

umpire tutor receptionist babysitter
tradesperson gardener labourer
nursery helper delivery person kitchen
cleaner! ~~IT~~ farm hand sports coach
warrant officer sales assistant
mechanic & assistant apprentice



nsw commission for
children & young people

children at work

recommendations

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tradesperson deliverer garden
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mechanic! Ter sales assistant
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“Working is great, you get great experience and some idea of what you want to become in the future.”

(Child, 15 years)

“I like being able to buy the things I need and want... and not having to ask your parents to pay for it.”

(Child, 14 years)

“[I dislike] people being mean because of my age. [They] think they can push me around.”

(Child, 16 years)

“At the end of the day sometimes I feel tired and sore.”

(Child, 13 years)

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Introduction

In 2005 the NSW Commission for Children and Young People released the *Children at Work*¹ report which showed that children enjoy working, it is important to them and it contributes to their development in many ways.

The report also showed some trends of concern:

- Children living in less advantaged areas were less likely to work than children living in more advantaged areas.
- High levels of harassment and injury were reported by the children surveyed.

To respond to the issues in the Report, the Commission convened a Task Force comprised of young people and representatives of employer organisations, community organisations, unions and government agencies. This Task Force has provided the Commission with advice on the action needed to extend the benefits children receive from work. The membership of the Task Force is at Appendix I.

As a result of the advice received from the Task Force, the Commission is putting forward a set of recommendations designed to improve children's experience of work.

The recommendations cover ways of:

- Making work work for children
- Improving access to employment
- Making work safer for children.

Making work work for children

Large numbers of children work and the experience of work contributes positively to their wellbeing. In view of the importance of work to children, it is important to consider how the recognition and support that children receive at work can be maintained or improved.

Key findings from *Children at Work* that have informed the recommendations are:

- Younger workers are more likely to work for immediate family, a work environment considered more protective. As children grow older, greater proportions work in the formal labour market. The older the child, the more likely they will work for a formal employer.
- Children work in two dominant contexts: for formal employers (61 per cent) or for immediate family (around 25 per cent). A small but significant number of children work informally for friends or neighbours, extended family and other community groups or schools.
- Just over three-quarters of children are paid for their work. However 10.8 per cent receive no compensation. Where non-monetary reward is provided, food and clothing are the most common.
- Hourly rates of pay are relatively low for children. The average rate is between \$6.00 and \$8.00 per hour and one in 10 receive \$2.00 or less per hour.
- Over 60 per cent of children undertake work that is one-off or casual, involving irregular work hours and non-standard shifts.

¹ NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2005). *Children at Work*. Researched and written by Toby Fattore, Sydney: NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2005.

Recommendations to make work work for children

Recommendation 1

As working environments can change over time, it is important to know whether the safety and wellbeing of working children and young people is affected.

While there are many programs supporting young people in the transition from school to work, there is little known about what children learn in their early jobs. Knowing what children learn and need to learn can help us better prepare them for work.

Research from an employer's perspective has focused on the skills employers want young people to have. However, there is little research or programs on the skills and training employers themselves need to manage and support children as workers.

1. *It is recommended that the NSW Commission for Children and Young People:*
 - *regularly repeat aspects of the Children at Work research to monitor how the working lives of children change over time;*
 - *identify what children learn about work and how they learn it;*
 - *identify the particular skills employers need to manage children as workers.*

Recommendation 2

Children and young people need assistance in negotiating their work arrangements. Advice is currently available to young employees through the Advisory Service provided by the Office of Industrial Relations. However, advisory services need to be tailored to the needs of children as children often do not use general information services. They are more likely to use a service that is specifically designed to meet their needs.

Children and young people need practical assistance in negotiating fair arrangements with their employer so it is important that there is a capacity to advocate on behalf of children and young people in the workplace.

2. *It is recommended that the NSW Government provide a free information, advisory, education and referral service tailored for children and young people, advising them, their parents and employers on employment, including occupational health and safety matters and that the phone number be widely and continuously promoted to children and young people.*

Recommendation 3

Children and young people add value to a workplace. However, as they are still developing, have less workplace and life experience and are usually balancing work with study, employers can help children make a successful adjustment to work if they take this into account.

3. *It is recommended that employers are supported to extend their understanding of children's employment needs through:*
 - *Employer bodies developing a guide for employers on understanding the capabilities and specific needs of children in the workplace (including transport needs), and which provides guidance on the social responsibilities of employers towards them as young workers;*
 - *Developing curriculum for TAFE and other management training courses on managing children and young people who work.*

Recommendation 4

Schools are already doing a great deal to assist children to develop workplace skills through vocational education and PDHPE programs. However, there is a need for all children to develop the skills and knowledge required in workplaces including the development of negotiation and conflict resolution skills. The development of work related skills needs to commence at the beginning of secondary school in view of the age that children start working.

