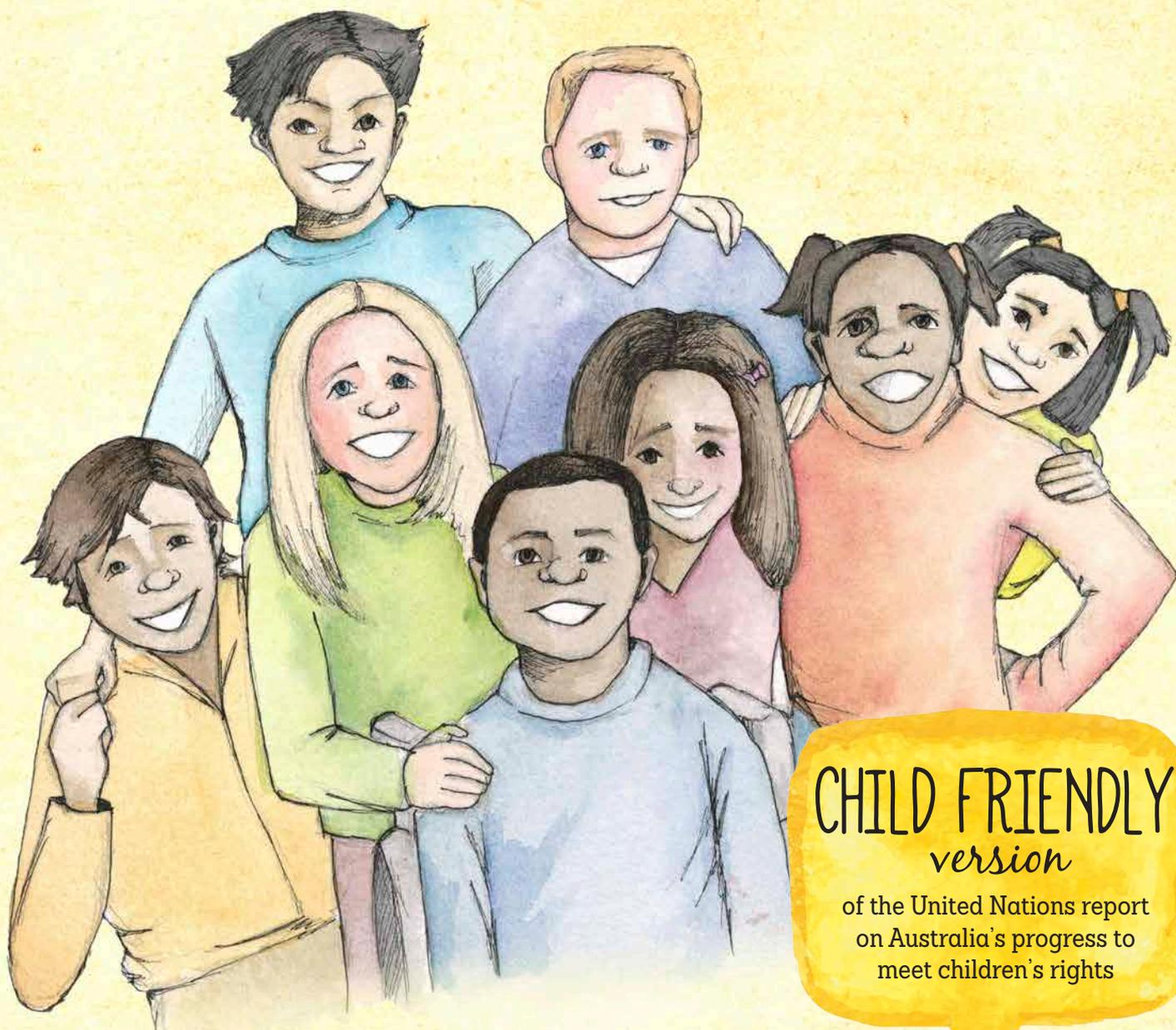


# YOUR RIGHTS: HOW TO MAKE AUSTRALIA MORE CHILD FRIENDLY



CHILD FRIENDLY  
*version*

of the United Nations report  
on Australia's progress to  
meet children's rights



AUSTRALIAN  
CHILD RIGHTS  
TASKFORCE



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

# WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

WHAT ARE  
CHILD RIGHTS?

## EVERY CHILD IN THE WORLD HAS HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic things that all people need to be treated fairly and have a good life. For children, all these rights are listed in something called the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These are special rights for all people under the age of 18 and include things which children need to help them be safe, happy and healthy.

YOU HAVE THE  
RIGHT TO:

## EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

Every child is equal. This means that every child should be treated fairly. It does not matter if you are a girl or boy, what colour your skin is, if you have a disability, what your religious beliefs are or the kind of family you have, all children are equal. If children are treated unfairly because of these differences it is discrimination. There should be no discrimination.

