
1. My first submission is in relation to the 2012 Concluding Observations point nr 64 and recommendation nr 65 ("Mental Health").

It is made from a perspective and experience of a parent of a primary school-age child diagnosed with ADHD. I note that the school was not able to assist with the diagnosis (no resources and counselor "too busy"), neither it was possible via the public health system. We had to spend hundreds of dollars on the testing by private service providers. We were discovering now that access to therapy is very limited - due to insufficient numbers of doctors/therapists in the public system and extremely long (years) waiting lists, meaning that to get access to necessary therapies quickly we will need to use the extremely expensive private services again. Based on the above, the extent to which Australia has progressed against them over the past five years is likely to be negligible. I would recommend making mental health services available for free via school system, in every school, to enable early and convenient diagnosis and therapy.

2. My second submission is in relation to the 2012 Concluding Observations point nr 76 and recommendation nr 77 ("Early childhood care and education"): "the majority of early childhood care and education in the State CRC/C/AUS/CO/4 19 party is provided by private, profit-driven institutions, resulting in the services being unaffordable for most families" - this is still the case and the pricing is prohibitive, especially in the big cities, resulting in many mothers not returning to work until their children reach school age. More affordable and high-quality childcare centres often have very long waiting lists. Obtaining governmental "childcare benefit" and "childcare rebate" is a highly bureaucratized and complicated process, prohibitive to many busy and overstretched parents, who may find it too hard to fill in all the forms, registrations and document checks. An alternative and simpler solution should be considered, e.g., a number of hours per week paid directly to the childcare provider for each enrolled child of specific age, like in New Zealand.

3. Continuously increasing population density in major urban centres in Australia is causing increased demand for schools across many areas and is not being adequately addressed by local and state governments (certainly not in Sydney). Most primary and secondary urban schools are already at or over capacity, with kids learning in demountable classrooms that populate school playgrounds and sports courts, limiting outdoor play. There is a very limited scope of work being undertaken to address this issue, with some school buildings being enlarged to the detriment of the outdoor playing spaces and increasing density of students per unit of area available or by adding further temporary classrooms. Enlarging existing schools and making them into mega-schools housing thousands of children in a limited space cannot be considered a healthy and effective learning environment for children. Sustainable long-term planning of housing densification should include providing new local primary and secondary schools to accommodate population growth of school pupils as well.

4. The privatisation of the education sector, especially secondary schools resulting in lack of public high schools, especially in the neighbourhoods considered as wealthy. Children whose parents living in these areas who cannot afford private non-religious schools have to either to attend (cheaper) religious schools or commute long distances to free public schools in distant less affluent areas that kept their schools. Also, single-sex schools and selective schools create artificial divides in the society and often unhealthy school culture. The Government party should ensure that there is a range of culturally acceptable, affordable and local educational choices for children from all families.

Kind regards
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