



TUESDAY 25 October 2022

Children's Week is the perfect time to reflect on what children are telling us is happening in their lives. Now in its fourth year, the Student Voice Postcard initiative asks primary school aged children to write in their own words about what matters to them most.

When it comes to the future of the planet, children really are the proverbial 'canaries in the coal mine'. They provide advance warning on all that is well and not so well with the world. And they offer us solutions that if implemented, would return positive real-life outcomes for them and us. Their insights and experiences should be a key ingredient of any corporate scenario planning, long term strategy, or horizon scan. That way we can ensure we are ready to scaffold and support these 21st Century citizens into the future.

We can learn much from how they speak about themselves and from their views on adulthood, community, relationships, and challenges. When we listen to their aspirations, barriers, and worries, we gain insight into where our efforts need to be placed, and what we can do to navigate toward a better future.

Our children are currently telling us that too many of the adults in their lives are stressed, and that this is affecting them now. They're telling us that this makes

them nervous about the future. They're telling us they're concerned about the constant tests, measurements, and comparisons they are subjected to, and that they're really worried about issues facing society — big issues like climate change and poverty. They're also telling us that they want to know more about the good things that are happening, so they can feel positive about the future and not always be facing doom and gloom.

These are not the same things that concerned children in the '90s and '00s. These are by-products of vast technological and sociological shifts that are occurring around children now. Today's children are growing up learning and navigating relationships in a hyperconnected, fast-paced world. Their diverse and complex lives have been shaped by rapid technological, cultural, political, and environmental change, with decisions being made by leaders, decision-makers and policy developers that directly affect their lives, mostly without their input.

Children are asking adults to take a sharper focus on their rights, interests, and wellbeing, and to integrate these into economic, social, and environmental policy. They want more of a voice and to be taken seriously — in the classroom, in their homes, in the community, and at government level.

Being heard is key to children making their own lives better. It's also key to improving whole communities. By listening, empathising, and validating children's lived experiences, we will be building enduring relationships with them that are grounded in trust. By directly addressing their concerns now, we will be intervening early to do things differently for their benefit down the line.

Please take the time this Children's Week to read the **snapshots below** on what children think about a range of important topics. Let's not miss the opportunity to tap into the lives of children and learn how they want us to make a difference.

Download here:

- [What Children Say About Wellbeing](#)
- [What Children Say About the C Word](#)
- [What Children Say About Looking After the Planet](#)
- [What Children Say About Grownups](#)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Connolly', written in a cursive style.

Helen Connolly

Commissioner for Children and Young People SA