



OUR VOICE

SAVE THE CHILDREN AUSTRALIA YOUTH AMBASSADORS REPORT 2016



Save the Children

Acknowledgements

Save the Children Australia and the Youth Ambassadors acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to elders past and present.

Save the Children 2016 Youth Ambassadors

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This report was produced by Save the Children Australia's Youth Ambassadors throughout 2016. It is entirely the work of these young people, and does not reflect the official position of Save the Children Australia.

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YOUNG VOICES SPEAKING OUT

At Save the Children, we're doing everything we can to ensure children's rights are recognised and respected. But we can't do it alone. Young people themselves are the best people to create real, lasting change. That's why we run our Youth Ambassadors program.

Every year, our Youth Ambassadors program works with four Youth Ambassadors to lobby Australian politicians and speak out publicly about issues that affect them.

In 2016, the Youth Ambassadors took part in a national Youth Summit that saw 75 young people come together at the State Library of Victoria in June to discuss political, social and moral issues facing Australia. They produced a series of videos outlining their thoughts that were delivered to Federal MPs.

Our Youth Ambassadors work to uphold, promote and protect children's rights. They speak out on issues that matter to them, and they represent the views of their peers at events, in the media and in Parliament.

This report outlines their thoughts on the key issues in Australia today.

MEET OUR YOUTH AMBASSADORS



LILLY LYONS, 14

Lilly, from New South Wales, wanted to be a Save the Children Youth Ambassador because of the organisation's strong connection to her family.

"My brother and sister are half Ethiopian, and my mother's ex-partner would teach me all about famine and drought and how Save the Children helped his community and local orphanage when he was boy," she said.

"Hearing the stories as a young girl taught me how lucky we are to live in Australia, and that the fortunate should always do their best to help the less fortunate."

Lilly's passion for helping others also stems from a shocking childhood experience of sexual assault by a family member. She is a strong advocate for sexual assault victims and people who've experienced homelessness and drug and alcohol abuse.

Lilly also loves helping her local community.

"I have started my own program in schools called 'What's Up Monitors' where a child helps another child in need. It's youth helping youth. Stopping bullying and helping kids who have been bullied is a serious issue, and this needs to be taken care of in Australia and all around the world."

Lilly also hosts her own show for young people on local radio station 2GLF. "I think young people like myself can advocate with great results for more aid and services for such countries and the children that are suffering," she said. "A young person's voice can be so powerful. One person, one voice can make a difference."



HABIBA ASIM, 18

Habiba, from Western Australia, is passionate about breaking down stereotypes in today's society and achieving justice for people seeking asylum.

"Growing up as a young Muslim girl, post 9/11, I have faced being stereotyped in many different ways," she said.

"My dad inspires me to do better for the community I live in. He continually pushes me to break down stereotypes applied to me as a young Muslim woman and to help form new ideas in society to what they see as a young Muslim woman to be."

Habiba is a member of Save the Children's Youth Leadership Roundtable, which speaks out on issues affecting children and young people and puts forward recommendations for change.

She cares deeply about helping children and their families who have been forced to flee their homes because of war, conflict or persecution.

"Recently I just returned from visiting my mother country, Pakistan, after ten years," said Habiba. "I realised how lucky I am to be living in a country as safe as Australia. During my visit to Pakistan, all schools were shut down for 13 days due to terrorists being present in the area. Also, around the same time, a university in Peshawar was hijacked by terrorists and many students were killed."

"I believe Australia has the capability of helping so many that need it most. Australia needs to extend a helping hand and set an example much like Canada has with the Trudeau government."



CAMERON WARASTA, 16

Cameron, from Victoria, is passionate about fighting for equality and justice.

"Sixteen years ago, I won the lottery when I was born in Australia to two extraordinary Afghan parents," he said proudly.

When, two years ago, Cameron was awarded a full scholarship to an elite private school, his life changed completely.

"Experiencing the divide between living in a commission flat and then in the suburbs attending a public school, compared to living in the heart of the city as a student of one of the most elite schools in Australia, my political views transformed into political actions," he said.

As a Youth Ambassador, Cameron is passionate about achieving equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, starting with a treaty.

