

Submission

No 66

## INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

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**United services Union Submission to the  
Commission of Children and Young People**

**Re: Enquiry into needs and issues for 9-14 year olds.**

The United Services Union (USU) has approximately 40,000 members and represents local government (including childcare workers), energy, airline, clerical and administrative employees throughout NSW. The USU also has a commitment to working on issues related to youth and women.

USU is committed to working on issues to improve the life and well-being of our members, their families and the community. The following submission has been developed by the USU in response to The Commission of Children and Young People enquiry into the needs and issues for 9-14 year olds.

The submission is based on issues raised by members over time and experience based on the work of Union organisers. The main emphasis of this submission is on education, training, employment, household incomes and family relationships/support.

**Children and young people**

***Education and Training***

- All children and young people have a need to have access to affordable secure housing, good health and dental care, education, nutrition, good parenting and supportive care, with an absence of abuse and neglect.
- Children and young people have a need to have appropriate pathways throughout their lives to encourage participation in education, training and employment. Of particular importance are the transition periods from primary to secondary school and from school to work, including programs for Indigenous children and young people, females, children and young people with disabilities and children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Additional support needs to be provided to groups and individuals that are experiencing barriers to accessing the services within the community.
- Appropriate support services need to be available for children and young people experiencing family difficulties, with an emphasis on supporting continued participation in education, training and employment.
- Children and young people need access to good quality and supervised:
  - before and after school care- local government as a provider of before and after school care is provides a good model for this type of childcare

- Vacation care- local government again provides a good model
- homework centres and/or other after school activities
- recreational activities
- Schools/industry partnerships that provide vocational opportunities for students in high schools, such as gaining Certificate III in Childcare while still at school, need to be of a high quality. The model used by local government in childcare provides an example of good industry practice whereby students, starting from Year 8 in high school, can participate in vocational studies to streamline pathways to employment. This model forms part of the Federal governments strategies on reducing the skills shortage in specific industries and in part targets young people.

## **Children and young people and their families/carers**

### ***Employment, household incomes and family relationships/support***

Children generally are not in a position to earn their own income and rely on family and household incomes for their daily provisions, support and well-being.

Households and families that do not have access to adequate income cannot provide the essential basic needs for children and young people. The following points look at issues for households and their impacts on children and young people

- Household incomes need to be adequate enough to be able to meet the daily requirements of family members including housing, nutrition, health and dental care, education, parenting and supportive care. Households with low incomes cannot meet the essential requirements for children and young people.
- Minimum wages of employees need to be reviewed in line with cost of living increases.
- Casualisation of the work force, out sourcing of jobs, privatisation of government services etc have great impacts on households to have gainful and secure employment so they are better equipped to provide the essentials for families.
- More needs to be done to support flexible workplace hours to provide better work life balance, promoting the opportunities for strengthening family and social bonds for children and young people.
- Wage increases need to be adequate to meet the demands of rising costs of daily living
- Working conditions for low paid and low skilled workers need to be improved

- Young workers need additional protection to decrease opportunities for exploitation, unsafe practices, bullying, harassment and unfair treatment in the workplace.
- Youth wages need to be reviewed and better provisions implemented to promote equity in the workplace.

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