4. *It is recommended that the skills required to prepare all children for work are incorporated into the school curriculum from Year 7.*

Recommendation 5

Better information is needed for children at work and their families, particularly in relation to babysitting. The *Children at Work* study found 21 per cent of children working as babysitters, with this being the most common job undertaken by children.

5. *It is recommended that the NSW Commission for Children and Young People develop a guide to assist children working as babysitters, their parents, and the parents employing children to babysit.*

Improving access to work for children

In view of the *Children at Work* study finding that children living in the most economically disadvantaged areas work least, while those working in the more advantaged areas work most, it is a priority to improve access to employment for children from areas with limited employment. Children in the most advantaged 10 per cent of areas are almost two-and-a-half times as likely to work as children in the most disadvantaged 10 per cent of areas.

Recommendations to improve access to work for children

Recommendation 6

There are innovative school – industry programs to assist children and young people make successful transitions from school to work. They aim to increase school retention rates for children at risk of leaving school early through innovative educational programs to better prepare them for further education, work or training. They are generally however not designed to directly assist children to find a job whilst they continue their study.

Building strong linkages between schools, business and the community is increasingly seen as the foundation for developing individual learning pathways for students.

The Australian Government currently funds initiatives such as Local Community Partnerships to implement career and transition programs for students. Initiatives such as this could provide a foundation for improving access to paid part-time work for children and young people.

6. *It is recommended that relevant Commonwealth agencies, such as the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), examine ways in which formal and informal work opportunities for children can be improved in disadvantaged areas.*

Recommendation 7

A number of businesses provide funding or support to children and young people in the transition from school to work. However, there are few programs where businesses directly employ children still at school in disadvantaged areas, or where a condition of funding by corporate philanthropy to community programs is that young people be employed. Mentoring programs also assist children with issues such as career planning, goal setting, ethics, bullying and work-based learning experiences.

7. *It is recommended that employer organisations and associations encourage and support businesses to provide paid vacation jobs for children and young people from disadvantaged areas so that they can gain work-based learning experiences.*

Recommendations 8 and 9

Another barrier for children seeking part-time employment is the availability and cost of transport. Although there is very little research about the transport needs of children in NSW in relation to their work, particularly in rural and regional areas, the results of consultations with young people undertaken by the Commission and many other organisations indicate significant transport difficulties in general.

Travel concessions for young people are inconsistent across NSW and this can impact adversely on children travelling to work. However, it is noted that children and young people now have access to concessions in metropolitan areas covered by private bus companies and that this will include outer metropolitan areas in the near future.

Although children 15 years and under do not require proof of age cards to travel on public transport for the concession fare, it can be difficult for some children to prove their age when purchasing a ticket. Schools are able to issue a concession card to children under 16 years of age. However, children are not always aware that they need to do this and it is reported that some schools have difficulty in providing them.

8. *It is recommended that the Ministry of Transport continuously and widely promote the availability of concession cards for children from 12 to 15 years of age with schools, parents and children.*
9. *It is recommended that the Regional Transport Coordination Network develops transport projects in consultation with young people to:*
 - *address issues regarding their access to public transport; and*
 - *provide/facilitate access of children and young people and their parents in rural areas to safe, affordable transport systems (eg, taxi vouchers, petrol subsidies). This could occur by mobilising existing local community networks and service providers and exploring and developing other transport options such as mini-bus services and transport rental schemes.*

Making work safer for children

A high level of workplace injuries and harassment was identified in *Children at Work*.

Around 40 per cent of children and young people sustained a work-related injury, and 7.4 per cent sustained a serious injury requiring hospitalisation, medical treatment, or time off school for three days or more. Nearly 48 per cent of children and young people experienced verbal harassment at work and about one-fifth experienced physical harassment at work.

Recommendations to make work safer for children

Recommendation 10

Research demonstrates that children and young people are still undergoing rapid physical and social development. When this is combined with children's lack of experience in workplace tasks and culture, there are added risks for children in the workplace.