"The statistics for the inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are horrifying, and for us as a country to stand back and act as if the years of genocide, dehumanization and cultural degradation will correct themselves, is beyond ignorance, it is insanity," he said.

He believes the way we respond to the needs of people seeking asylum is the greatest moral challenge of our times.

"Change is possible, but only if we fight for it," he said. "I want to fight for change."

"If I could change one thing in the world, it would probably be the lack of empathy... what unites us at the end is not our separate races, but the race that binds us all together: the human race."



GENEVIEVE GROVES, 16

Genevieve, from Queensland, wants to create real change in the world.

"Whether it be at a grassroots community level or undertaking the promotion of a national campaign for immigration reform, ethical consumerism and workers rights," she said, "All in all, I'm a person who cares deeply about equality."

Genevieve has volunteered for a wide range of organisations and causes. She has tutored refugee students at a local high school, and helped out at a local nursing home, a holiday camp for children with severe physical and mental disabilities, a feminist youth collective, a domestic violence educational collective and a laundry service for the homeless.

"I love being involved in my local community as it is diverse and vibrant, and it affords me many opportunities to advocate for the causes I am passionate about – refugee settlement in mainstream Australian society, the rights of the disabled, and education."

She is also passionate about empowering young people.

"Everyone needs to take charge of their own democracy. Enrolling to vote, taking an active interest in current affairs and politics, and making a small change in their communities can lead to big results on the local, national and international level."

"Every young Australian can make a difference," she said. "They just have to find out how to start."

BEING ACTIVE CITIZENS

A big part of being a Save the Children Youth Ambassador is about becoming active participants in society.

In 2016, our Youth Ambassadors took on a range of social issues, engaging through media, public events and meetings.

They also visited Save the Children programs to meet with children and talk to staff working to make children's lives better.



14-year-old family violence victim Lilly writes: "We're still not safe."

LILLY 417

Thousands of women and children are hurt by violence in the home every year. That abuse could be violent, sexual, emotional or financial. Kids are hurt because this family abuse can prevent them from growing up, going to school, getting jobs or becoming happy adults. Lilly is 14 years old and lives in regional NSW. She is a Youth Ambassador for Save the Children Australia.

These issues mean a great deal to me because I was a victim of incest. I know how frustrating it can be going through the courts to try and get justice or even protection.

It's been impossible for me and my mum to get legal protection from the person who sexually abused me. The whole process was nothing short of awful. And I was only ten years old at the time and attempting to support my mother with her own domestic violence situation.

Youth Ambassador Lilly Lyons writes in Mamamia about her experiences with family violence

GENEVIEVE GROVES
Country: Australia
Age: 16
Organization: Save the Children Australia
save-the-children.org.au

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INVOLVED WITH SAVE THE CHILDREN AUSTRALIA?
Simply put, young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. They often feel that they don't have a voice to influence the decisions that affect them. Save the Children Australia has given me a chance to show young people they have a chance to speak out in their communities.

WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY DO?
I am a voice for youth, so I engage in work with my community to bring greater awareness to the issues facing young people in Australia.

THE BEST THING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING:
Meeting so many incredible people who have such inspiring personal stories.

HARDEST THING TO DO:
Feel like you're not doing enough.

MOST IMPORTANT LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED:
There is no single journey for those suffering hardship.

TIPS FOR OTHER KIDS WHO WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITY:
Check out community organisations in your local area, like an animal shelter or nursing home, and ask to start helping out!

Youth Ambassador Genevieve Groves talks to Kids Nation Mag about her work

MEDIA RELEASE

Save the Children youth ambassador urges young people to enrol to vote or risk having their voice sidelined in 2016 federal election

19/05/2016

When 16-year-old Brisbane teenager Genevieve Groves was nominated as one of four Save the Children youth ambassadors for 2016, she was determined to use the role to make her voice heard.

The political protégé is still too young to vote, but is urging young adults to enrol and have their say ahead of the federal election on July 2.

The Australian Electoral Commission revealed earlier this week that half of all 18-year-old Australians and a quarter of 19-year-olds are not yet enrolled to vote in this election, making them the most under-represented voting group in the country.

"This election will heavily influence the future of this country, and yet new figures show that a high proportion of eligible teenagers haven't even registered," Ms Groves said.

