from children and young people. Participants express worry about the effect of COVID-19 on education and employment. However, the presence of a global pandemic and its impact on participants' lives has not stopped young Queenslanders from expressing appreciation of their communities, demonstrating compassion for others, giving thought to the environment and describing hopes for the future. Consequently, collecting data during the global COVID-19 pandemic has allowed us to see the resilience, hope and compassion of Queensland's young people.

We find these initial results encouraging and we look forward to sharing the final findings of the GUIQ 2020 project.

For enquiries or further information please contact us at:

[info@qfcc.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@qfcc.qld.gov.au)

[www.qfcc.qld.gov.au](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au)





