

Submission

No 51

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

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The needs of children and young people in the middle years

There is a need for out of school hours care (OOSH) for this age group including after school hours and vacation care. This caters for children under the age of 12. One of the observations made by the children services worker is that these programs cater from 5 to 12 year olds and the activities provided are not age appropriate for children aged 9-12 years of age. This age group is not properly catered for or recognised as having different needs to younger children.

There is a lack of services for young people in the 12 to 14 age bracket. This includes lack of services for out of school hours care. Youth programs offer services to this age group but they usually operate on a drop in basis and may not be appropriate as after school hours care and do not offer the same level of supervision as other models.

Within the local area there is a lack of transition to high school programs for children and young people. There has been considerable recognition of transition to school programs for younger children but this has not translated for older children transitioning to high school. This is a gap in provision of information and orientation to students beginning high school.

The activities and services which provide opportunities for children and young people in the middle years to develop resilience

In the middle years in the Wollongong LGA there is generally a lack of services that cater for this age group and are age appropriate. Wollongong City Council administers a program funded by the Department of Education and Training called Links to Learning which targets young people in year 7 and 8 at risk of leaving school from 2 local high schools. The program aims to help young people develop the necessary skills and resilience to be able to remain in school. This program works with 40 young people each year.

Department of Education and Training funds programs across NSW which target students at risk of leaving school, there is one other Links to Learning program with this target group in the Wollongong LGA.

The extent to which changing workplace practices have impacted on children and young people in the middle years, including possible changes to workplace practices which have the potential to benefit children and young people in the middle years

The hours that parents are often required to work make it very difficult for children in this age bracket. They don't really fit the mould for the standard Out of School Hours Programs (OOSH) and those over the age of 12 can't access any government funded OOSH programs. The issue keeps coming back to flexibility in the workplace i.e. ability to work from home for part of the day to allow parents to be home when children arrive, availability of flexible hours of work and capacity to work part time. Family friendly work practices are something that gets talked about a lot but unfortunately doesn't translate very well into practice in thousands of workplaces across this State.

This combined with no government funded programs for children, that are age and developmentally appropriate means that these children and families have few to no options for OOSH programs.

Submitted by
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