



METRO LISTENING TOUR 2026



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Acknowledgement of Country

I proudly acknowledge and pay respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Western Australia and acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation upon whose lands my office is located. I recognise the continuing connection to culture, lands, skies and waters, families and communities of all Aboriginal peoples. Together, my team and I, also pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging young leaders. We recognise the knowledge, insights and capabilities of Aboriginal peoples and pay respect to Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

A note about language

For the purposes of this publication, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and recognises Torres Strait Islanders who live in Western Australia. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, although similarities do exist.

Images

The images of Western Australian children and young people featured in this publication comprise of photographs taken by staff during the student forums Listening Tour 2026. Informed consent to publish any photographs featured in this publication has been obtained.

Credit

The artwork used in this publication was created by children and young people as part of the Student Forums Listening Tour 2026 and has been reproduced with their informed consent.

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Disclaimer

This publication has been prepared by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and is intended to provide the views of those who participated in the consultations and conversations undertaken during the Listening Tour 2026. Any errors of omission or commission are the responsibility of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. A selection of quotations is included in this publication on the relevant topics. The quotations are generally unedited to ensure the voice of the child or young person is authentically represented. Editing has only occurred where necessary for clarity, understanding or for confidentiality. In this instance, any changes or omissions have been marked with square brackets or an ellipsis (...).

Thank you

I extend my sincere thanks to every young person who contributed their views at the Listening Tour forums. Your time, your willingness to speak out, and the trust you placed in this process are deeply appreciated. Your insights provide invaluable guidance for the decision makers of this state to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people. We must honour this and take action to meet your needs.

Message from the Commissioner

As Commissioner, I am continually inspired by the insight, resilience and determination of children and young people across Western Australia. At a time when many families are facing rising living costs, housing pressures and growing social and economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever that we listen to and learn from the experiences of the nearly 700,000 children and young people who call our state home.



The messages shared by more than 200 children and young people during the Metro Listening Tour were both compelling and consistent, echoing the findings of the Commissioner's Speaking Out Survey 2025 and reinforcing that these are not isolated concerns, but shared experiences across diverse communities. Children and young people want safe environments in which they can learn, grow and thrive. They want systems and services that are responsive, inclusive and accessible and they want adults to value their perspectives as contributors to positive change.

This publication is a reflection of their voices and a call to action for all of us. Governments, schools, service providers, families and communities share a responsibility to listen, respond and work alongside children and young people to create a Western Australia where every child is supported, empowered and able to reach their full potential.

Dr Jacqueline McGowan-Jones

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Jacqui', written in a cursive style.

Western Australia's children and young people at a glance

695,452¹

children and young people
live in Western Australia,
22.60% of the population.

+12.76%²

increase in the child population over
the past ten years

157,000³

live in regional and remote
areas of the state

48,491⁴

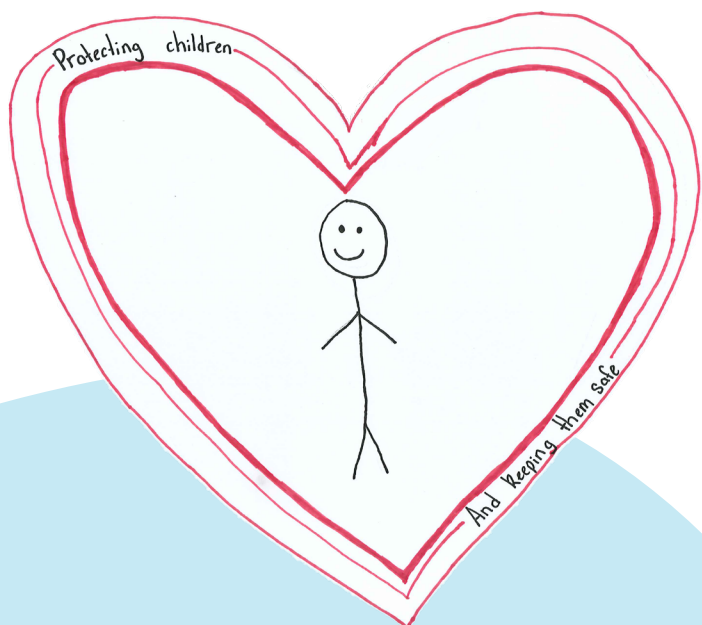
Aboriginal children and young
people projected in WA for 2027.