## ADULTS SHOULD DO WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU

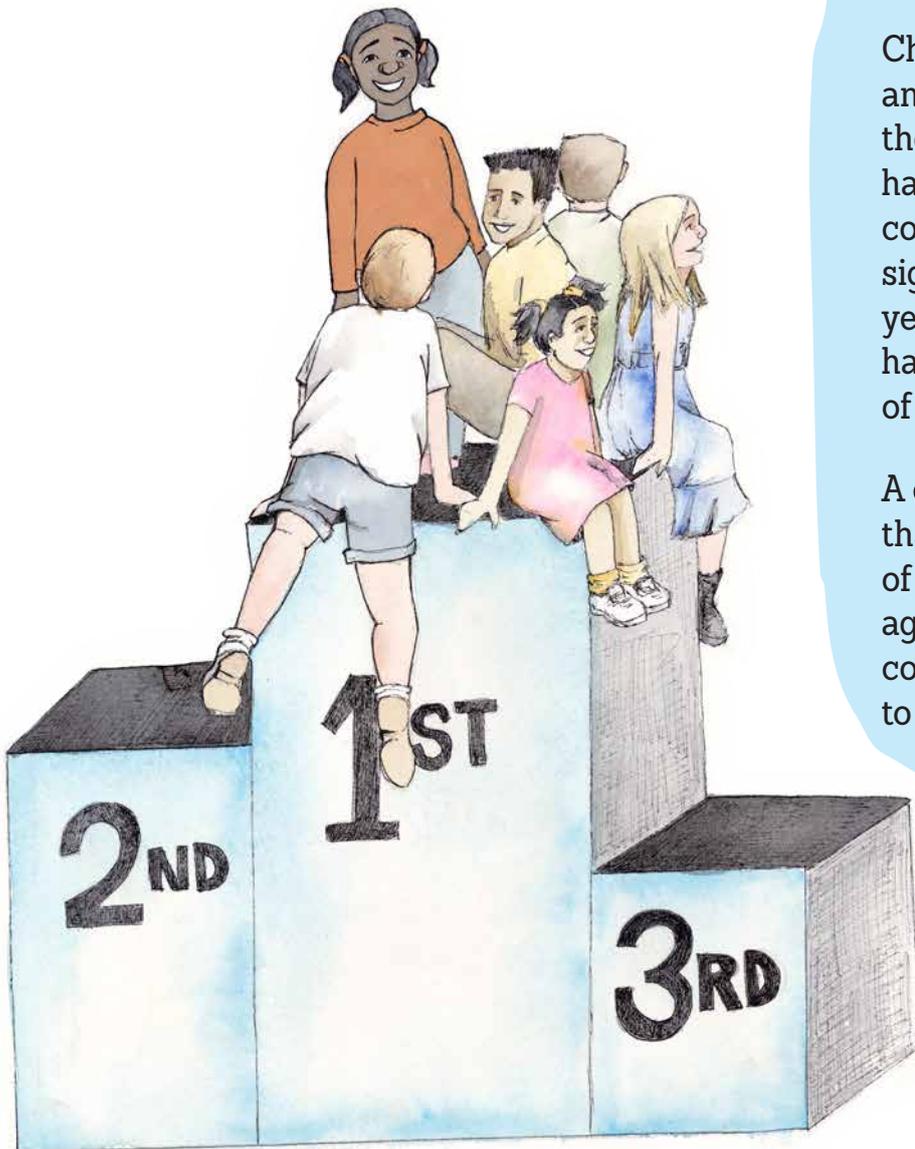
When adults are making decisions about your life, they need to remember that there is only one child in the world like you! The first question they should ask is 'what is best for **this** child?'. Your needs should come first when they are deciding things that are important to you. This is called the best interests of the child.

## GROW UP SAFE, HEALTHY AND STRONG

You have the right to grow up safe, healthy and strong. You have the right to enough healthy food to eat, somewhere to live and someone who cares for you. You have the right to be able to go to school, learn, be included and have the chance to do your best.

## BE HEARD

You have the right to say what you think should happen to you in your family, school and community. Adults should listen to what children say and give it serious attention.



### Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Children's rights are written down and agreed to as part of the work of the United Nations. This agreement has been signed by almost every country in the world. Australia signed in 1991, so for over twenty years our Government (leaders) has agreed to protect the rights of every child in Australia.

A **convention** is an agreement that our leaders make on behalf of the country. Australia made an agreement, together with other countries around the world, to protect all children's rights.

- ◀ All children are equal and share the same rights. Every child is a winner when it comes to rights!

# WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

## YOU AND OTHER CHILDREN

Rights are for all children. You can stand up for your rights and the rights of others. When you are thinking about your own rights, you also need to think about what is best for the other people around you – including other children. How can you help other people to have their rights?

