

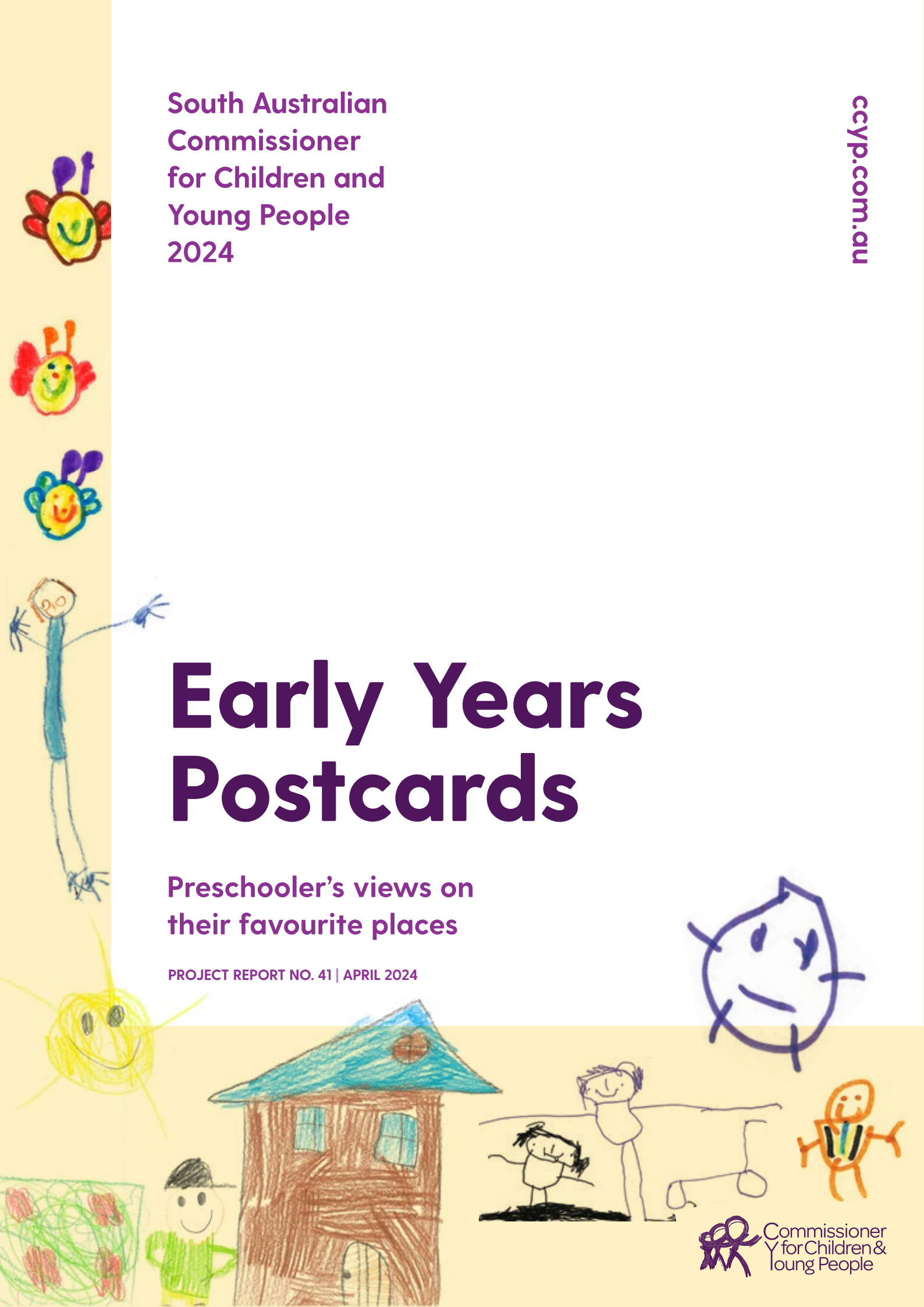
South Australian
Commissioner
for Children and
Young People
2024

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Early Years Postcards

Preschooler's views on
their favourite places

PROJECT REPORT NO. 41 | APRIL 2024



Introduction

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, and including 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. That's why in 2023, at the request of many early years' educators, I extended my Student Voice Postcard initiative aimed at children aged 8–11 years, to include preschool aged children.

To introduce children in the preschool age-group to an understanding of what it means to have a voice I asked them to draw me a picture of their favourite place and tell me why they liked it.

Early years educators were asked to support participating preschoolers with the description of their drawing, which children mostly described as places where they could 'have fun', 'be happy', 'feel good', and 'be safe'.

