

ACCGA Joint Statement on Poverty

Anti-Poverty Campaign – 13 – 19 October 2024

All Australian children are entitled to grow up safe, healthy and get the support they need to reach their full potential. This includes having their health, wellbeing and developmental needs fulfilled, to have adequate housing, food and healthcare and to fully participate in their education and their community. They should be able to go on school trips, enjoy family outings, play regular sport, and engage in extracurricular activities that align with their interests and talents.

And yet poverty faces far too many children, with over 761,000 Australian children under 15 living in poverty.ⁱ Child poverty impacts on the day to day lives of children, as well as preventing them from taking part in the activities they want to enjoy and limiting their opportunities for the future. Those who experience poverty as a child areⁱⁱ:

- found to be up to three years behind at school when compared with their peers by the time they turn 15
- 3.3 times more likely to be poor as an adult
- 2.5 times more likely to live in social-housing
- 2.5 times more likely to experience financial stress; and
- more likely to experience poor mental and physical health.ⁱⁱⁱ

We also know that those living in poverty can experience greater exposure to the child protection system (mistaking poverty for neglect), which can in turn lead to increased likelihood of experiencing violence, social isolation and, for many, leading to contact with the criminal legal system.

Decades of policies, system structures and limited access to resources have prevented any real increase in wages and income support payments have contributed to the chronic disadvantage experienced by many Australians today. Cost of living pressures have been left unchecked leading to exponential housing costs reduced housing supply and food insecurity. The ever-increasing costs for everyday essential items such as food, utilities, health and dental services, transport, and education, have disproportionately affected families who are on low incomes, single parent families and young people.

This Anti-Poverty Week, Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates are calling on Australian governments to implement urgent resources and action to address structural barriers that contribute to poverty and to take bold action to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and marginalisation that continue to have devastating implications in Australia's society, impacting families, communities, children and young people.

Australian Governments can act now to address child poverty by taking these four actions, reflecting calls from the broader anti-poverty network:

- establish a national child poverty taskforce and strategy, inclusive of long-term strategies to increase opportunities for young people to break cycles of adult poverty, for example through increasing the minimum wage for apprentices and reducing the cost of higher education
- show commitment to ending child poverty through national law, including legislation to regulate pricing on essential items (e.g. staples, fresh vegetables, fuel, GP visits, female hygiene products)
- increase income support payments, including enabling children and young people under 18 to access the leaving violence payments; and
- establish a minimum national poverty line that is regularly measured, monitored and reported upon.

Child poverty can be overcome. Australian governments have the power and resources to stop it. The persistence of child poverty in Australia – a modern and thriving nation – is indefensible.

Australian Children's COMMISSIONERS AND GUARDIANS



Helen Connolly
Commissioner for Children and
Young People
South Australia



Shahleena Musk
Children's Commissioner
Northern Territory



Isabelle Crompton
Acting Commissioner for Children
and Young People
Tasmania



Jodie Griffiths-Cook
Children and Young People
Commissioner
Australian Capital Territory



Shona Reid
Guardian for Children and Young
People
South Australia



Shayna Smith
Office of the Public Guardian
Queensland



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Commissioner for
Children and Young People
Western Australia



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Meena Singh
Commissioner for Aboriginal
Children and Young People
Victoria



Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Commissioner for Children and
Young People
Western Australia



Liana Buchanan
Principal Commissioner for Children
and Young People
Victoria



COMMISSIONER FOR
ABORIGINAL CHILDREN
& YOUNG PEOPLE

Zoe Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young
People
New South Wales

Anne Hollonds
National Children's Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission



Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts
Commissioner for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Children and Young
People.

April Lawrie
Commissioner for Aboriginal
Children and Young People
South Australia

ⁱ <https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty/number-of-people-in-poverty-by-age-in-2019-20-and-change-in-poverty/>

ⁱⁱ Esperanza Vera-Toscano and Roger Wilkins (2020) Does poverty in childhood beget poverty in adulthood in Australia? Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne. Accessed at https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3522482/Breaking-Down-Barriers-Report-1-October-2020.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Esperanza Vera-Toscano and Roger Wilkins (2020) Does poverty in childhood beget poverty in adulthood in Australia? Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne. Accessed at https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3522482/Breaking-Down-Barriers-Report-1-October-2020.pdf.