

Submission

No 91

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

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## **Children and Young People in NSW in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Submission by students from St Luke's Grammar School, Dee Why

In order to find out about the needs of young people, we chose to conduct a survey of students in Year 6 and Year 9 at our school, aged between 9 and 14. The Year 9 Leaders wrote the questions for the survey. The students were given half an hour during school time to write their answers to the survey. The survey was anonymous.

We chose to address the questions related to Needs of Children and Young People (Questions 1 and 2) and Services and Support (Question 3).

The results of our survey covered the following areas:

### What young people worry about

The first question we asked was about the main causes of emotional anxiety in young people. The answers suggested a wide range of areas that contributed to anxiety in young people:

- 34% of the students said homework or school stress
- 28% said peer pressure
- 26% said peer relationships or friendship issues
- 20% said body image
- 18% said pressure from parents to do well
- 14% said parents splitting up
- 12% said drugs
- 12% said illness or fear of family members getting sick
- 8% said bullying
- 4% said gossip

### Services and Support

We then asked about government services to help young people cope with emotional anxiety. The majority of students (72%) said they thought the government should introduce more resources or organisations to help young people cope with anxiety and 58% said they felt that more government counselling services were needed in the local area. 44% of students surveyed thought there should be more promotion of government helplines and counselling services for young people, in the local area.

Almost all of the students at our school participate in sport outside of school. We felt this was an important way for students to cope with anxiety, so we asked students what they thought about sporting facilities in the local area. While 24%

of students said they thought the sporting facilities in the local area were sufficient, the remainder made a variety of suggestions about the types of facilities they would like to see improved or added to the local area.

- 22% thought that more basketball courts should be built, especially open, publicly accessible courts
- 14% would like a local ice-rink
- 12% would like more indoor swimming facilities
- 10% would like more public ovals
- 8% would like more tennis courts
- 6% would like to see more skate parks

12% of students also wrote that they would like the current sporting facilities better maintained.

We asked about activities for young people outside of school, to bring people together in the local community. There were a small number of suggestions for dances and concerts, but the large majority of students were not interested in such organised activities. Some reasons were given – two students said that their churches already provided enough activities, two other students said that kids want to arrange their own free time and one student said that adults already have enough say in how young people run their lives.

We felt it was important that young people were taught how to protect themselves in difficult situations. We asked if students thought that self-defence classes should be provided for all young people. The large majority of students thoughts this was a good idea.

Thinking about what young people are taught, we asked if students thought that modern education is relevant to young people today. The majority of students believed that it is relevant. There were some changes suggested. Some students would like to see homework abolished. A number of students commented that there was too much emphasis on Australian history and they would like more world history. Some responses asked for subjects that offered life skills, such as financial literacy. A number of students would like more sport.

Finally, we asked about the impact of government decisions on young people. The majority of students felt that government decisions have no impact on young people. Where there was an impact, it was through parents – interest rate hikes, rising petrol prices and the budget have led to increases in stress for parents, which has meant more stressful households. When asked whether young people should be consulted more when politicians make decisions, the responses were an even split.