

Submission

No 56

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

Organisation: Unions NSW  
Name: Mr Mark Lennon  
Position: Assistant Secretary  
Telephone: 02 9881 5999  
Date Received: 6/05/2008

---

5<sup>th</sup> May 2008

Level 3, Trades Hall  
4 Goulburn Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000  
Telephone: 02 9881 5999  
Facsimile: 02 9261 3505  
Website: [www.unionsnsw.org.au](http://www.unionsnsw.org.au)  
E-mail: [mail@unionsnsw.org.au](mailto:mail@unionsnsw.org.au)  
ABN: 43 132 138 531

The Committee Manager  
Committee on Children and Young People  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

By Facsimile: (02) 9230 3052

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached the Unions NSW submission to the Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years in NSW.

Should you require any further information, please contact Ms Alison Rudman on (02) 9881 5900 or [ARudman@workingnsw.org.au](mailto:ARudman@workingnsw.org.au).

Yours sincerely,



**Mark Lennon**  
**Assistant Secretary**





**Unions NSW**

**Submission To**

**Inquiry Into Children and Young People  
9 – 14 Years in NSW**

The NSW Union Movement is proud of its role in protecting and extending the rights of working families in NSW. A key part of these families are young people in the often difficult period between childhood and adolescence.

Young people between the ages of 9-14 years are for the most part still engaged in formal education but are approaching an age where they are legally able to obtain employment. It is generally accepted that young people in this age bracket are now able to conceive a world outside of the foci of themselves and are seeking a greater independence and involvement within broader society. It is for these reasons that our submission focuses on access to:

- Education
- Working life
- Quality infrastructure.

The federal government's *Welfare to Work* legislation needs to be amended as it has an impact on children and young people. Sole parents are required to seek paid employment after their child has turned 8 years of age<sup>1</sup>. This interferes with a parents' ability to parent and had led to some reporting an increase in their stress levels. If parents are required to undertake paid employment we recommend that they are given flexible working conditions such as hours and entitlements to be able to meet the needs of their children.

## **Education**

It is essential for young people between the ages of 9-14 years that they have comprehensive education options from early childhood to tertiary education. This includes accessible, affordable, properly resourced childcare, primary and secondary schooling, university and vocational education. It is only through education that young people are able to contribute to a skilled economy and an engaged democratic citizenry.

Currently children and young people in primary school settings may have access to appropriate before and after school hours care activities. Most "Outside of School Hours" (OOSH) childcare cease taking children once the child reaches high school age. These 12-14 old children still require supervision as many become "latch key" children as parents or guardians are still at work. Unions NSW encourages the committee to look at creating and maintaining appropriate OOSH care for children aged 12-14. This could be done by means of tax rebates, funding appropriate home work centres

---

<sup>1</sup> Eva Cox & Terry Priest (2008) *Welfare to Work: At What Cost to Parenting*, Social Inquiry Centre, UTS, Sydney.

and/or other community run facilities between the hours of 6-8.30 in the morning and 3-6 in the evening.

## **Working life**

Young people, particularly those approaching 14 years, need to have choices as they reach the end of compulsory schooling. There needs to be recognition of the informal work that many young people undertake in family businesses before they reach working age. This means that the government needs to create a stronger industrial relations environment. This can be achieved by the following,

- Enacting bold new solutions to youth unemployment, particularly in rural and regional areas.
- Recognising that the most secure jobs are environmentally sustainable jobs.
- Implementing additional protection to decrease opportunities for exploitation, unsafe practices, bullying, harassment and unfair treatment in the workplace.
- Reviewing youth wages to promote pay equity in the workplace.
- Lobbying the Federal Government for an industrial relations system with the following guiding principles:
  1. Casuals to have the same rights as permanent staff.
  2. A fair days pay for a fair days work regardless of gender or minority status.
  3. Investment in education and training to secure Australia's skill supply.
  4. The right to be safe at work and if that right is compromised, the right to redress. This redress needs to be swift, equitable and accessible.
  5. Access to compulsory conciliation and arbitration to resolve outstanding issues.
  6. The space to campaign for future improvements and claims.
  7. Freedom of Association.
  8. Government's (both state and federal) that reflect best employer practice.
  9. Portability of leave and entitlements in recognition of the transient nature of a significant portion of people's lives.

## **Quality Infrastructure**

At the centre of quality infrastructure for people aged between 9-14 years is the need for affordable housing both now and in the future. Following on from this is a need to be able to travel between that housing and whatever their other occupations are.

Young people may work in the CBD but are often members of communities outside the Sydney CBD. They need affordable housing that is supported by both local and regional infrastructure that allows citizens to fulfil at various times their responsibilities as carers, students, workers and community members.

This is important during the 9-14 year old period when their parents need to be able to live where a support system exists. It is also important as they progress to independence that the necessary support system continues to be in place. To encourage this increasing independence, they also need access to a comprehensive public transport system that allows people to get around their region in a safe, reliable and affordable way.

Close to the affordable housing and accessible transport needs to be affordable healthcare that focuses not just on crisis intervention but also preventative care. This is essential to ensure that vulnerable young people are protected from neglect.

The ages 9-14 years are a transitional period. In recognition of this there needs to be a focus on education, jobs, affordable housing, healthcare and transport services. These services provide young people with a solid foundation but also optimism for the future.