

News Release



Young people are working more, eating less, avoiding medical support and borrowing money to cope with the rising cost of living, new data from ACYP finds

NSW, Monday 26 June 2023

The Advocate for Children and Young People, Zoë Robinson, has released a report exploring children and young people's experiences of the cost of living crisis, including that four in ten young adults in NSW are facing some or a lot of financial difficulty.

"Households right across NSW are struggling at the moment, and while we see young people responding to these challenges with resilience and finding different ways to adapt, this report is confronting in uncovering the ways young people have been forced to make choices, whether it be between paying rent and going to the doctor, or between paying off debts and eating three meals a day."

The data found 34% of children and young people and 41% of young adults are struggling financially. The most common ways to cope with this were to reduce spending on retail items; meal delivery; eating out and social opportunities. However, a worrying proportion of children and young people report other ways of coping with rising costs, such as:

- 22%, including 31% of young adults, ate smaller meals or skipped meals;
- 19%, including 27% of young adults, did not seek medical services; and
- 19%, including 26% of young adults, bought less fresh food to reduce spending on groceries.
- 34% of tertiary students and 8% of school students avoided purchasing supplies for their education.

To balance their income children and young people also report working more, selling their personal belongings or starting a 'side-hustle'. However, 50% of young adults have also increased their level of debt to manage increasing costs – mostly through less formal lending mechanisms such as borrowing from family or friends or using buy now pay later platforms.

A young mum from Western Sydney shared her struggles with the rising cost of living. "I'm finding it hard to live without worrying about if I have enough food to last me through the fortnight because I have to pay for rent and bills which is more than half my pay. I have to use Afterpay gift cards so I can get food and have clothes and nappies to put my son in."

The report includes interim findings on the issue from a survey about the cost of living ahead of a broader report on consultations with young people, due to be released late 2023.

57% of the young adults surveyed held some form of credit debt and of those, 34% were very or quite concerned about their debt. 43% felt they would never be out of debt.

The report also found that 65% of young adults were experiencing housing stress – spending more than a third of their income on accommodation.

"Young people are suffering under rising costs – we see this especially among young women, those living in Regional NSW, those who identify as LGBTQIA+, those with mental health conditions and those with a disability. It is critical we listen to children and young people's experiences and work with them to ensure they remain safe and healthy in the midst of this crisis." said Ms Robinson.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with the Advocate for Children and Young People please contact: Una O'Neill on 0491 224 049