

My Personal Essay: By Rachael Davies 2006

Children's rights

Everyday I sit down to watch the news. Everyday I see bombs going off and more lives lost, but the most recent event that has affected me the most was the story of 8 year old Sofia Rodriguez-Urrutia Shu who was raped and killed. She had her hands and legs tied and her legs broken. Her 14 year old brother found her in the disabled toilets on the floor. Where were her rights?

Children's rights are a big part of my life as I am a child.

These rights are the ones that I think are the most often violated in Australia.

- Children have the right to protection from sexual abuse
- Children have the right to protection from abuse
- Children have the right to a voice, to be heard.

Children have the right to protection from sexual abuse.-

Everyday children are sexually abused. One in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys (23%) of all Aussie kids will be the victim of sexual; abuse before the age of 18 and 85% of sexual abuse occurs in the home. This is the statistic that surprised and scared me the most.

Children have the right to protection from abuse. There are four types of abuse, physical, sexual, emotional/ psychological, neglect. It is commonly known that any sort of abuse isn't always reported so there is no accurate statistics about the prevalence of child abuse. No child should be put through abuse. It is traumatising for them and often leads to crime, depression or drugs. 76% of women and 72% of men patients with a mental illness have been abused. 84% of Oddesey House participants (drug rehabilitation program) report a history of abuse. 80-85% of women in Australia prisons are victims of incest or other types of abuse. Girls are three times more likely to be sexually abused with boys being three times more likely to be physically abused.

Children have the right to a voice and be heard. In 2002-2003 there were 198,355 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made to state authorities. This figure has risen significantly over the last five years from 91,734 in 1995-96. This doesn't mean that it happens more just that it is getting reported. Of the reported cases reported 28% were physical abuse, 10% were for sexual abuse, emotional abuse took up 34% of reports and neglect had 28%. Normally though you would expect children to make up stories of this, but 98% of all cases reported to officials, children's statements are found to be true.

All in all children have the right to protection from any sort of abuse or neglect and if they don't have that protection they have the right to be heard so that the perpetrators can be put to justice, but in the present legal system less than 10% of perpetrators are ever charged, while only 1% are ever convicted. In the court process, survivors become re-victimised, often losing all sense of justice. So if you know of someone that is abused and not just children, let the right people know so it can be stopped.