

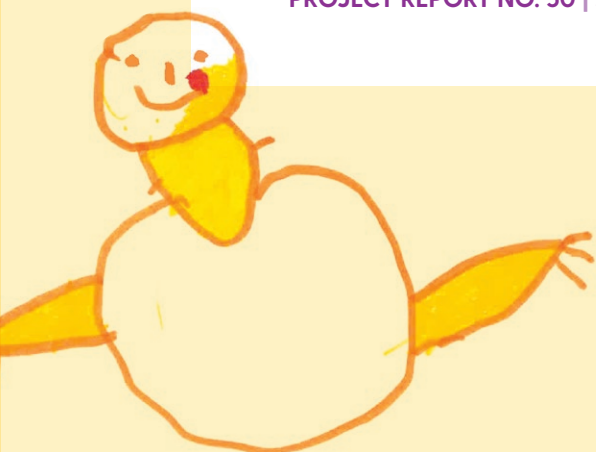
South Australian  
Commissioner  
for Children and  
Young People  
2025

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# Early Years Postcards 2

Preschoolers' views on their  
favourite thing about being outside

PROJECT REPORT NO. 50 | JUNE 2025



# Introduction

Australia’s Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) takes a child-rights approach to education, promoting children’s active citizenship.

It encourages early years educators to introduce child rights into children’s daily practice, using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guide, and including the right of children to ‘be active participants in all matters affecting their lives’.

The Commissioner’s Student Voice Postcards initiative for 8–12 year olds has been very popular in primary schools since its introduction in 2019. It has been designed to communicate the right to have a voice and be heard to children in this age group via an engaging activity that involves answering four simple questions and drawing a picture if they wish to. More than 82,500 postcards have been received over the six years since the initiative commenced.

In 2023, due to its success, and at the request of many early years educators, Commissioner Connolly decided to extend her state-wide Student Voice Postcards initiative to include preschoolers aged 3–5 years. A postcard designed specifically for this age group was produced and distributed to preschools and childcare centres throughout the state. This is the second year of the Early Years Postcards initiative.

Between October and December 2024, preschool-aged children were asked to draw a picture of their favourite thing about being outside. Early years educators were asked to write down each child’s description of their drawing and return the postcards before the end of the school year.



A total of 156 postcards were received from children attending eight preschools and childcare centres across South Australia. Most of the children who participated in the Early Years Postcards initiative were 4 years of age.

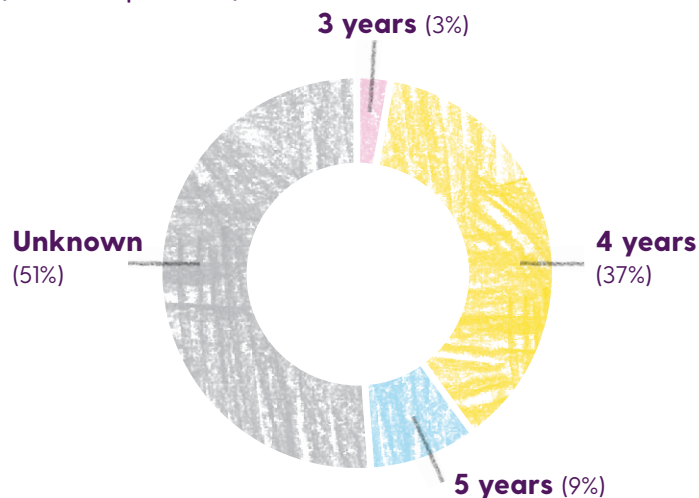
At one kindergarten the Early Years Postcards were used to spark conversations with children about how the viewer would know that their picture was happening outside. Children were encouraged to provide as many details as possible about what they drew and were also asked to write a word that best described the activity they or others were involved in doing in their picture. An educator from another early years setting shared that the children ‘really liked the idea that another adult would listen to what they [had to] say’.

This mini report summarises what preschool children shared was their favourite thing about being outside.



