



2011  
Child Rights  
NGO Report  
Australia

## Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

*All children should be educated on what their basic rights are – 16 YEAR OLD MALE, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA*

Although the majority of Australian children enjoy the realisation of most of their educational rights, research indicates that several educational needs are being neglected for disadvantaged groups of children including Aboriginal children<sup>i</sup>, newly-arrived or refugee children, children with a disability or those who are in out-of-home care.

Not all Australian children have equal educational access or outcomes. Despite 98.8 per cent enrolment rates, approximately one in three Year 9 students possess only basic literacy skills.

### BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Aboriginal children and children from non-English speaking backgrounds are not being adequately provided with bilingual forms of education which impacts attendance, repetition and completion rates. Aboriginal children generally experience significantly lower levels of attendance, literacy and educational attainment than non-Aboriginal students.

**Recommendation:** the Australian Federal Government should work with state and territory governments to fund, protect and promote appropriate models of bilingual education.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Barriers still prevent some families from accessing quality early childhood education and care. These include inadequate training for staff, limited funding and socio-economic disadvantage.

**Recommendation:** Australia should ensure that early childhood services are adequately funded to ensure the needs of each child are met.

### CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children with disabilities face severe limitations on their educational opportunities including inadequate government policy on engaging with students, inequitable and confusing funding arrangements and insufficient qualification standards for teachers. Public education policies and curricula do not reflect the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream school system.

**Recommendation:** the Australian Federal Government, together with state and territory governments should establish a Disability Education Action Plan which sets targets and allocates sufficient funding to fulfil the educational rights of children with disabilities.

### CHILDREN WITH A REFUGEE BACKGROUND

Currently, there is no national strategy for supporting refugee children in schools and there is no uniform accountability across jurisdictions to ensure that the needs of refugee students are met.

**Recommendation:** the Australian Federal Government should work with state and territory governments to develop a national strategy and guidelines which recognise the needs of refugee children.

For more information see the full *Listen to Children* Report at [www.childrights.org.au](http://www.childrights.org.au)

<sup>i</sup> Throughout the NGO Report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are referred to as 'Aboriginal children.' The authors acknowledge the diversity in culture, language, kinship structures and ways of life within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and recognise that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples retain their distinct culture, irrespective of whether they live in urban, rural, regional or remote areas of the country.