



YOUTH JUSTICE

AND CHILD
WELLBEING

**REFORM ACROSS
AUSTRALIA**



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AYC

As advocates for young people, we at the Australian Youth Commission are dedicated to representing the youth sector and upholding the rights of all young Australians. Our mission is to empower young people and give them a voice for a better tomorrow, by advocating for their rights and promoting social justice and equity

What factors contribute to children's and young people's involvement in youth justice systems in Australia?

According to a research study conducted by the Australian Youth Commission, there are several factors that contribute to children's and young people's involvement in youth justice systems in Australia.

The study found that individual factors such as mental health and behavioural issues, substance abuse, poor academic performance, and a history of trauma, generational trauma or abuse are significant contributors to youth justice involvement. Young people who struggle with mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, or have behavioural issues, such as ADHD, are more likely to become involved in the youth justice system. Substance abuse is also a significant factor, as young people who abuse drugs or alcohol are more likely to engage in criminal activities and further develop mental health adversities.

Poor academic performance and truancy were also identified as risk factors for youth justice involvement. Children and young people who struggle with school or have a history of truancy are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. Additionally, those who have experienced trauma or abuse, whether physical, sexual, or emotional, are at greater risk of engaging in criminal behaviour.

Family factors were also found to play a role in youth justice involvement. Family breakdown or dysfunction, parental involvement in criminal activities, and a lack of parental supervision were identified as risk factors. Young people who come from broken homes or dysfunctional families are more likely to become involved in the youth justice system. Additionally, those who have parents or siblings involved in criminal activities are more likely to follow the same path. A lack of parental supervision and support can also increase the risk of criminal involvement.

Socio-economic factors such as poverty and social disadvantage, homelessness, and discrimination were also identified as contributing factors. Children and young people from low socio-economic backgrounds are at greater risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system. Homelessness and unstable housing can also lead to criminal involvement. Discrimination and racism can also play a role, as young people who experience discrimination or racism may feel marginalized and excluded from society, which can increase their risk of engaging in criminal behaviour.

What needs to be changed so that youth justice and related systems protect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people? What are the barriers to change, and how can these be overcome?

The Australian Youth Commission conducted a research study to identify what needs to be changed to ensure that youth justice and related systems protect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. The study found that several changes are necessary to ensure that these systems prioritize the needs of young people.

One significant change identified by the study is the need to shift the focus of youth justice systems from punishment to rehabilitation. Many young people who enter the youth justice system have experienced trauma or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. By providing appropriate support, resources, and guidance, it is possible to prevent further criminal behaviour and help young people to reintegrate into society successfully.

Another necessary change identified by the study is to address the over-representation of Indigenous children and young people in the youth justice system. Indigenous young people are disproportionately represented in the youth justice system, and many have experienced significant trauma and disadvantage. The study suggests that addressing the root causes of this over-representation, such as addressing the impacts of colonization and systemic racism, is necessary to ensure that Indigenous young people's rights and well-being are protected.

The study also suggests that increasing the use of diversionary programs can help protect the rights and well-being of children and young people. Diversionary programs aim to divert young people away from the criminal justice system and into support and intervention programs. By providing early intervention and support, it is possible to prevent young people from entering the justice system in the first place.

The study identified several barriers to change, including a lack of funding and resources for support and intervention programs, a lack of political will, and a lack of community awareness and understanding. To overcome these barriers, the study suggests that advocacy and education campaigns are necessary to raise awareness of the issues and the need for change. Additionally, increasing funding and resources for support programs and diversionary programs is essential to ensure that young people receive the support they need.

In conclusion, the research study conducted by the Australian Youth Commission suggests that several changes are necessary to ensure that youth justice and related systems protect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. By prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment, addressing the over-representation of Indigenous young people, and increasing the use of diversionary programs, it is possible to prevent young people from entering the justice system and provide them with the support they need to succeed.

Can you identify reforms that show evidence of positive outcomes, including reductions in children's and young people's involvement in youth justice and child protection systems, either in Australia or internationally?

The Australian Youth Commission conducted research to identify reforms that have shown evidence of positive outcomes, including reductions in children's and young people's involvement in youth justice and child protection systems, both in Australia and internationally. The research found several reforms that have been successful in achieving these positive outcomes.

One reform that has shown evidence of positive outcomes is the implementation of restorative justice programs. Restorative justice programs aim to repair the harm caused by crime and conflict by involving those affected in the resolution process. These programs have been shown to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and improve young people's outcomes by promoting accountability, empathy, and a sense of responsibility for one's actions.

Another reform that has shown positive outcomes is the implementation of trauma-informed care. Trauma-informed care recognizes the prevalence of trauma experienced by children and young people involved in the justice and child protection systems. By providing trauma-informed care, including assessment, treatment, and support, it is possible to address the root causes of negative behaviours and improve outcomes for young people.

The research also identified family-based interventions as a reform that has shown evidence of positive outcomes. Family-based interventions aim to improve family relationships, strengthen parenting skills, and address risk factors for negative behaviours. These interventions have been shown to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and improve outcomes for young people.

Internationally, the research identified the Scottish Children's Hearings System as a reform that has shown evidence of positive outcomes. The Scottish Children's Hearings System aims to divert children and young people from the justice system and into support and intervention programs. This system has been shown to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and improve outcomes for young people by prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment.

In conclusion, the research conducted by the Australian Youth Commission identified several reforms that have shown evidence of positive outcomes, including reductions in children's and young people's involvement in youth justice and child protection systems. These reforms include restorative justice programs, trauma-informed care, family-based interventions, and the Scottish Children's Hearings System. By implementing these reforms, it is possible to improve outcomes for young people and reduce their involvement in the justice and child protection systems.

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From your perspective, are there benefits in taking a national approach to youth justice and child wellbeing reform in Australia? If so, what are the next steps?

The Australian Youth Commission initiated research to determine if there are benefits to taking a national approach to youth justice and child wellbeing reform in Australia. The research found that there are several benefits to taking a national approach.

Firstly, a national approach would ensure consistency and coherence in policy and practice across all states and territories. This would reduce confusion and fragmentation and ensure that all young people have access to the same level of support and services regardless of where they live.

Secondly, a national approach would enable greater collaboration and information sharing between states and territories. This would improve the effectiveness of services and programs by promoting the sharing of best practices and innovative ideas.

Thirdly, a national approach would allow for a more efficient use of resources by eliminating duplication and unnecessary bureaucracy. This would enable funds to be redirected towards prevention and early intervention programs, which have been shown to be more effective in reducing youth involvement in the justice and child protection systems.

The research also identified several next steps that could be taken to implement a national approach. These include establishing a national task force or coordinating body to oversee the reform process, conducting research to identify the most effective interventions, and consulting with young people and communities to ensure that their needs and perspectives are taken into account.

In conclusion, the research conducted by the Australian Youth Commission suggests that there are several benefits to taking a national approach to youth justice and child wellbeing reform in Australia. By implementing a national approach, it is possible to improve consistency and coherence in policy and practice, promote collaboration and information sharing, and more efficiently use resources. The next steps involve establishing a national task force, conducting research, and consulting with young people and communities.


About Us

We are a youth-led organization that is committed to promoting social justice and supporting disadvantaged or marginalized young people in our community. At AYC, we believe that every young person deserves equal access to opportunities, regardless of their background, race, or socio-economic status.

Our mission is to create a more equitable and inclusive society by empowering young people and advocating for their rights. We do this by providing a platform for young people to voice their concerns and ideas, and by working with partners and stakeholders to develop innovative solutions to the challenges facing our communities.



Contact

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