70,700⁵

children with disability in 2022,
or 11.6% of all children.

**51.4%⁶ /
48.6%⁷**

male and female split of children
aged 0 to 14 years



Forum overview

200+

children and young
people engaged

9-17

years of age

17

participating schools

The Metro Listening Tour 2026 provided a safe and respectful space for children and young people to share their experiences, perspectives and aspirations. Through open and student-led discussions, participants reflected on the issues affecting their lives, schools and communities, while identifying opportunities for positive change. This publication reflects their voices and highlights the key messages, priorities and recommendations they shared, reinforcing the importance of listening to and acting on the views of children and young people.

Participating schools

- Perth College
- Ballajura Community College
- Kiara College
- Swan View Senior High School
- Singleton Primary School
- Rockingham Lakes Primary School
- Settlers Primary School
- Bungaree Primary School
- Warnbro Primary School
- Hillman Primary School
- Safety Bay Senior High School
- Baldivis Secondary College
- Rockingham Montessori School
- Kolbe College
- Lakeland Senior High School
- All Saints' College
- Morley Primary School

“I liked speaking about issues that I feel need addressing and improving”

“I like how this event is about young people’s opinions and rights”

“I got to speak my opinion with no judgement”

Activity examples

Students engaged in a range of interactive learning activities aimed at fostering critical thinking, self-reflection and active participation. A notable activity was a values-based exercise where students physically positioned themselves within the room to represent their agreement, disagreement or uncertainty regarding a series of statements. It revealed:

Strong agreement

“Students should have a say in school rules and decisions that affect them”

STATEMENT PUT TO THE ROOM

“Every child deserves access to education”

STATEMENT PUT TO THE ROOM

Mixed views

“Children have sufficient knowledge (often depending on the topic being discussed)”

STATEMENT PUT TO THE ROOM

Strong disagreement

“Removing playtime is an appropriate form of punishment”

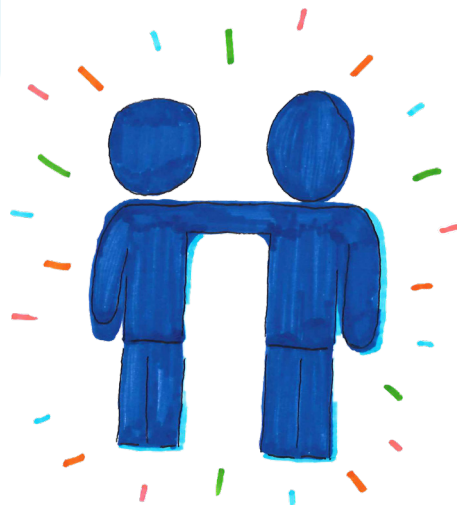
STATEMENT PUT TO THE ROOM

“If a child breaks the rules, they should lose their rights”

STATEMENT PUT TO THE ROOM

“Adults always know what’s best for children”

STATEMENT PUT TO THE ROOM



Discussions also extended to broader and more complex issues

- Minimum age of criminal responsibility
- Youth detention
- Treatment of young people within the justice system
- Importance of fairness and protecting individual rights

Their perspectives on educational and social issues

- Differences between public and private schools
- Post-school pathways
- Public transport and accessibility
- Sleep, wellbeing and mindfulness

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Discussions then focused on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a legally binding international treaty that sets out the rights of all children and young people under 18 years of age. Through these discussions, students were encouraged to think about themselves as active rights-holders and consider how these rights relate to their own lives, experiences and aspirations. The young people demonstrated a strong understanding of the importance of children's rights in supporting their safety, development, wellbeing and participation in society. When reflecting on the rights outlined in the UNCRC, students identified the following as being the most important to them.

RIGHTS MATTER...