"Young people in my area of Brisbane are deeply engaged on a whole raft of political issues like equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, asylum seeker rights, gender equality and education funding to name just a few.

Youth Ambassador Genevieve Groves calls on young people to vote in the 2016 Federal Election



Visiting the Save the Children Cubbies Adventure Playground program in Fitzroy



Youth Ambassador Cameron Warasta meets with candidate for Goldstein Tim Wilson



Youth Ambassador Habiba Asim presents Senator Linda Reynolds with a framed photo from Save the Children's Afghanistan program

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander affairs

There are a broad number of issues that relate to the inequality felt by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. This is not just a matter for individuals – there exists a deep racism that is perpetuated by institutions, Government and schools.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people aren't given a strong voice to have their experiences heard. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people see discrimination in a number of areas: in the justice system, in foster care, in access to healthcare and medical services and in the job market.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Restore funding to the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.
- Work to ensure that the Australian Constitution recognises the prior and ongoing sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and outline a plan for the adoption of a national treaty with Australia's First Peoples.
- Ensure equitable access for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples to legal services.
- Ensure that laws, policies and strategies aimed at reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment are underpinned by a human-rights approach.
- Work to ensure that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children in foster and out-of-home care are retained within their own communities wherever possible.
- Support and fund programs that encourage Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander juvenile offenders to go into education or the workforce after release.
- Work with States and Territories to abolish or amend mandatory sentencing laws for crimes including minor assaults, driving offences and petty theft.
- Implement the Close the Gap initiatives to tackle the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Fund an implementation plan for the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy.



Photo: Rob McKechnie/Save the Children

Environment, Agriculture & Animals

Acting on climate change may not seem like an immediate issue – in many ways it will take decades before we begin to see impacts. But we need to immediately decrease our emissions before it is too late.

We need a change to our energy production model. Currently we use so much coal and yet Australia has the benefit of huge solar potential that is largely untapped. We should harness this opportunity.

We must also ensure that ethical, sustainable practices are encouraged in our agriculture and food production industries.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Reallocate fossil fuel subsidies towards investment in renewable energy projects.
- Introduce a national emissions trading scheme, including a market-led floating price on carbon.
- Place a national moratorium on coal seam gas mining.
- Support those communities directly engaged in coal production to transition to fully renewable energy industries through retraining and reskilling.
- Invest in research and development of carbon neutral technologies, including exploration of export market opportunities.
- Phase out of fossil fuel vehicles through the introduction of tax incentives for the take-up of electric cars.
- Commit to ongoing funding of the Indigenous Ranger program and Indigenous Protected Area.
- Prioritise investment in public transport within cities, with a particular focus on providing access to citizens on the fringes of suburban areas.
- Produce educational resources that highlight public transport linkages and empower people to utilise transport links to get around.
- Ensure that new infrastructure meets best practice in sustainable building design.
- Investigate options for regulation change that would support and allow for businesses to donate food products that would otherwise go to waste.
- Expand the carbon farming initiative, which aims to allow farmers and land managers to earn carbon credits for storing carbon or reducing emissions on the land.
- Assist farmers to minimise or eliminate the use of harmful pesticides and fertilisers.
- Rollout of nationwide ban on greyhound racing, as well as horse jumps racing.
- Investigate ways to phase out the live exports industry.
- Require all eggs to be free range.
- Institute a national ban on all products tested on animals.



Health

All Australians should have the right to a healthy life, regardless of their background, socio-economic situation or location.

Youth people in particular require more preventative care to ensure that issues such as mental health are dealt with early in life before they can have sometimes drastic effects.

Effort should also be made to support families, carers and guardians to be better equipped to support young people dealing with drug or alcohol abuse.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Increase funding towards rural and regional areas for better mental health services.
- Fund and implement a national anti-stigma campaign to support young people dealing with mental health issues.
- Reinststate the independent National Mental Health Commission.
- Commit to fully funding of Headspace.
- Develop support programs for children who have parents/guardians suffering from mental health issues.
- Increase funding and resources to rehabilitation services, targeting those most in need.
- Introduce drug rehabilitation and syringe disposal programs into all prisons.
- Rollout a national trial of sponsored medical use of marijuana, and decriminalise the use of marijuana for recreational purposes.
- Fund programs that aim to increase awareness of the impact of drug and alcohol abuse in schools.
- Support young people to be aware of and able to access support services when they are impacted by secondary drug and alcohol abuse.