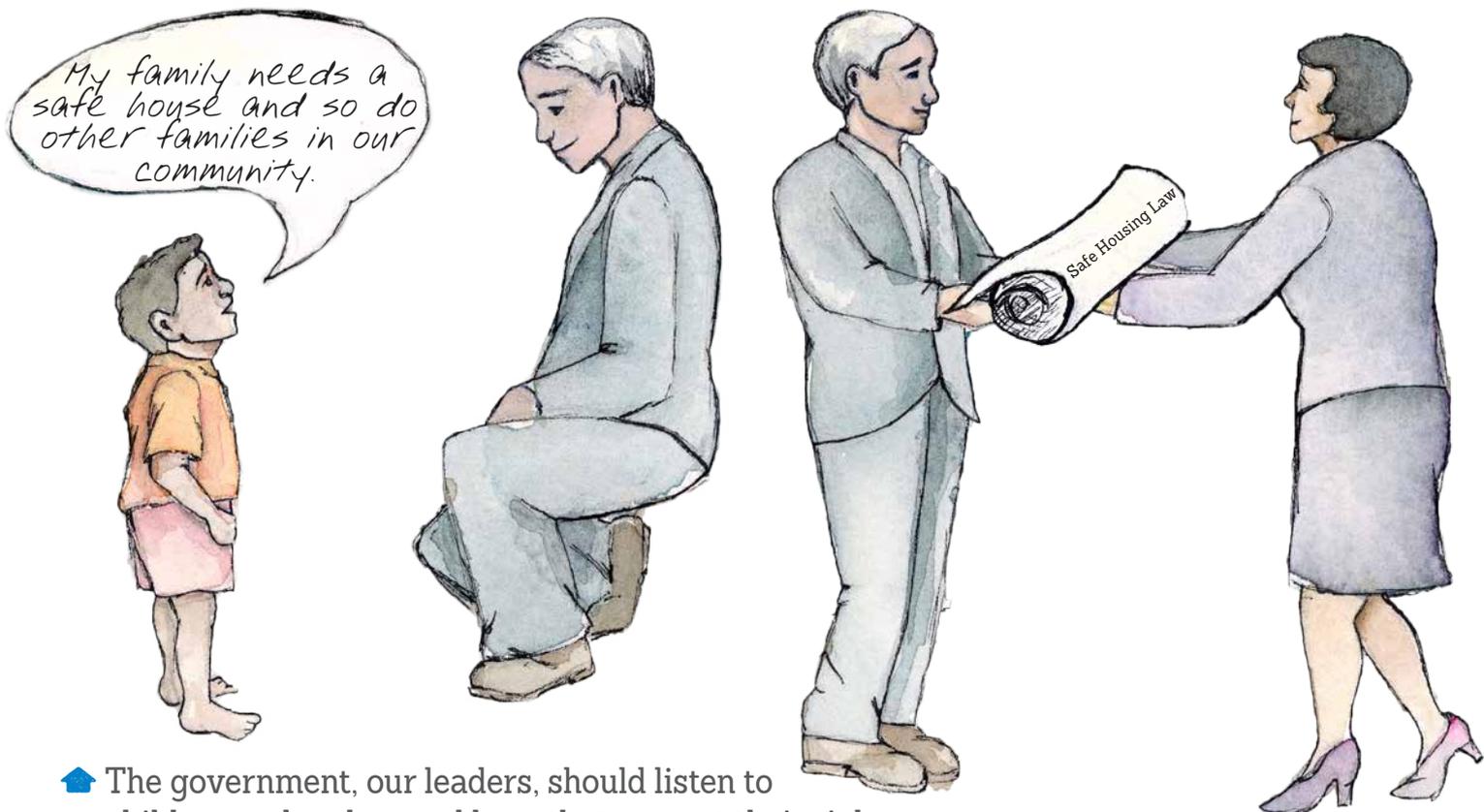
## ADULTS

Your parents, teachers and all the other grown ups make a lot of decisions about your life. So they have responsibility to help you have your rights respected and protected.

## THE GOVERNMENT

Our leaders make choices and rules that decide how life in Australia will be for everyone. Our leaders can make decisions that improve life for all children. This is a very big responsibility and we talk about lots of ways they could help in this book.

**Government (our leaders)** are the people adults voted for to lead our country and make choices about how life will be in Australia.

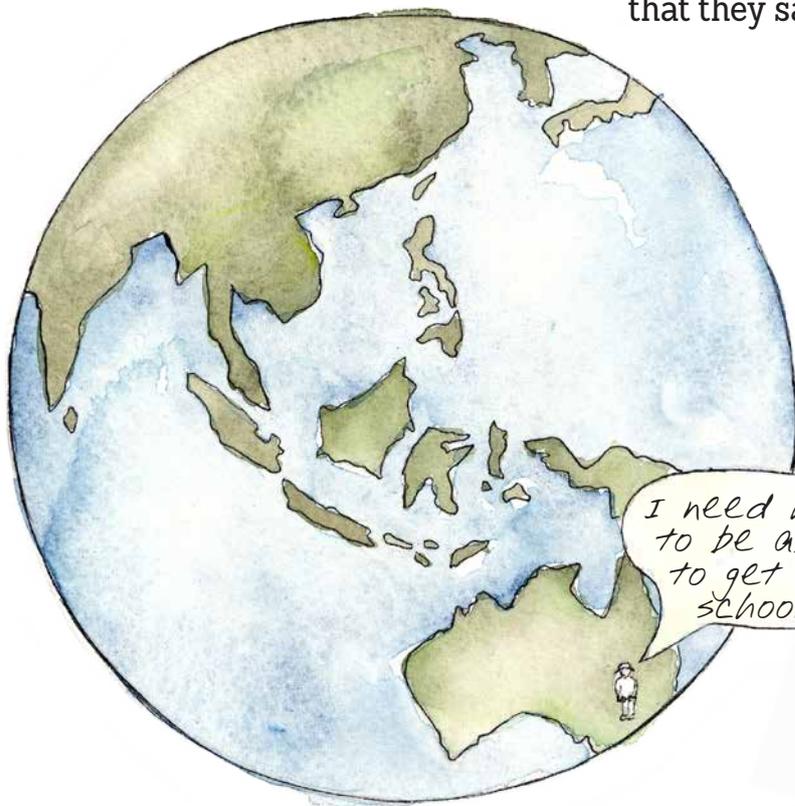


🏠 The government, our leaders, should listen to children and make good laws that respect their rights

# HOW DO WE KNOW IF CHILDREN ARE GETTING THESE RIGHTS?

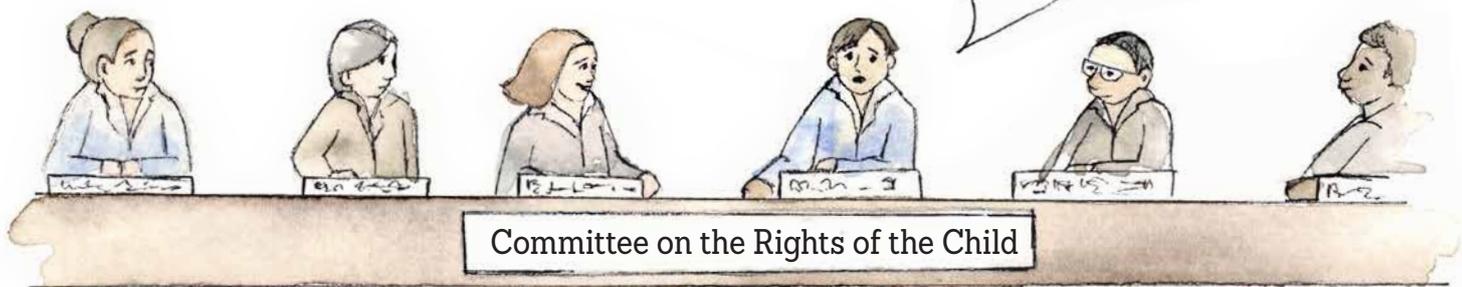
There is a special group of people who know a lot about children's rights and how to do the best for children all over the world. They are called the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. This group checks to see if different countries are doing their best to help and protect children.

