

# Media Release [for 20 November 2019]



Time to stand up for child health: Global alliance of children's hospitals calls on nations to put children first

Children's health and wellbeing is at risk unless governments accelerate efforts to reverse concerning trends warns a global alliance of children's hospitals on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. See [joint statement](#) here.

At a time when Australia's GDP per capita is higher than it has ever been, our children are continuing to experience significant ill health – both physical & mental.

## Key health challenges facing Australian children and young people

- **Overweight or obese:** 1 in 4 (24.9%) children aged 5-17 years were overweight or obese in 2017-18 (17% overweight and 8.1% obese)<sup>i</sup>
- **Allergic conditions** are on the rise. Admissions for anaphylaxis due to food allergy in children aged 0 to 4 years are increasing, having increased five-fold over a ten year period<sup>ii</sup>
- **Mental ill-health:** Australia spends 9.0 billion annually on mental health, which is only 4.9% of total health expenditure, yet 14% (560,000) of young people aged 4 to 17 years experience a mental disorder<sup>iii</sup>. While child mortality rates have been falling, suicide remains leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds<sup>iv</sup> with the annual rate being 4 times higher for indigenous than non-indigenous teenagers<sup>v</sup>.
- **Abuse & Neglect:** Rates of child abuse & neglect are on the rise, at 10 per thousand nationally<sup>vi</sup>

“As we necessarily increase our spending on the healthcare needs of an ageing population, we must not forget that early intervention in the health & wellbeing of our children is crucial” said Emeritus Professor Les White, a former Children's Hospital Executive Director and NSW Chief Paediatrician as well as the current Patron to Children's Healthcare Australasia, a non-profit group of more than 90 paediatric hospital services across Australia and New Zealand.

“It is gravely concerning to see key measures of the health of our children getting worse not better. Investment in childhood is the best way to sustain a healthy and productive Australian society now and into the future. It is essential that governments work together to ensure that we put children first and foremost.” he said.

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations Charter on the Rights of Children

November 20, 2019 marks 30 years since the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children which states that children and young people have the right to the “highest attainable standard of health”. This anniversary offers a chance to reflect on how the rights of children and young people are respected in our communities and to recommit to improving health systems so all children can thrive and fulfill their potential.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/childrens-headline-indicators/contents/6-overweight-obesity>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/food-allergy/food-allergy>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/report-contents/summary/prevalence-and-policies>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths-in-australia/contents/leading-causes-of-death>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/atsi-adolescent-youth-health-wellbeing-2018/contents/summary>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/childrens-headline-indicators/contents/17-child-abuse-neglect>