Protection from sexual abuse **Identity** Health, water, food, environment

Family guidance as children develop Refugee children **Rest, play, culture, arts**

Respect for children's views

Protection of privacy Contact with parents across countries **Keeping families together**

Best interests of the child **Protection in war**

Access to education **No discrimination**

Children with disabilities Protection from kidnapping **Freedom of thought and religion**

Life, survival and development

Food, clothing, a safe home **Everyone must know children's rights**

Protection from violence **Minority culture, language and religion**

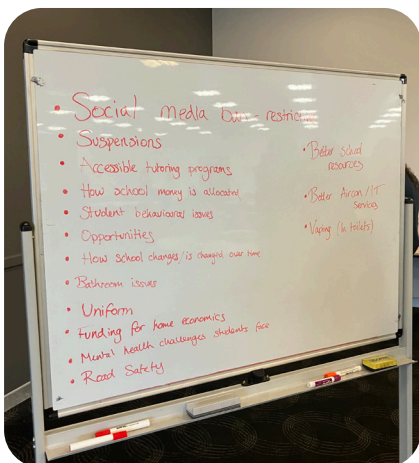
Access to information **Protection from exploitation**

Protection from, and prevention of, sale and trafficking

From the forums

Pictures from the forums

“Enjoyed sharing my ideas with the Commissioner”



West and East forums. Photographs from the Listening Tour 2026 forums, reproduced with consent.

“Having my voice finally heard”

From the forums

Pictures from the forums



South forums. Photographs from the Listening Tour 2026 forums, reproduced with consent.

Problems young people encounter in schools

- student suspensions and disciplinary measures
- bathroom facilities and related issues, including access
- student mental health challenges
- availability and quality of school resources
- opportunities for student development
- the social media ban
- school-life balance
- access to tutoring and academic support programs
- student behavioural concerns
- allocation and management of school funding
- school uniform policies
- changes in school environment over time
- rising costs associated with learning
- neurodiversity and disability
- dated IT services and air-conditioning
- consistency of teaching and relief staff
- the use of vaping products
- road safety concerns

Complaint mechanisms in schools

The young people reflected on their awareness of complaint mechanisms in schools and whether these processes are accessible, effective and child friendly. While a small number indicated they knew how to raise a complaint, very few had done so and none reported a satisfactory outcome - highlighting potential gaps in accessible and effective complaints processes.



Additional subjects and broader concerns

Subjects young people want to be taught

Essential life skills

Cooking, tenancy, taxation and the practical knowledge needed to live independently.

Financial literacy

Budgeting, loans, mortgages, superannuation and how debt actually works.

Politics and civic participation

How government decisions are made and how young people can influence them.

ICT and game design

Coding, digital design and pathways into the technology industry.

Project-based learning

Longer assessments built around real problems rather than exams.

Practical learning

Hands-on trades, first aid and workplace experience during school.

Broader concerns



Environmental issues

Climate change, water security and the condition of the environment they inherit.



Global conflict

War and instability overseas and the way it is reported to young audiences.



Influence of Artificial Intelligence

The effect of AI on school work, honesty, privacy and future employment.

Listening to Western Australia's children and young people



Basic needs and wellbeing

Young people highlighted the importance of having access to quality healthcare, clean drinking water, nutritious food and a safe and healthy environment. They expressed concerns about factors that may affect their health and wellbeing and emphasised that these basic needs should be available to all children and young people.

Students also spoke about the value of trusted adults regularly checking in on their wellbeing, noting that feeling supported, listened to and cared for is important to their overall physical and mental health.



Voice and participation

Young people placed a strong emphasis on the importance of having a say in decisions that affect their lives. They expressed a desire not only to be supported, but also to be actively involved, listened to and taken seriously. Students also highlighted the importance of feeling empowered to raise concerns, make complaints when necessary and have confidence that their views will be heard and acted upon.



Inclusion and access to opportunities

Young people raised concerns about the availability, accessibility and affordability of services, programs and opportunities within their communities. They also highlighted barriers relating to public transport, access to recreational activities and pathways to further education, training and employment and emphasised the importance of ensuring these opportunities are equitable and accessible for all young people.

Students also stressed the importance of having a say in decisions that affect their lives, noting that meaningful opportunities to contribute their views help them feel valued, included and empowered.



Education and learning

Education was identified by young people as a fundamental right, with participants highlighting the important role schools play in supporting learning, development and wellbeing. Young people called for a more inclusive, practical and engaging education system that balances academic achievement with student wellbeing.