About every five years this special group of people looks at how well Australia is protecting children's rights that are listed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee made a list of all the ways our leaders can help children in Australia to have their rights respected and protected. This book is a short summary of some of the important things that they said.



I need help  
to be able  
to get to  
school.

All children in Australia  
should be supported to go  
to school. Lets tell their  
leaders they need to do  
something about  
this.



🏠 The Committee care about the rights of all children in Australia, and across the world

# WHAT CAN OUR LEADERS DO FOR

SHOULD ADULTS LISTEN TO WHAT YOU AND OTHER CHILDREN HAVE TO SAY?

**YES!** Our leaders need to make sure that there are ways for you to tell them what you think. They should ask your opinion on the decisions, laws and rules that affect your life. This also means that you have a responsibility to listen to other children and adults too.

DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE DIFFERENT RULES DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU LIVE?

There are different rules and laws for children in each state and territory. One of our leaders should have the special job, called a Minister for children, to make sure Australia does its best for all children. This person with this job could create a plan to help all children have their rights no matter where they live in Australia.

IS AUSTRALIA ABLE TO MAKE SURE ALL CHILDREN HAVE THEIR RIGHTS?

**YES!** Australia is one of the richest countries in the world, which means we can help all children living here.

WHO CAN STAND UP FOR CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE NOT GETTING THEIR RIGHTS?

Australia needs someone whose job it is to make sure our leaders do their best to help all children in Australia have their rights respected and protected. This person is a National Children's Commissioner.

**Guess what?** Our leaders listened to this advice and you now have a National Children's Commissioner called Megan Mitchell! She will listen to children and share their views with leaders. She will tell our leaders which children need the most help.

Australia also needs someone whose job is the Deputy National Children's Commissioner especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, to make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are treated fairly too.

# ALL CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA?

HOW MUCH MONEY DOES AUSTRALIA SPEND ON CHILDREN?

**NOT SURE!** Our leaders need to keep a careful record of how much Australia spends on making children happy and healthy. This will help us choose the best way to spend money to help all children in Australia have their rights respected and protected.

SHOULD AUSTRALIA HELP CHILDREN LIVING IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

**YES!** Every child, no matter where they live in the world should be able to have their rights respected and protected so they can be safe, happy and healthy.

In some countries children cannot go to school or see a doctor when they are sick. Our leaders should help these countries and their children too.

WHO SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

**EVERYBODY!** We need to make sure all children and adults know about children's rights. This is especially important for people that work with children, for example teachers and doctors.

DO YOU FEEL SAFE AT HOME AND SCHOOL?

You have the right to be safe in your home, school and community. No one should hurt you.

Our leaders should make a rule (law) that says no-one can hurt children in Australia for any reason. They should teach adults how to make sure that homes, schools and communities are safe.

You can always tell an adult that you trust if anyone makes you or other children feel unsafe. You can help by not hurting other children and helping them to feel safe and included whenever they are with you.

# FAMILY & HOME

WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY LIKE?

Australia has lots of different kinds of families. Our families are from different countries, believe in different things and we all have our own special way of doing things – this is called our culture.

No matter who you are living with as you grow up, you should be able to live with people that can share or teach you about your family and culture.



◀ Pride in your culture

WHO ELSE CAN TAKE CARE OF YOU?

Our leaders should help your family to find safe places and people to care for you while they are at work. They should make sure these places don't cost too much money.

Our leaders should try to help families stay together whenever they can. Sometimes, for lots of different reasons, a child cannot live with their family. If you are living with people outside of your family, our leaders should make sure you are safe and happy there.

Our leaders need to make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are treated fairly and can live together too.

WHAT IF YOU  
DO NOT HAVE A  
HOME TO GO TO?

Our leaders should make sure that you are given help and support to find a safe home if you do not have one. They should make sure that the people helping you understand your special culture. We need to make sure that there are people that understand Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures and cultures from other countries too.



🏠 I would like to help you. Where would you feel safe?

DO YOU HAVE A  
BABY IN YOUR  
FAMILY?

Breast milk is great for new babies as it helps them grow strong and stay healthy. If mums with a new baby want to breastfeed, our leaders need to make sure they have help and support in the community to do so.

WHAT IF MUM  
OR DAD HAS TO  
GO TO JAIL?

If your mum or dad is locked up or is in jail you have the right to visit them. Our leaders should carefully explain to you why your mum or dad are in jail and help you to visit your parents.

**Australia does a report like this one every five years.**

- ◆ How do you think Australia could be better for children?
- ◆ Do have something to say, an opinion to share on any of the issues in this book?