Law & Justice

Paramount in any Government's agenda towards young people and justice should be to keep youth out of the correction system in the first place.

We must ensure that prevention services are prioritised to support young people, as well as diversion programs to set them back on the right track.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Immediately reinstate the position of Minister for Youth
- Review the role of Apprehended Violence Orders as they relate to young people's protection
- Investigate the Australian age of discretion and work towards changing this to be in line with international standards
- Change the name of detention centres to combat discrimination
- Invest in programs that divert children from the criminal justice system and allocate resources to programs to support juvenile offenders in getting back on track.
- Further rehabilitative support for first time offenders and harsher penalties for repeat offenders
- Greater investment into emergency shelters to ensure they are immediately available and accessible and meet survivor needs
- Increased investment in prevention programs designed to keep young people out of prison
- More investment into programs for children – ensuring they are able to access support services
- More investment into educating police, health works (doctors, nurses, social workers) and teachers.
- Ensure that family violence counselling is fully covered by Medicare
- Appoint a federal watch dog to ensure states are upholding their legal requirements to protect young people from harm within the justice system
- More services to ensure offenders are able to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society



Social Inequality

The gap between the rich and the poor is growing in Australia - it doesn't have to be this way.

We as a society must ensure that the most vulnerable amongst us are adequately cared for. This includes the homeless, low socio-economic families and young people in need.

Young people in rural areas in particular would greatly benefit from increased investment in housing, services and education facilities.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Increase the national housing supply
- Renew funding for innovate homeless services through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
- Investigate how funding for national affordable housing agreement can better meet needs of homeless, specifically looking at youth homelessness
- Fund prevention and early intervention programs and programs that assist with social reintegration
- Encourage and facilitate a review of state and territory residential tenancy laws in order to ensure compliance with international human rights standards, including protection from forced evictions.
- Encourage private sector and institutional investment in affordable housing stock through a range of incentives, subsidies and grants and by reforming housing taxation
- Increase funding and incentives for GPs to operate in rural and regional areas.
- Fund community health services so communities can access to a range of services.
- Prioritise rollout of the National Broadband Network in regional areas to ensure access to internet in rural hubs
- Environment: national biosecurity authority that would coordinate the protection of our unique flora and fauna
- Invest in the creation of new jobs in the renewable energy sector
- Increase investment in regional universities and higher education
- Ensure greater transparency around foreign investment of Australian companies and properties



Photo: Rob McKechnie/Save the Children

\$ Economic Inequality

We must ensure that our taxation and social safety net system is fair for everyone. Aiming for a sustainable welfare system should be the ultimate aim here.

Increased investment in the start-up entrepreneur market will encourage more young people to innovate and create new economies.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Tackle tax evasion of multinational companies, and work to ensure equity across the taxation system as a whole.
- Limit negative gearing to new housing supply.
- Incorporate financial and taxation education in secondary schools.
- Make the income taxation system more progressive to allow low income workers to succeed in life.
- Increase superannuation guarantee charge from 9.5% to 15%
- Protect penalty rates
- Youth Allowance for people living independently of their parents should be increased to, at least, the recognised poverty line (YAYAC)
- Sponsor and provide incentives for youth start-ups and remove barriers to the market, such as credit
- Researching sustainable welfare system that best targets and protects those who need it most
- Invest in transition to work services to provide support to improve the work-readiness of young people and help them into work (including vocation and tertiary education).
- Incentive private sector to hire young people through programs like youth wage subsidies