Key priorities included more flexible teaching approaches, greater exposure to career pathways and life skills, increased investment in arts and creative programs and stronger support for students with learning difficulties and diverse learning needs.



Health and mental wellbeing

Young people highlighted the importance of accessible and affordable healthcare, particularly mental health support.

Key concerns included long wait times, barriers to services, vaping, substance use and the cost of essential healthcare, with calls for responsive services that meet diverse needs.

“Tell the government what we said today”

Listening to Western Australia's children and young people



Safety and community

Safety emerged as a key priority for young people, with students raising concerns about feeling safe in public spaces and while using public transport. They highlighted the need for improved community infrastructure, including safer pedestrian crossings, better lighting and increased CCTV coverage.

Young people also identified bullying as an ongoing concern, emphasising the importance of clear and accessible reporting pathways. Concerns about youth crime and its impact on community safety were also raised, with participants calling for responses that help young people feel safe, supported and connected to their communities.



Fairness and respect

Young people emphasised the importance of fairness, equality and respect in the decisions and systems that affect their lives. Students expressed a strong view that decisions concerning children and young people should always be made in their best interests and highlighted the need for adults to listen to and consider their perspectives.

Some young people also questioned whether schools and teachers intervene effectively when concerns arise, reinforcing the importance of responsive support and environments where all young people feel heard, respected and treated fairly.



Promotion of child rights

Young people highlighted the importance of understanding and exercising their rights, emphasising that access to information about rights should be embedded within education to help children and young people be safe, healthy and informed. They further expressed the view that children should be empowered to make decisions about matters affecting them and should not feel obliged to always comply with adults when something does not feel right.

Young people also stressed that children's rights require active support from governments, communities and institutions. They also clearly distinguished between rules and rights, noting that while rules may differ across settings, rights are universal, fundamental and apply to all children and young people.



What should adults ask young people?

ARE

YOU

OKAY?

Questions young people want to be asked

"Do you feel safe?"

"Are you comfortable talking about this?"

"Are you happy?"

"Are you having fun?"

"How can we help?"

"Is there anything you need?"

"What do you want to do?"

"What do you think?"

"What's making you feel stressed?"

"What kind of world do you want to live in?"

"What changes do you want to see?"

"Do you know where to go for support?"

"What do you want to change about the world?"

Helplines referenced at the forums

Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800
Lifeline	13 11 14
Headspace	1800 650 890
13YARN	13 92 76



Calls to action from children and young people

The Listening Tour 2026 highlights the insight, clarity and wisdom of children and young people across Perth. Throughout the forums, students demonstrated not only a strong understanding of their rights, but also a deep commitment to fairness, inclusion and the wellbeing of their communities. Young people engaged thoughtfully in discussions about the issues that matter most to them, providing valuable insights into their experiences, priorities and aspirations.

Discussions centred on a range of issues affecting children and young people, including education, health and wellbeing, safety, access to services and opportunities for participation and inclusion. Students raised both practical and systemic challenges, including difficulties accessing timely mental health support, concerns about safety in public spaces and on public transport and the need for more flexible, relevant and engaging educational experiences. Young people also expressed a strong desire for greater access to life skills education, clearer career pathways and enhanced support to navigate the transition to adulthood.

Additionally, students demonstrated a strong understanding of children's rights and their importance in supporting safety, development, wellbeing and participation. They also consistently emphasised the importance of being heard in decisions that affect them, increasing awareness and understanding of children's rights, respecting diverse perspectives and ensuring that all children and young people are treated fairly and with respect. Their contributions reflected a clear desire not only to be supported, but to be active participants in shaping the environments, services and decisions that impact their lives.