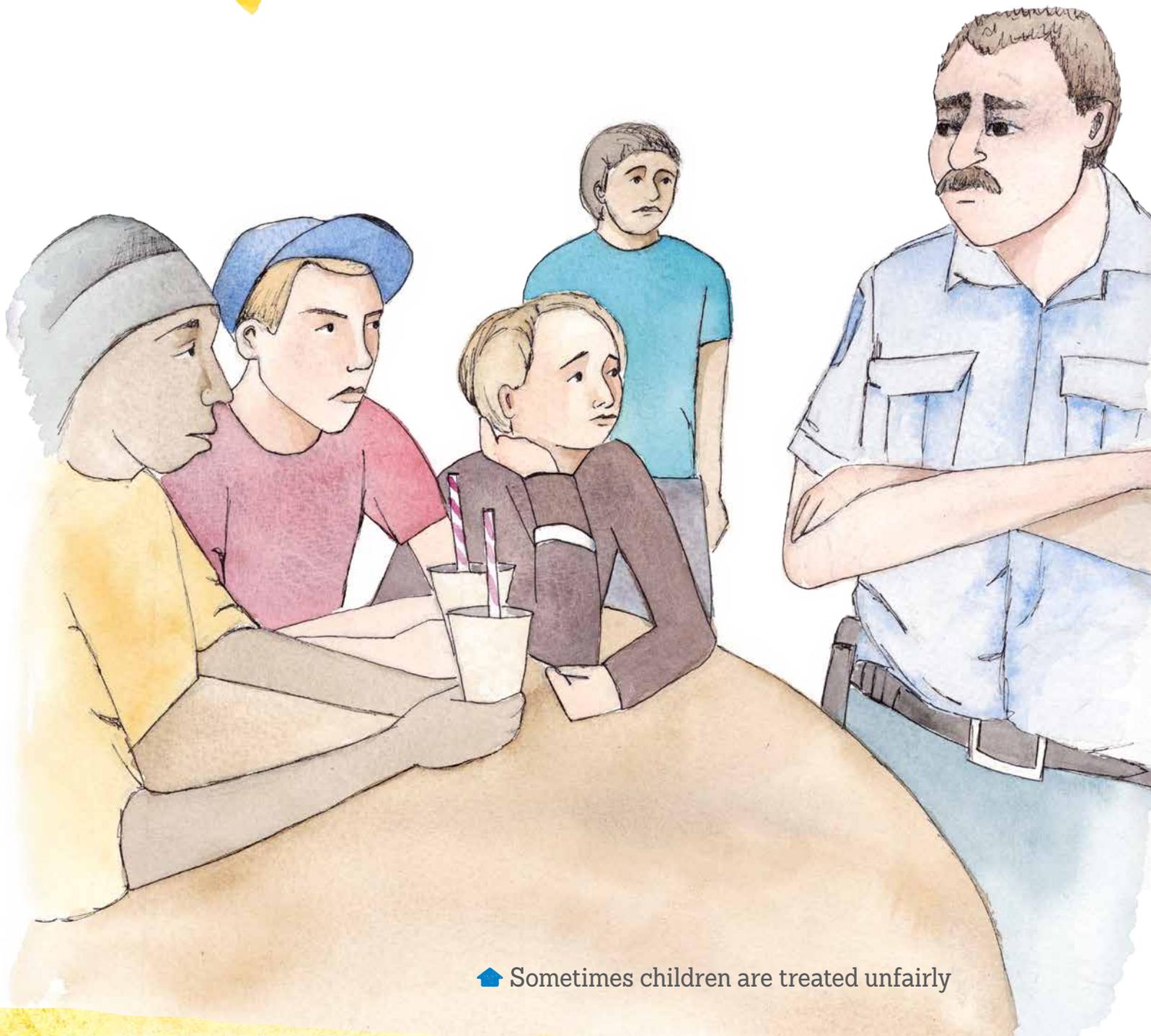
You can have your say on the Child Rights Taskforce website  
[www.childrights.org.au](http://www.childrights.org.au)

# COMMUNITY, SCHOOL & FRIENDS

WHERE CAN YOU MEET UP WITH YOUR FRIENDS?

You have the right to meet with your friends in safe and friendly community spaces. Of course this also means that you and your friends respect other people that share the same space.

Our leaders should make sure you are able to meet with your friends in the community no matter where you live.



🏠 Sometimes children are treated unfairly



ARE ALL CHILDREN  
TREATED FAIRLY?

Have you ever been treated unfairly? Maybe you have been blamed for doing something you did not do or other children have been unkind to you.

We all have a responsibility to treat others fairly and kindly. This respects their rights and encourages others to respect your rights in the same way.

Quite often Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children are not treated fairly. Children with different kinds of families, children that have recently arrived from another country, and those who do not speak English are also sometimes treated unfairly. Our leaders must make sure that children are treated fairly.



WHOSE BUSINESS  
IS YOUR  
BUSINESS?

You and your family have the right to privacy.

Our leaders should make sure your personal information is kept private and no one can share this information unless you want them to.



WHAT LANGUAGES  
DO YOU SPEAK?

In Australia, children speak a lot of different languages. For many children, English is not the language they speak at home.

Our leaders need to make sure that if English is not your first language you are given help to learn at school.

# HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BULLIED AT SCHOOL?

You might know what it is like to be picked on. If the same people pick on you often it is called bullying.

All children have the right to be treated kindly at school, including children that might be different in how they look, talk or act.