Between June and September 2023, I received 180 early years postcards from children attending nine preschool/childcare centres across South Australia. Most of the children who responded were 4 years old.

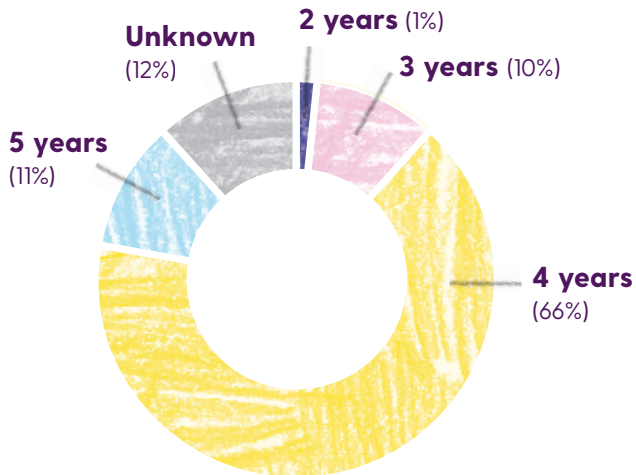


"My town.
That's
childcare
in the
middle"



Age of respondents

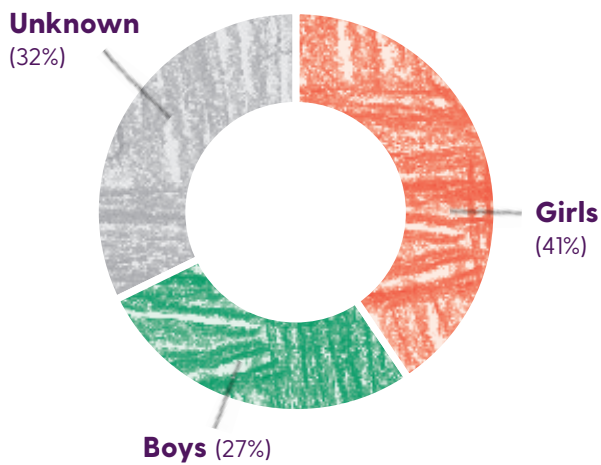
(% of responses)



"This is my house. I feel safe because mum and dad keep me safe"

Gender of respondents

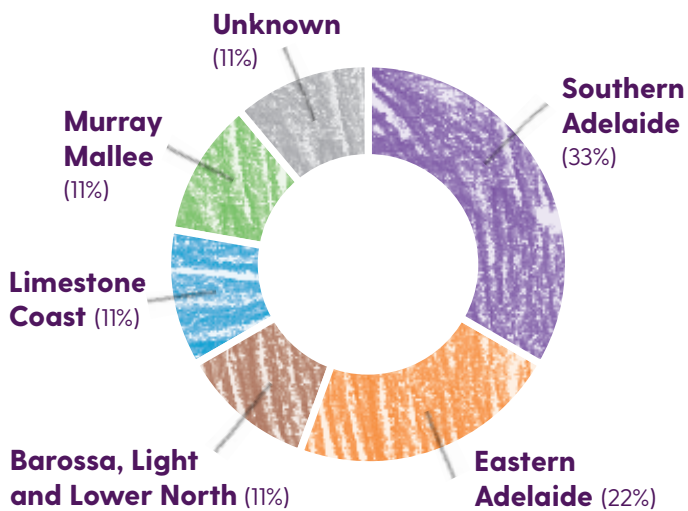
(% of responses)



"Playing in the forest and camping with daddy"

Participation, by region

(% of responses)



"Bali at the waterpark because it is warm and there are lots of pools"

What preschoolers communicated via their drawings

When I asked preschoolers to draw me a picture of their favourite place, most children drew a picture of themselves at home.

This picture was usually a drawing of an activity each preschooler liked doing at home, such as playing games or watching TV. The accompanying explanation for why this place is so special (as documented by an early years' educator supporting the child to participate in the activity) was because they like their home best as it's where they feel safe with their siblings and parents. Children also like going to their grandparents' home because they can play games there too, and be given a treat.

But not all children drew pictures of their families or grandparents' home. Many children's favourite places are outdoors in their local community. They like going to the playground, the beach, the pool, or a water park. They enjoy riding on the bike track and going on the slippery slide, or swimming at the beach where they can make sandcastles and 'spot seagulls'.

Preschools and childcare centres were also favourite places for children to be. At these places there were drawings of the water-pump, 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 in 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.