10. *It is recommended that the NSW Government in partnership with WorkCover, business, and other relevant organisations undertake a campaign specifically designed for parents and those employing children to inform them on:*
 - a. *the need to provide a safe workplace for children;*
 - b. *the risks of injury and harassment of children and young people in their work; and*
 - c. *the most effective ways to mitigate this risk.*

This should be based on research that identifies the most effective ways of communicating this information. The research and campaign should focus on the following work areas: sports refereeing, labour and construction, retail and hospitality, and agriculture and horticulture.

Recommendations 11 and 12

Occupational health and safety (OHS) training for workers is generic and training is not usually provided with children in mind. There is little involvement of young people in the development of OHS training programs at their workplace.

11. *It is recommended that the NSW Government amends the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001 to give specific consideration to the health and safety needs of children and young people under the age of 18 years.*
12. *It is recommended that targeted compliance against occupational health and safety standards continue to be undertaken by WorkCover to preempt injuries and harassment in industries engaging large numbers of children and young people, such as the retail, fast food, construction and labouring, agriculture, hairdressing, hospitality and entertainment industries.*

Recommendation 13

YouthSafe is a program to raise awareness among young workers of the occupational health and safety issues in the workplace, their rights and responsibilities as an employee and the responsibilities of their employer.

YouthSafe is being trialled in schools and will provide an online OHS course for secondary school students.

13. *It is recommended that WorkCover, in conjunction with Unions NSW, evaluates the effectiveness of YouthSafe including its suitability for children aged 16 and under, and acts on its findings with the aim of enabling access to a suitable program for all children and young people who work.*

Recommendation 14

Nearly 48 per cent of children were found to have experienced verbal harassment at work. Most commonly this involved being shouted at, sworn at and being the object of fun.

One of the areas where verbal harassment was found to be more likely was in sports related work where children may become the target of disagreement with umpiring decisions.

The Department of the Arts, Sport and Recreation is undertaking a pilot program to reduce the pressure and lessen the abuse and conflict directed towards new officials.

14. *It is recommended that the Department of the Arts, Sport and Recreation continue to pilot the 'Coloured Vest Program' and subject to its success in decreasing the incidence of harassment of young referees or umpires promote its use amongst a wide range of sports where children are involved in sports related work.*

Recommendations 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19

In general, there is limited information about children and workplace safety in Australia, and what research literature there is suggests that children are unaware of both their workplace safety rights and the procedures to follow if they are injured. Little is known about harassment of children at work and there are few studies measuring its incidence in Australia.

15. *That WorkCover and other relevant organisations undertake research to improve the understanding of industry specific risks for children and young people at work, including the informal sector, by examining:*
 - *whether injuries and diseases incurred are general to the working population or specific to children and young people;*
 - *the nature of the injuries concerned;*
 - *the consequences of injuries to children and young people; and*
 - *strategies and programs to decrease injuries to children and young people.*
16. *That the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) includes children from 12 years of age in its standard data collections on work.*
17. *That WorkCover explore whether to include in the NSW State Supplementary Survey of the ABS Monthly Population Survey a supplementary question on the incidence of injury in households, the age of those injured, and whether the injury occurred at work.*
18. *That the NSW Injury and Risk Management Research Centre collect data and report on the incidence of injuries of children and young people at work.*

Appendix 1

Members of the children at work task force

Gillian Calvert (Chair)	NSW Commission for Children and Young People
Anna Booth (Deputy Chair)	NSW Commission for Children and Young People – Expert Advisory Group
Kathy Rankin	Australian Business Limited
Julie Owen	Australian Retailers Association New South Wales
Rosemary Brook	Department of Education & Training
Julie Depczynski	Farmsafe Australia
Sharryn Brownlee/David Hope	Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations of NSW
Kerryn Boland	NSW Children’s Guardian
Mathew Ferguson	NSW Youth Advisory Council
Catherine Quealey	Office of Industrial Relations, Department of Commerce
Sonia Minutillo	Unions NSW
Alison Peters	Unions NSW
Vicki Telfer/Abigail Hall	WorkCover NSW
Carlo Ritchie	NSW Commission for Children and Young People – Young People’s Reference Group
Caroline Boateng	NSW Commission for Children and Young People – Young People’s Reference Group
Kristy Delaney	Youth Action & Policy Association

“[I dislike] heavy lifting, repetitive procedures, only 15 minute breaks.”

(Child, 15 years)

“I don’t like being patronised and demeaned, and I want to be treated as an equal”

(Child, 14 years)

“I feel independent ... it makes me feel like I’m growing up”

(Child, 13 years)

“I can meet new people and not just have friends in school but also out of school and it builds my social life. It’s fun.”

(Child, 15 years)

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nycan! TERT sales assistant
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