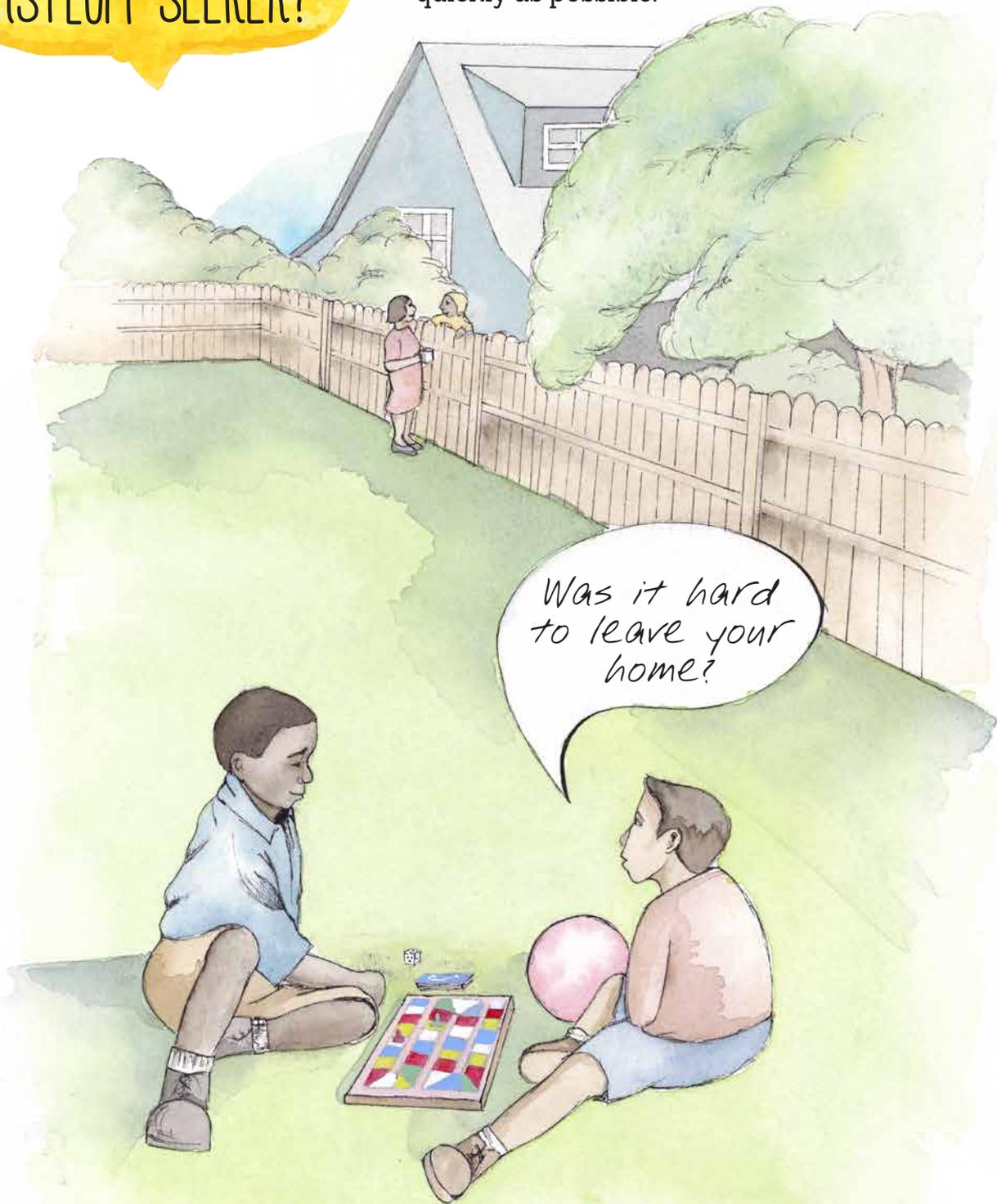
Our leaders and your teachers should make sure there are rules to help stop bullying and help children that are being bullied.



🏠 Children also have a big responsibility to help other children who are not being treated fairly or kindly

DID YOU COME  
TO AUSTRALIA AS  
A REFUGEE OR  
ASYLUM SEEKER?

Some people are not safe in their own country and come to Australia looking for help, and hoping to be allowed to stay. These people are called refugees or asylum seekers. If you have run away from danger in your home country, our leaders should make sure you are able to live in the community and have a home as quickly as possible.



🏠 Children who arrive as asylum seekers or refugees often come to escape danger. We should welcome them and offer support.

# THE LAW – POLICE, COURT & JUSTICE

SHOULD CHILDREN  
ALWAYS COME  
FIRST?

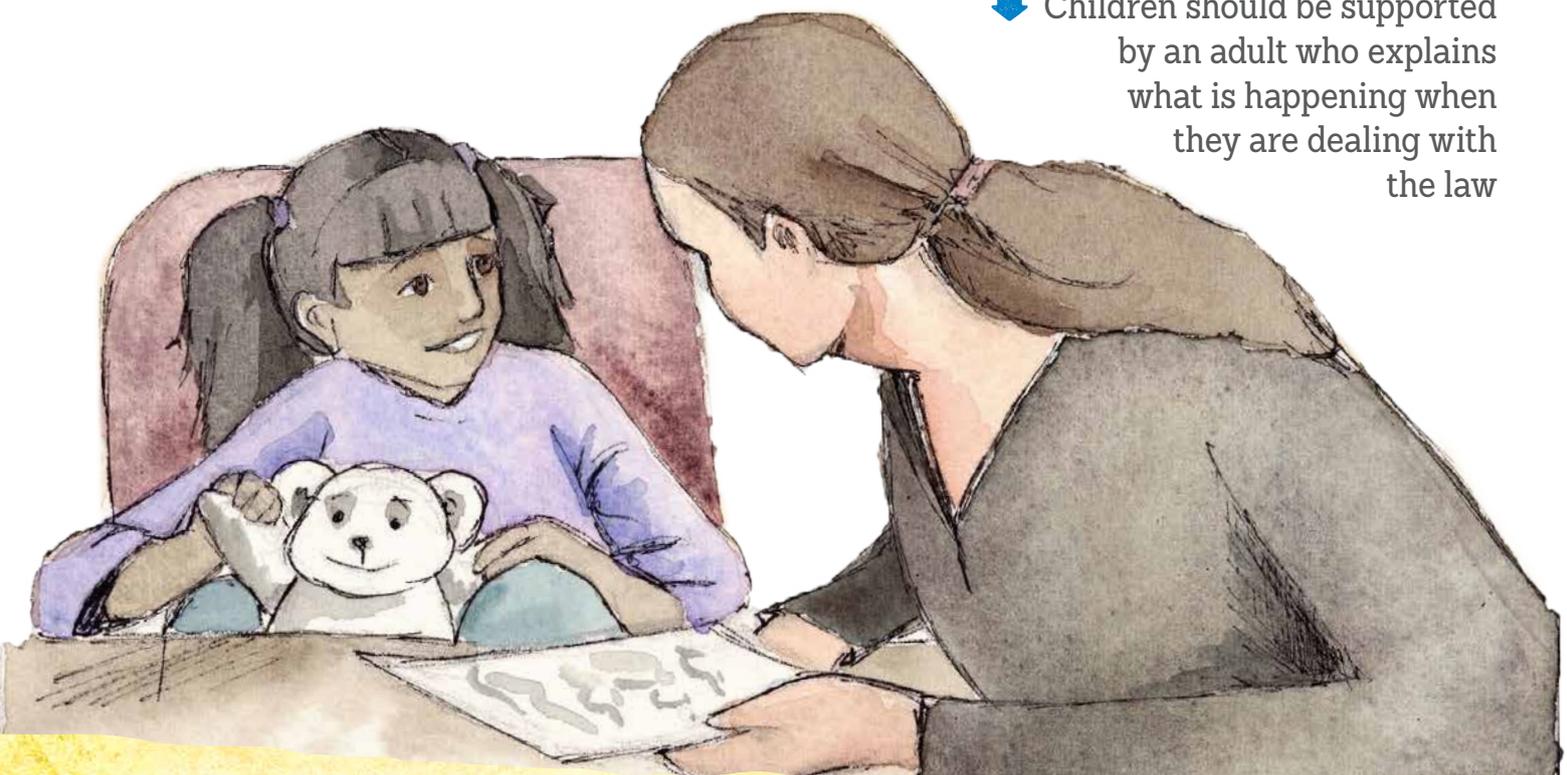
When people in power are making decisions about your life, they need to remember that there is only one child in the world like you! The first question they should ask is 'what is best for this child?'. This should be the most important thing they think about when making decisions. Every child is different so every choice will be different.

