

## Four-year-olds' favourite places

Helen Connolly

Between June and September last year, I received over 180 postcards from preschoolers across South Australia. Most of the children who sent these to me were four years old.



When you ask four-year-olds what their favourite place is, most will tell you it's their home, and that this place is special because it's where they feel safe with their siblings and parents. When they're at home four-year-olds told me they like playing games and watching TV. They also like going to their grandparents' home because that's where they can play more games and be given a treat.

Many children's favourite places are outdoors. They really like going to the playground, the beach, the pool, or a water park. They enjoy riding on the bike track and going on the slides at the local park, or swimming at the beach where they can make sandcastles and 'spot seagulls' – not dissimilar to what we all enjoyed as kids.

Some of the other favourite places children drew included their preschool or childcare centre. There were drawings of the waterpump, the sandpit, the playdough table, and the drawing table. One child drew her childcare in the middle of a picture of 'my town.'

Some of the children who sent me postcards drew pictures of their holiday destinations. They said they enjoyed staying in a caravan park, spending time with their families, and doing fun holiday activities. Other children named specific locations in South Australia and Australia, and there were even international destinations in the mix, showing that some four-year-olds have an awareness of the world around them.

The responses I gathered last year came from an extension of my annual Student Postcard initiative which has been running since 2019. It's an opportunity for kids whose voices are not often heard to tell me what matters to them most. I decided to include pre-school aged children in the initiative after many early years' educators had encouraged me to do so.

The aim of my Early Year's Postcards activity is to introduce children in the pre-school age-group to an understanding of what it means to have a voice and be heard. Pre-schoolers were supported to complete a simple activity that involved drawing a picture of their favourite place and telling me why they liked it. Early years educators were asked to support the children with the description of their

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drawing, which children mostly described as places where they could have fun, be happy, 'feel good', and be safe.

Australia's [Early Years Learning Framework \(EYLF\)](#) takes a child-rights approach to education, promoting children's active citizenship. It encourages early years educators to introduce child rights into children's daily practice, using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guide. This includes the right of children to 'be active participants in all matters affecting their lives.' Being able to speak up and express their opinions is a core right of children. But to exercise this right, children need to know about it, which means adults need to recognise and promote it.

Thank you to all the preschools and childcare centres who participated in 2023. I look forward to hearing from more SA pre-schoolers in 2024!