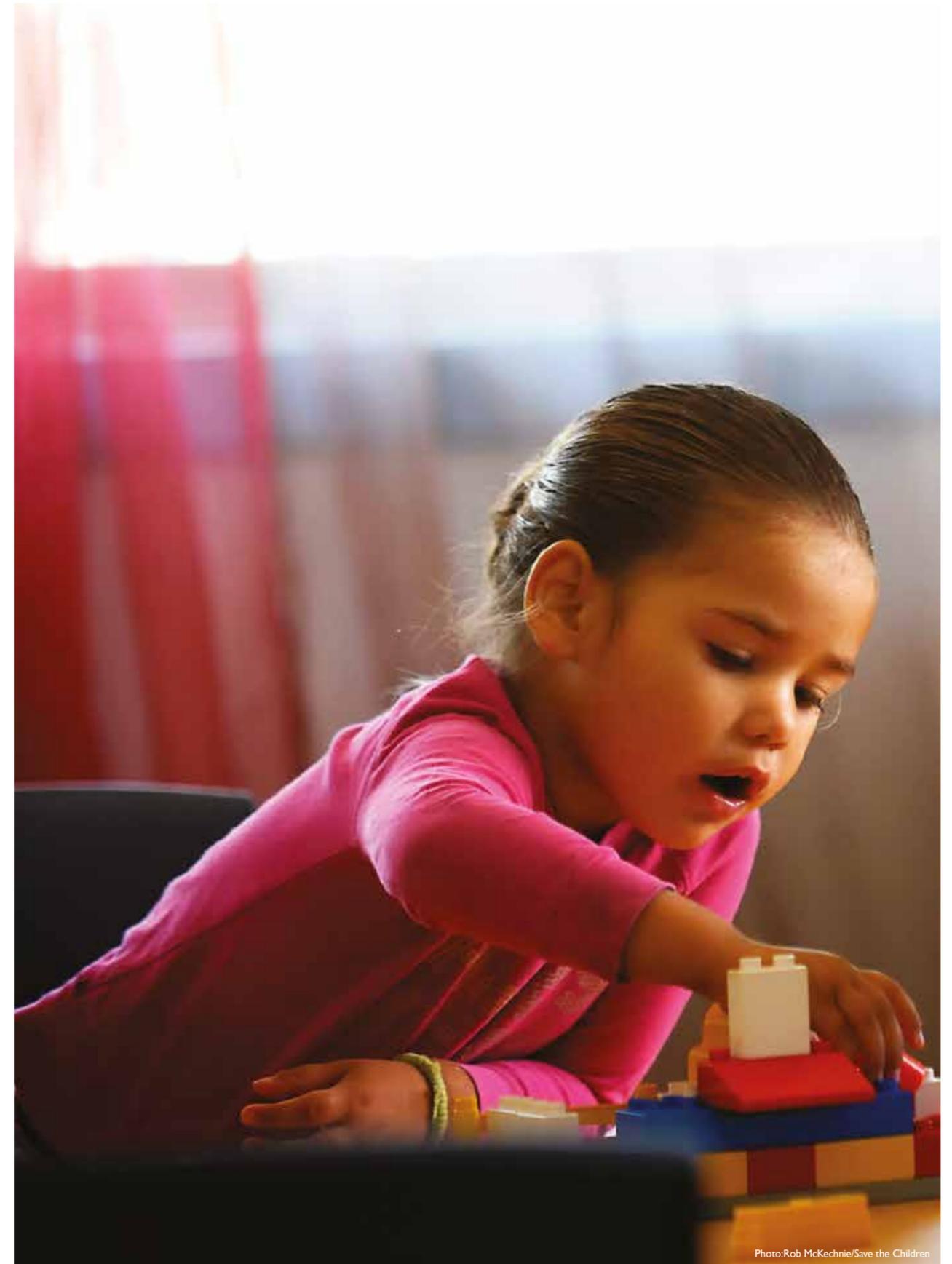


Photo: Rob McKechnie/Save the Children

Discrimination

All people should enjoy the same rights, responsibilities and benefits in our society. This means that regardless of sexuality, gender, physical ability or other difference, our Government should afford the same rights to all.

Young LGBTI people suffer social stigma, mental health issues and other disadvantage due to laws that treat them differently from the rest of the population. This needs to change, with leadership from Government.