Some children drew the shops they like to go to buy food and drinks. They also drew 'fun' locations that included 'play cafes', 'the dinosaur museum', and the 'ferris wheel'.



What does this tell us about preschoolers?


The children's postcard pictures and their supporting comments recorded by early years educators, show the diverse range of interests and activities preschool aged children enjoy. They tell us that preschoolers feel happiest when they're either at their family home or grandparents' home, outside, or at their preschool or childcare centre, and that these are the places where they feel safe.



"The playground is special because it makes me feel safe"

Why is this important?

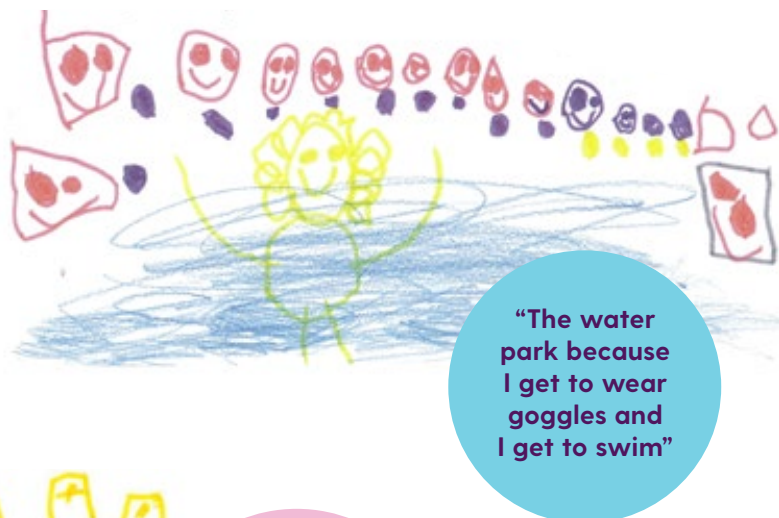
By providing South Australian preschool children with an opportunity to share their views via this simple activity, we have actively supported their right to have their own voice and to express themselves.




"the two bushes because I fit in there"

As set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this right to express a point of view is crucial to children understanding that they are entitled to have a voice.

Having a voice is fundamental to children feeling that they belong in families, households, and communities – that what they think and feel has value and matters to those around them.



"The water park because I get to wear goggles and I get to swim"



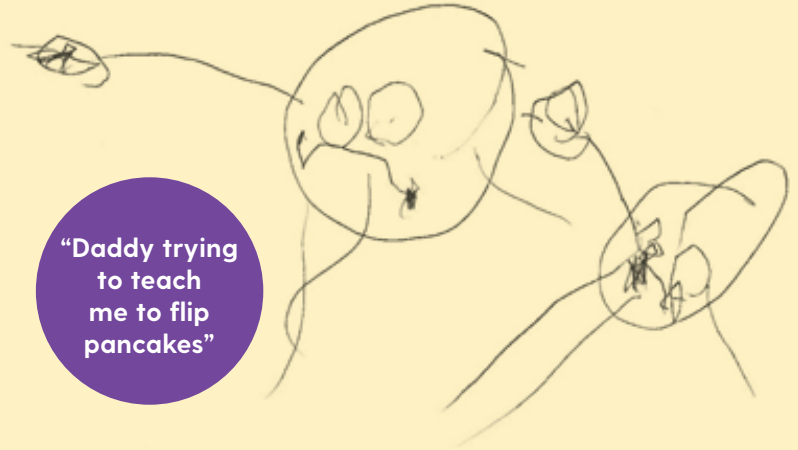
"The outdoor playground. I go there a lot with my pa and sister. There's a big rainbow slide!"



“my favourite is the play-dough table. I like making balls”



“Queensland is special because the waterslides and the Queen”



“Daddy trying to teach me to flip pancakes”

The Commissioner's Role

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* ('the Act'). The Commissioner's role includes advocating for systemic change to policies, programs and practices that impact the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people. This work is informed by the experiences and issues of children and young people themselves, with a specific focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.

The Commissioner's strategic agenda was formulated with direct input from children and young people. In particular, children and young people asked the Commissioner to facilitate their involvement in decision making, and to create opportunities for them to experience authentic participation in the adult world. The Commissioner is working with a number of partners on this agenda, including ways in which children and young people can have greater input into the design and delivery of policies, processes and practices that relate to delivery of services aimed directly at them.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the South Australian early years educators who supported preschoolers from South Australian preschools and childcare centres to participate in the Early Years Postcards activity – an extension of my Student Voice Postcards initiative.

Please note that all drawings and associated comments have been reproduced verbatim.

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