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Our children: Who are they and where are they heading?

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Abstract

There are approximately 4 million children aged 0 to 14 years living in Australia today. Within 10 years these people will become educated, enter the workforce, form relationships and participate in all areas of civil life, thus shaping what Australia will ultimately become. So while much attention is focussed on the impact of ageing on Australia's population, children are an important part of our future. This paper looks at the characteristics of today's children — their families, health, well-being and education — and projections into the future. While most young Australians have positive experiences in these areas, this is not the case for all of them. For example, some children suffer long term health conditions, some are abused or neglected, some come into contact with the justice system as victims or offenders, while some struggle to achieve at school. Drawing on a range of data sources, this paper identifies and discusses the issues surrounding some of the vulnerable groups of children in our society. It concludes that most Australian children are faring well in regard to their health and welfare and that this trend is expected to continue in the future.

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