We must also ensure that those living with a disability are given the support necessary to succeed in life.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Recognise the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people to have equality in their communities, workplaces, schools and the whole of Australia.
- Legislate to allow equal marriage for all consenting adults, to ensure that a person's gender or sexuality does not affect their legal rights and responsibilities under Australian marriage law.
- Make the use of the Safe Schools program mandatory for all public schools.
- Investigate national methods to allow people to change their gender identity on identification documents.
- Work with retailers and companies to stop the genderisation of toys, clothes and other products marketed towards children.
- Commit to national economic measuring and reporting that factor in non-paid work, with is often done predominantly by women.
- Investigate the possibility of corporate board quotas that seek to address the gender imbalance.
- Work with businesses to expand access to parental leave for fathers.
- Commit to the full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- Work to ensure a 100% disability access for all Government businesses, buildings, services, public transport and facilities.
- Ensure adequate resourcing for disabled students to achieve equity in education and assist them to transition into the workforce
- Providing additional and targeted funding for representation of people living with disabilities in policy and decision making and reinstate the position of national disability discrimination commissioners
- Assist people living with disabilities to transition into the workforce with a credible and flexible thresholds



Photo: Jamie Baker/Save the Children

Foreign Affairs, Security & Aid

Australia is a generous nation, and yet we now have the lowest budget in history allocated towards our Australian Aid program. This must be drastically increased to support the most vulnerable people around the world.

We also have a very big part to play in the global refugee crisis - both here in our region but also around the world. We can and should do our fair share to support people seeking asylum.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Significantly increase annual funding to UNHCR, with a focus on supporting programs in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Increase funding and support to refugee host countries to adequately deal with the growing refugee crisis.
- Increase Australia's humanitarian refugee intake to 30,000 and investigate opportunities to diversify the various intake pathways.
- Immediately close the immigration detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island and allow those people currently held in those facilities to settle permanently in Australia.
- Ensure that safe pathways exist for those seeking asylum, by providing funding and incentives for regional protection and distribution systems, enhancing regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- End the practice of indefinite detention, and abolish temporary protection visas.
- Ensures that the Australian Aid program targets the poorest 40% of people in developing countries – including disadvantaged groups such as women and girls, people with a disability, indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups.
- Adopt a revised purpose for the Australian aid program of assisting people to overcome poverty through contributing to eliminating extreme poverty, reducing inequality, promoting sustainable development and protecting human rights.
- Endorse the Global Goals and adopt them as a framework for the policies, priorities and performance benchmarks of the Australian aid program.
- Institute a Parliamentary Friends of Australian Aid group.
- Ensure that Australia is playing an active role in working towards security and stability on the global stage, through mechanisms such as the UN Security Council, APEC, ASEAN and other bodies.
- Work through diplomatic channels to proactively advocate for a two-state solution for the Israel/Palestine conflict.
- Ensure that Australian peace-keeping forces within our region are supporting countries to combat domestic violence and other social issues.