DO YOU STILL HAVE  
RIGHTS IF YOU BREAK  
THE LAW AND ARE  
IN TROUBLE WITH  
THE POLICE?

Yes! You do still have rights and are to be treated fairly by the police. If the police arrest you they should only keep you with other children, not with adults.

Courts and the law can be confusing, so you should have all the help you need to understand what is happening and the chance to explain what happened.

- ▶ Children should be supported by an adult who explains what is happening when they are dealing with the law



# FEELING SAFE & HEALTHY

DO YOU FEEL UNSAFE?

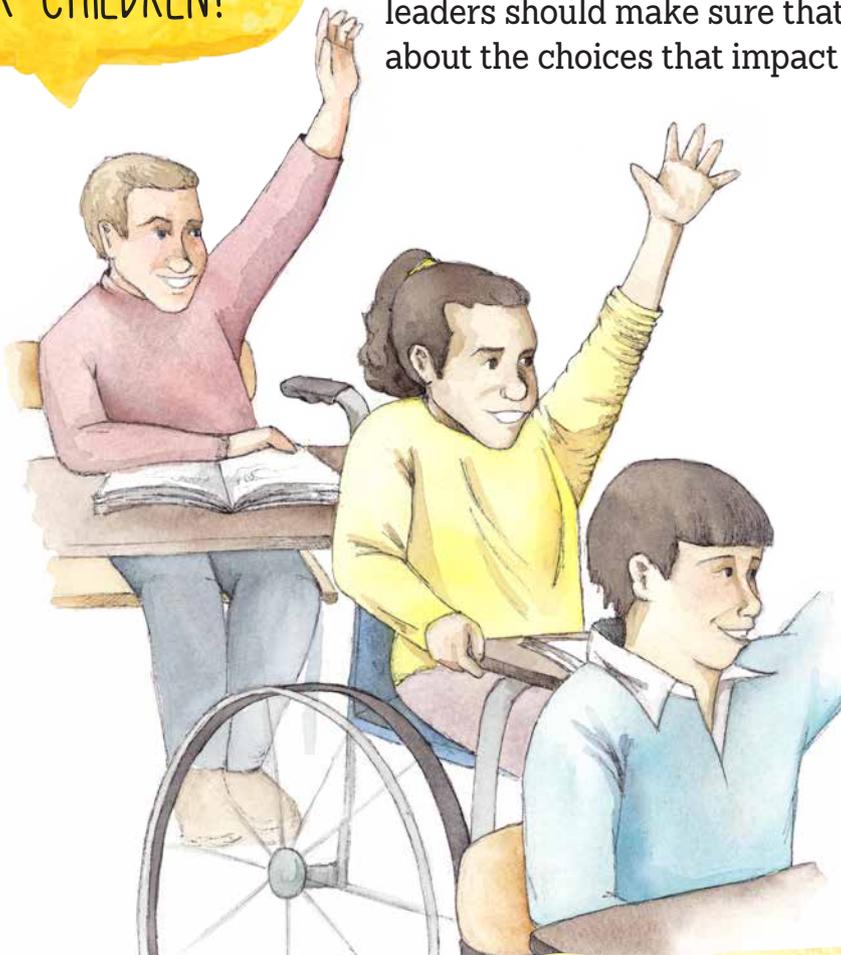
Our leaders should do everything they can to make sure that children feel safe at home, in school or anywhere else. Our leaders need to make sure that the adults who work with children know what to do when you tell them you don't feel safe and how they can give you the best help.

You can talk to any person you trust if you feel unsafe. It might be your mum, dad, carer, family or friends. It might be the police, a counsellor, teachers, doctors, nurses, community workers or other people that know a lot about you and other children.

ARE CHILDREN LIVING WITH A DISABILITY TREATED THE SAME AS OTHER CHILDREN?

If you have a disability our leaders should make sure you have the help you need to be healthy, happy and included in your community. You should be supported to take part in all activities at school.

You have the right to be treated with respect and our leaders should make sure that you are listened to about the choices that impact your life.