### Age of respondents

(% of responses)



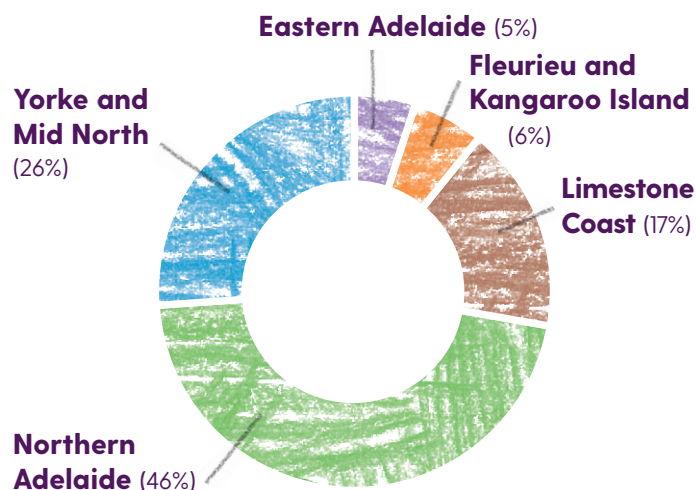
### Gender of respondents

(% of responses)



### Participation, by region

(% of responses)



# What preschoolers communicated via their drawings

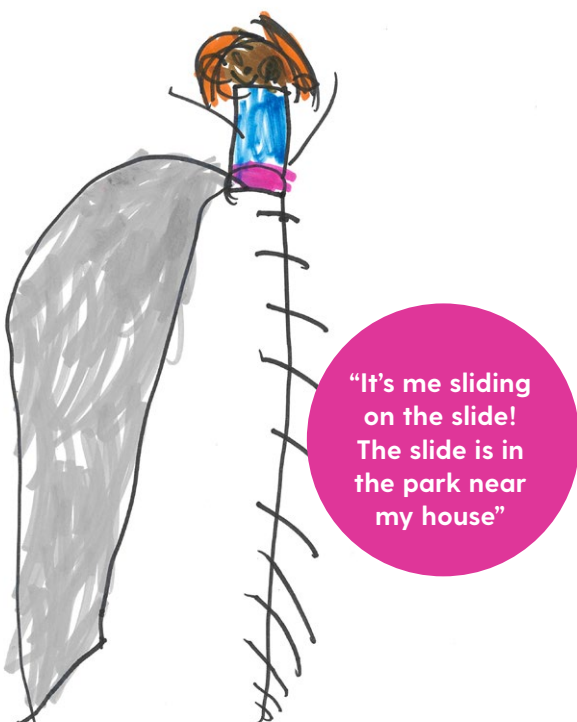
When Commissioner Connolly asked preschoolers to draw her a picture of their favourite thing about being outside, their responses showed that being outside is often a sensory experience for children.

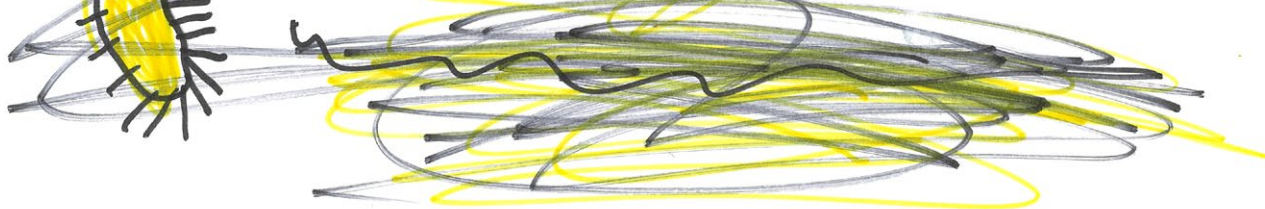
Children shared the feeling of engaging in play and movement – swinging, jumping, running, climbing and splashing. They also shared the feeling of the world outside, mentioning the fun they had, the warmth of the sun, and the enjoyment of being with their family and friends.

Many children's favourite thing about being outside was playing on play equipment – at the playground or park, at their childcare or preschool, at home, or elsewhere. They drew swings, trampolines, and slides, as well as monkey bars, sandpits and climbing frames.

They described their drawings with phrases like 'swinging to the sky', 'bouncing on my trampoline', and having 'so much fun' on the monkey bars and slide.

Children enjoyed many other outdoor activities, including riding their bikes and motorbikes, playing with footballs and other sports equipment, and running. They liked 'muddy puddles' and playing on the grass which 'feels a bit squishy and wet'. A few children shared that they enjoyed camping and campfires, including being in a tent.





"I like going to the beach. I went to Port Broughton and I touched a hermit crab"

Water activities were a favourite with several children, including being at the beach. They drew pictures of playing in the sand and building sandcastles, playing and splashing in the water, and swimming and surfing. A few shared that they enjoyed fishing and crabbing.

Children also shared a range of other outside places and activities they enjoyed. These included going to the zoo, the pool, the creek and the ice-cream shop. They also enjoyed eating food, playing with toys, picking flowers, 'blowing bubbles', painting, and 'riding in the car'.