“everyone’s life matters”

“everyone has the right to feel represented, especially children”

Consistent messages, shared responsibility

Importantly, many of the themes raised by children and young people through the Listening Tour 2026 closely aligned with findings from the Commissioner's 2025 Speaking Out Survey (SOS 25). They highlighted the importance of accessible and affordable healthcare, particularly mental health support. Key concerns included long wait times, barriers to services, vaping, substance use and the cost of essential healthcare, with calls for responsive services that meet diverse needs. Participants' views echoed broader findings relating to mental health and wellbeing, access to services, safety, education and the need for stronger supports to meet children's basic needs. The consistency of these messages across multiple engagement activities demonstrates that these are not isolated concerns, but shared experiences among children and young people from diverse backgrounds and communities. Together, the findings reinforce the need for a coordinated, holistic and youth-centred

approach to policy and service delivery that ensures children and young people can access the right supports at the right time, while also providing meaningful opportunities for them to contribute to decisions that affect their lives. Their collective voices highlight the importance of systems that are responsive, inclusive, accessible and designed around the needs and experiences of children and young people.

The messages shared throughout the forums were clear and consistent: children and young people want to be heard, respected and supported. They want safe environments where they can learn, grow and thrive and they want their views to be genuinely considered by the adults, organisations and decision-makers around them. This publication reflects those voices and reinforces the shared responsibility of governments, service providers, schools, families and communities to listen and act on what children and young people have told us.



**“help
protect and shape the world
around us”**



Recommendations

Adopt a child-centred, rights-based approach across government, schools and families that recognises children and young people as active partners in decisions that affect their lives. This requires genuinely listening to their voices, acting on their feedback and ensuring they have access to the support, opportunities and services they need to thrive. By fostering safe, inclusive and respectful environments, we can empower all children and young people to learn, grow and reach their full potential.

Government

- **Improve access to mental health support** through increased investment in youth-focused services and early intervention programs.
- **Embed youth participation in decision-making** by ensuring children and young people inform policies, programs and service design.
- **Strengthen community safety** by improving safety in public spaces and transport and enhancing youth-friendly reporting mechanisms.
- **Promote and uphold children's rights** through legislation, policy, service delivery and community awareness initiatives.
- **Support successful transitions to adulthood** through career development, mentoring, employment pathways and life-skills programs.
- **Deliver integrated and accessible services** by improving coordination across education, health and community sectors.

Schools

- **Strengthen student voice and participation** by providing meaningful opportunities for students to influence school decisions.
- **Enhance wellbeing support** through accessible counselling services and whole-school approaches to mental health.
- **Foster safe and connected school communities** by addressing bullying and promoting belonging and inclusion.
- **Deliver engaging and relevant learning** that reflects diverse needs and builds practical, transferable skills.
- **Strengthen career education and pathways planning** through earlier career exploration and stronger partnerships with industry and tertiary providers.
- **Promote children's rights, inclusion and respect** across curriculum, policies and school culture.

Parents, carers and families

- **Encourage meaningful communication** by actively listening to children's views and valuing their perspectives.
- **Build independence and life skills** to prepare young people for adulthood and decision-making.
- **Encourage community participation** through volunteering, leadership opportunities and civic engagement.
- **Foster respectful and inclusive relationships** by modelling empathy, inclusion and respect for diversity.
- **Support education and career exploration** by encouraging young people to pursue pathways aligned with their strengths and aspirations.
- **Support mental health and wellbeing** through open conversations and early access to support when needed.



Rights Matter!

Endnotes

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Quarterly Population Estimates (ERP), by State/ Territory, Sex and Age* [Data Explorer]. Retrieved September 07, 2026, from <https://dataexplorer.abs.gov.au/>
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Quarterly Population Estimates (ERP), by State/ Territory, Sex and Age* [Data Explorer]. Retrieved September 09, 2026, from <https://dataexplorer.abs.gov.au/>
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022-2023). *Estimated Resident Population (ERP) by Statistical Area Level 3 and Statistical Area Level 4* [customised report; unpublished].
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Estimated resident and projected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged 18 years and over, medium series, sex by states and territories and Australia, 2011 to 2031 (Table 5)* [Data set]. Retrieved September 8, 2026, from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-and-projections-australian-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population/2011-2031>
5. Commissioner for Children and Young People. (2026). *Profile of Children and Young People in WA*, Retrieved September 08, 2026 from ccyp.wa.gov.au/media/wzbc3m3m/ccyp9552-profile-report-2026-web2.pdf
6. Australia Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Western Australia, Census Community Profiles. Retrieved September 08, 2026 from [2021 Western Australia, Census Community Profiles | Australian Bureau of Statistics.](#)
7. Ibid.

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