



**Early Childhood  
Australia**  
A voice for young children

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Everyday Learning Series  
Volume 15 Number 3 2017

# Children's rights: Every day and everywhere

## Book 1

An Everyday Learning Series title

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# About the *Everyday Learning Series*

The most important early learning happens through day-to-day life experiences, and the **Everyday Learning** books are about how parents and educators can make the most of these experiences.

What an exciting responsibility it is to be helping build the foundations for the future of young children!

Babies and young children are learning all the time.

- The first years of life are the foundation for all later growth, development and learning.
- Every experience counts! Babies and young children are learning all the time, with most learning taking place in relationships.
- Research shows that what happens in these years is the key to:
  - being able to relate confidently and effectively with others
  - mental and emotional health
  - educational success.

What do babies and young children need, to get the best start for living and learning?

To learn best they need parents and educators (their first teachers) who:

- are warm and caring
- know each baby or child very well and appreciate what is special about them
- take time to understand the child's messages (cues) and to respond to them with encouragement, praise, comfort, independence and rest as needed
- are able to see, share and celebrate the big and small joys and achievements of the children in their care.

Adults provide:

- responsive and sensitive care
- a safe and interesting place to be.

Adults follow children's lead by supporting their exploration and the things they like to do.

There is no set list of things to teach babies and young children.

Living is learning and children learn through living. All children and babies have their own abilities and interests. Follow the child's lead.

Watch and listen; provide opportunities; give support; build on each child's strengths. Babies and children also come from family and cultural backgrounds that are part of the way they are and these contexts need to be included in their experiences.

The *Everyday Learning Series* is developed for students of early childhood education, beginning practitioners and parents. These books will help you provide the best start for children in your care.

## Childrens rights: Every day and everywhere

This is the first of two *Everyday Learning Series* titles on children's rights. In Book 1, the discussion is focused on the concept of children's rights and how these rights are promoted and protected through United Nations Conventions and through key documents that guide the work of childhood professionals. Some practical ways to teach children about rights and responsibilities are also discussed in this book.

The second *Everyday Learning Series* title on children's rights provides a more detailed discussion on how families, communities and childhood professionals enact and protect children's rights every day and everywhere. Readers are encouraged to engage with both books as they were written to complement each other.



It's important to promote and protect children's rights.

## Introduction: Setting the context for children's rights in Australia

*No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline* (Kofi Annan, 1998, former Secretary General of the United Nations).

Children are born with rights. These rights are identified in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) (UN, 1989). The UNCRC is intended to provide ethical and legal guidance for policies and practices to support and maintain children's rights in the context of their lives within families and communities. As a signatory to this Convention, Australia is required to make an ongoing commitment to ensuring children's rights are upheld and maintained and to provide regular reports to the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child (Woodhead, 2009).



The UNCRC is intended to support and maintain children's rights in the context of their lives.

Historically ... childhood was not regarded as a special period in the life span. Childhood ... was a much briefer period and the concept of human and child rights was not recognised.

The UNCRC is supported and extended by other UN Conventions, especially the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD) (UN, 2006), including Article 7 on the rights of children with disabilities, and the 2016 General Comment 4 on children's rights related to inclusive education.

Historically, children were seen as possessions of their families, who could do with them as they saw fit. Childhood was not regarded as a special period in the life span. Many children were working at a very young age and most people died much younger than they do today. Childhood, if it was recognised at all, was a much briefer period and the concept of human and child rights was not recognised (Stearns, 2015).