

## **Save the Children welcomes National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, urges Government to continue to work closely with children to bring it to life**

**Wednesday, 12 October 2021:** Save the Children Australia has today warmly welcomed a national focus on children’s mental health and wellbeing, noting the plan has arrived at a critical time for children’s mental health support and recovery.

The national child rights agency, which made a detailed submission to the strategy in February, is pleased to see a strong child rights focus at the heart of the strategy.

Matt Gardiner, Executive Director of Save the Children’s Australian Services said: “We applaud this strategy’s emphasis on early support and prevention, its focus on younger children from birth to age 12, and its recognition of the importance of schools and education for promoting children’s mental health and wellbeing.

“The timing of this significant announcement couldn’t be more crucial. A record number of children are reporting mental health issues as they struggle with the ongoing impact of the pandemic. As children emerge from unprecedented school closures and some of the world’s longest lockdowns into a new COVID-normal world, the initiatives outlined in the plan will be needed more than ever.”

The strategy acknowledges Save the Children’s landmark disaster recovery program, Journey of Hope, which has been delivered to school students all around the country to help them recover from fires and floods.

It also cites Save the Children’s programs to build children’s participation in disaster planning at the local level, and post-disaster child friendly spaces, as great examples of resilience and recovery programs that promote mental health and wellbeing.

“It is brilliant to see this strategy has a strong child-centred, child rights approach and we hope that means that children will also be at the centre of its implementation,” Mr Gardiner said.

“We urge the government to now ensure that children, who are experiencing these issues so profoundly, continue to be meaningfully consulted and included in the roll out. This includes all children, especially marginalised or disadvantaged children, who are so often left behind.”

Save the Children Australia has also urged the states and territories to prioritise the implementation of the strategy: “This is an opportunity for all State and Territory governments to join hands in bringing this plan to life and start forging the path to a better future for our children.”

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