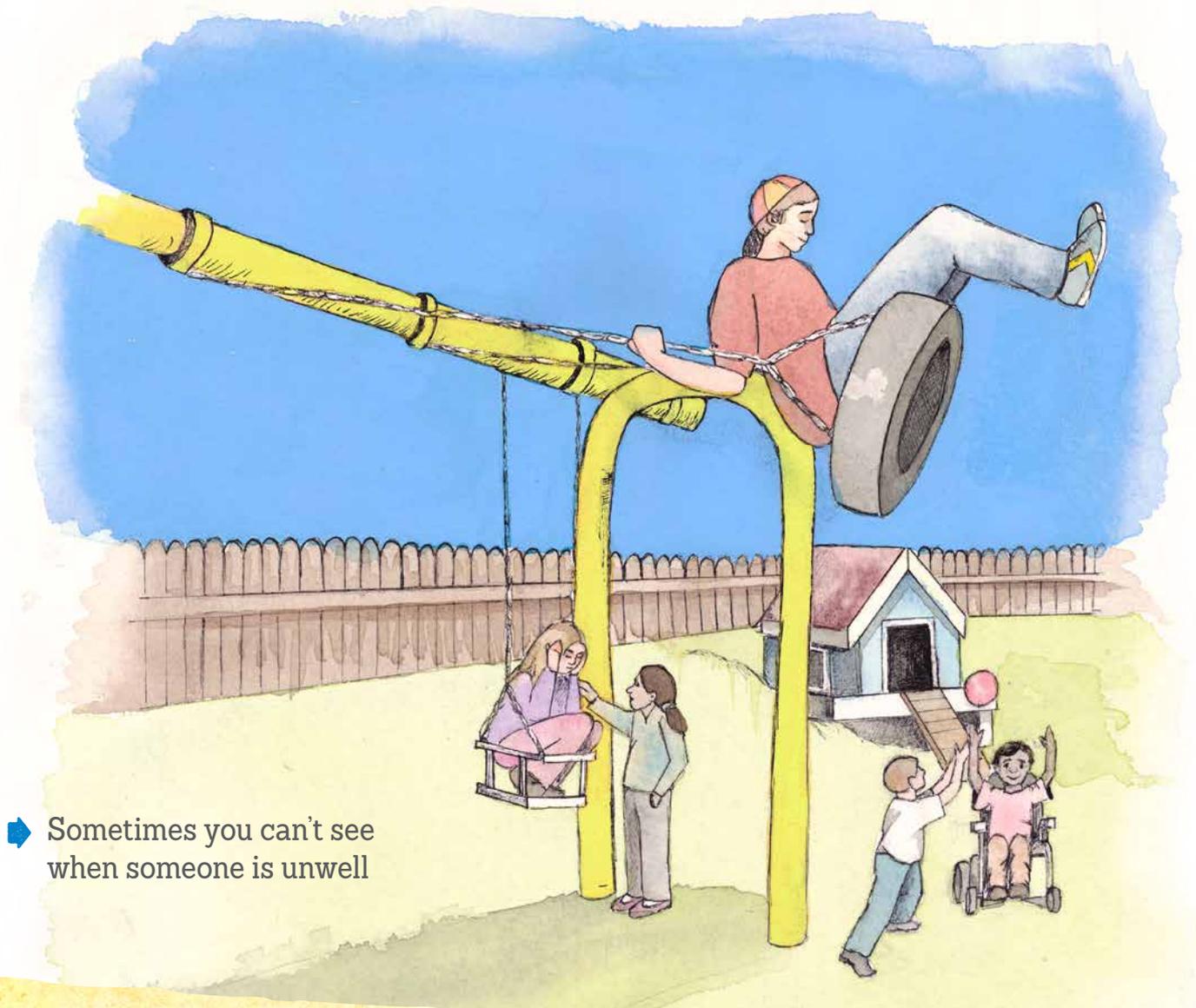
◆ All children should be included and supported

## WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU ARE SICK OR NEED A DOCTOR?

You have the right to see a health professional or go to hospital when you are sick. Doctors and nurses should listen to when you are sick and how you can feel better.

Our leaders need to make sure all children can see a doctor and provide health care for all people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children with disabilities and people living in rural areas.

Being sick isn't just about a pain in the stomach or a headache. It can also be about your mental health. In other words it can mean finding it hard to concentrate or feeling sad for a long time. Our leaders should help you to take care of yourself, where to get help and the best ways you can keep well and healthy.



◆ Sometimes you can't see when someone is unwell

# WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU IF YOUR RIGHTS ARE NOT RESPECTED?

- ◆ Your parents or guardians
- ◆ Family and friends
- ◆ Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800** for help right away
- ◆ Headspace **www.headspace.org.au** provides young people aged 12 – 25 and their families with health advice, support and information through headspace centres across Australia and online through **ehespace.org.au**
- ◆ If you need emergency help to keep you safe, you can call the police or ambulance on **000**
- ◆ Law Stuff tells you about your legal rights especially for young people **www.lawstuff.org.au**
- ◆ Youth Beyond Blue **www.youthbeyondblue.com/get-help/phone-help-lines** has a long list of different organisations that can help you with lots of different problems.
- ◆ Megan Mitchell, the National Children's Commissioner at **kids@humanrights.gov.au** and the Australian Human Rights Commission online at **www.humanrights.gov.au** for help in protecting children's rights.
- ◆ Visit **www.unicef.org.au/education**

for more information and resources for children, young people, parents, carers and educators. UNICEF works in over 190 countries to promote and protect the rights of children. In Australia, UNICEF advocates for the rights of all children to be realised and works to improve public and government support for child rights.

- ◆ Plan International **www.plan.org.au** is one of the oldest and largest child rights organisations in the world, founded 75 years ago, working in 50 developing countries across the globe. Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity.
- ◆ Visit the Australian Child Rights Taskforce on **www.childrights.org.au** UNICEF Australia and the National Children's and Youth Law Centre (NCYLC) lead the Child Rights Taskforce: over 100 organisations, standing up for the protection of child rights in Australia.

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Child Friendly Version of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child,  
Concluding Observations to Australia, June 2012

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The original Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child are available online at [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC\\_C\\_AUS\\_CO\\_4.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC_C_AUS_CO_4.pdf). In this booklet we have adapted these Concluding Observations to make them easily understood by children and young people.



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