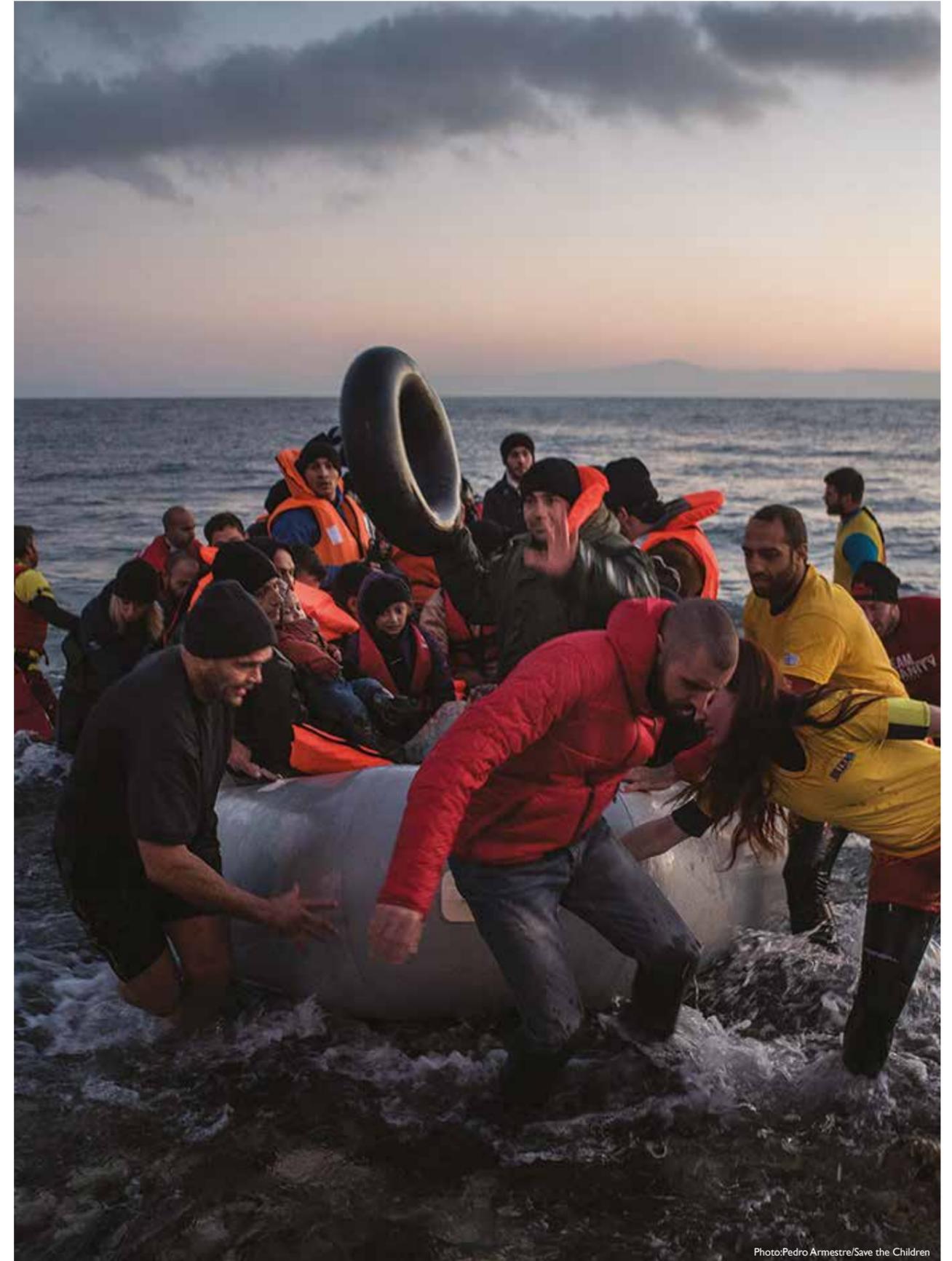


Photo: Pedro Armestre/Save the Children

Culture & Education

All children deserve the right to an education, including understanding our culture, art and music.

We must ensure that our teachers are adequately resourced to train generations of Australians to have a deeper understanding of our place in the world.

WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- Reinstating funding to the Arts Council of Australia and disbanding the Catalyst Fund, redirecting those funds back to the Arts Council of Australia.
- Reinstating recent cuts in funding to ABC and SBS, ensuring that regional areas have adequate access to these services.
- Working with the Australian art community and Tourism Australia to promote the works of Australian artists overseas.
- Providing additional funding and resources for dedicated arts and music programs within schools.
- Providing support and resources so that no child experiences inequities in educational quality including those children living in rural or remote Australia or from low socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Providing training and support for educators to adapt their teaching styles to approach learners genuinely as individuals rather than utilising a 'one size fits all' model.
- Ensuring that children who are experiencing problems within their homes and communities have support services available for them to attend and excel at school, and develop positive relationships between students and institutions.
- Committing to fully funding and implementing Gonski schools funding.
- Providing better preparation for the workforce through schools and education institutions.
- Equipping teachers with the skills that are necessary to adapt to changing technology and working environments.
- Piloting a national program to support cultural awareness workshops within schools, to provide better understanding and appreciation for a multicultural society.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture & history is incorporated into the national curriculum, and involves consultation with Aboriginal elders, leaders and communities.
- Promoting and supporting alternative and non-traditional pathways for education for secondary school leavers.
- Prioritising the needs of young people experiencing disadvantage when considering tertiary education reform to ensure equal access and opportunity.
- Incorporating nationalised and standardised sexual, reproductive and health education in schools.



Photo: Rob McKechnie/Save the Children

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Front cover photo: Participants from the national Youth Summit come together to advocate for political change.
Photo: Rob McKechnie/Save the Children

This page: Youth Ambassador Cameron Warasta presents a framed photo of Save the Children's work in Afghanistan to Federal Member for Gellibrand Tim Watts MP.
Photo: Sarah Carter/Save the Children



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