



POLICY STATEMENT: HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Principles

The *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006 (WA)* establishes that the Commissioner's paramount concern must be the best interests of children and young people in WA. The Commissioner undertakes research with children and young people to ensure their voices inform the activities and priorities of the Commissioner.

Critically, children and young people must be informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. Significant international evidence demonstrates the value of lived experience in the development of policy, programs and services.

The Commissioner advocates to uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for children and young people accessing health and mental health services.

Position

The Commissioner believes that upholding the rights of children and young people to be able to access necessary health and wellbeing services requires a whole-of government and whole of community approach. In line with national and international evidence, the Commissioner advocates for approaches to health and mental health that prioritise:

- improving the social and cultural determinants of health
- health promotion; prevention of injury, illness and disease, and intervention early in life and illness
- universal access to affordable, effective, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate health and mental health care, with targeted services to ensure equitable outcomes
- child and family-focused, integrated and culturally safe holistic health services
- empowering children and young people to make decisions about their health and wellbeing, and to inform the development and provision of healthcare services
- peer and lived experience informed services.

A holistic view of the child and young person must be at the core of all policy, programs and services. The interconnectedness of matters such as health, education, housing, safety and the challenges of exclusion and vulnerability demand a connected service system.

Children and young people accessing health and mental health services deserve holistic support to improve their emotional, social, cultural, and physical wellbeing. The Commissioner strongly supports children and young people having access to the best health care possible and information to help them navigate the service system.

The Commissioner's advocacy priorities are informed by consultation with children and young people across WA, research, and stakeholder engagement. The Commissioner for Children and Young People will prioritise additional issues of concern to provide evidence-informed recommendations to Government as needs arise.

