

School worries included tests, due dates, and the volume of schoolwork and homework they're being expected to complete. There was some worry about transitioning into the next year level at school, and for some about starting high school.

Many children said they were stressed out about homework and the NAPLAN tests, and that they believed schools should review how many tests and how much homework is really necessary. They asked for more opportunities to be made available to learn cooking, gardening, and other 'life skills', which they see as being key to their overall mental health and wellbeing.

Children had several ideas about ways to improve the physical and social environments of their school. These included having animals and meditation classes to help children relax, providing more play spaces, PE, and swimming lessons, and holding more 'wellbeing camps around SA' each year.

Work worries

Many children expressed their concerns about the future of work, and whether they'll be able to find a job and make enough money when they're an adult. They worried whether they could 'do well enough' or get the grades they think they need to get into university.

Many children said they were worried about jobs for family members and 'reducing the cost of things needed to live'. The prospect of not being able to achieve family goals or meet the expectations of others is a source of constant concern for some children.

Worries about what others think

A significant number of children were also concerned about how their peers perceive them in terms of popularity, schoolwork, sporting abilities, and appearance. They described the 'FOMO' (fear of missing out) on what their friends are doing, as well as worries they have about dealing with conflicts arising with their friends.

Some children reported on the negative impact they experience when adults overestimate their abilities and maturity, as well as how they are often being compared

to other children their age and made to feel as though they aren't likely to achieve the same goals.

“ **‘Some adults think that you can do more than your capable of doing. Can you please let adults know that sometimes they put too much pressure on us to act older than we are’** – 10 year old (Metropolitan Adelaide)

“ **‘Pressure to do well – parents don't listen/trust you – hard to stick up for yourself and for things that aren't right.’** – 11 year old (Metropolitan Adelaide)

Cost of living worries

Children also worry about the 'cost of living', particularly bills relating to rent and housing costs, health and medications, food and other essential items, such as access to the Internet and new clothes when they're needed.

They want adults to find ways to make 'more jobs', reduce taxes, and increase wages. They also want adults to make wages across different jobs more equal.

Some children wrote about lowering the minimum working age so that they could help support their families financially.

“ **‘Make more jobs so people can work to get a house, and helpful resources they need.’** – 9 year old (Northern Suburbs)

“ **‘Make bills shorter’**
– 9 year old (Yorke and Mid North)

“ **‘Give free internet.’**
– 12 year old (Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island)

“ **‘For uni to be free.’**
– 10 year old (Southern Suburbs)

Worries about the environment

The area that children worry about most is the environment. Children wrote about climate change, pollution, the ocean, waste, plastics, drought, deforestation, and bushfires. Uncertainty about the future is one of the worst worries children have, as is the hopelessness they feel in response to what they perceive are now overwhelming odds.

They see these things as unjust and unequal in the world, and something that their generation is unfairly inheriting, particularly in relation to the impact of climate change on future generations.

“ ‘Not many people listen to us and climate change will be worse for us.’

– 12 year old (Metropolitan Adelaide)

Children identified several ways adults can take better care of the environment and help address environmental issues. These ranged from reducing plastic waste to addressing deforestation to minimise climate change. They included planting more trees and investing in renewable resources, manufacturing more electric vehicles, and making more non-plastic alternatives readily available. They also wanted to see more recycling of soft plastic and for different recycling systems that are not toxic to the environment to be developed and introduced.



“ ‘Decrease the number of rubbish entering our oceans by only having landfill bins out once a fortnight and increasing the number of metal, glass, plastic and paper/cardboard getting recycled into something new.’

– 12 year old (Eastern Suburbs)

“ ‘Try to get lots of windmills running in the Energy and grow more trees for the environment.’

– 8 year old (Northern Suburbs)

For more information on *The Things That Matter To Children* see other snapshots in this series:

- **What SA Children say about Jobs, Skills, and the Future**
- **What SA Children say about School**

For more information on the *Job Aspirations of South Australian Children aged 8–12 years* visit:

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