When doing these outside activities, some children mentioned enjoying being with their family and friends. They like playing together and being with their mums, dads, friends, sisters and brothers. One child even drew a self-portrait with Commissioner Connolly, describing this as 'Helen at the beach with me'!

Children also shared that they enjoyed being outside with animals like cats and dogs, as well as with fish and other sea creatures. They liked observing the insects and 'bugs' outside such as caterpillars, ants, spiders, and butterflies.

The weather was another favourite thing about being outside for some children. They particularly enjoyed being in the sun – playing, laying and looking at it. Some liked running and playing in the rain, as well as being in the snow, looking at the sky, and spotting rainbows.



"Going to the zoo"

looking ki  
animals  
5

## What does this tell us about preschoolers?

The children's drawings and their descriptions, as shared by early years educators, reflect the love of being outside that preschool children have and the diversity of activities they enjoy doing when outside. This tells us that preschoolers who participated feel happy playing and engaging in the natural outside world and indicates that they feel safe and secure when doing so with friends, family and others adults in whom they trust.



## Why is this important?

By providing South Australian preschool children with an opportunity to share their views via this simple activity, we have actively supported their right to have their own voice and to express themselves.

As set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this right to express a point of view is crucial to children understanding that they are entitled to have a voice.

Having a voice is fundamental to children feeling that they belong in our families, households, and communities – that what they think and feel has value and matters to those around them.



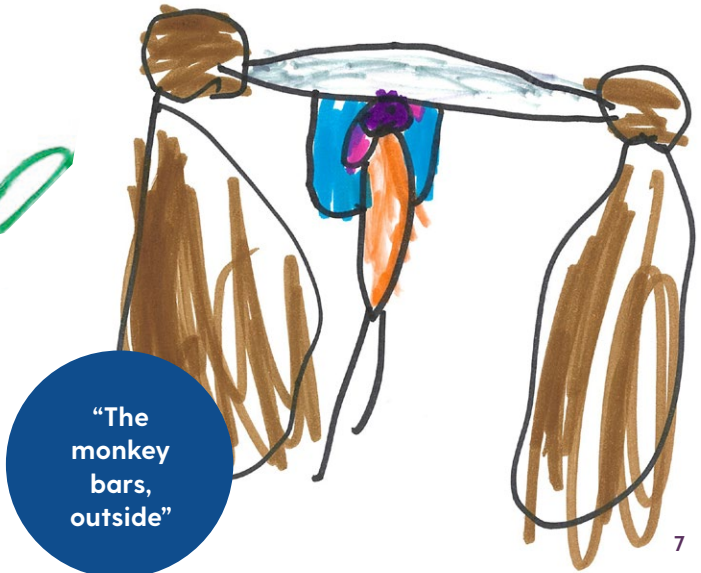


"Fletcher, Max and me on the swings"

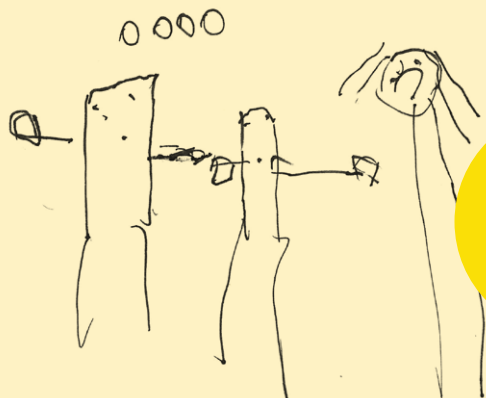


"I like playing in the sun with friends and family and the animals"

"Under the sprinkler on the trampoline"



"The monkey bars, outside"



“I like playing under the sun and blowing bubbles.”



“Playing on the climbing wall”



“I am painting outside. It is an ocean painting. Fish live”



“The rain”

### The Commissioner's Role

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* ('the Act'). The Commissioner's role includes advocating for systemic change to policies, programs and practices that impact the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people. This work is informed by the experiences and issues of children and young people themselves, with a specific focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.


### Acknowledgements

Thank you to the 156 South Australian preschool children aged 3–5 years who participated in the Early Years Postcards initiative in 2024 – an extension of the Commissioner's Student Voice Postcards initiative. Thank you also to the early years educators from South Australian preschools and childcare centres who supported preschoolers to participate in the Early Years Postcards initiative. Please note that all drawings and associated comments have been reproduced verbatim.

This report was released by the Acting Commissioner, following completion of Commissioner Helen Connolly's inaugural term (2017–2025). Thank you to the dedicated staff who finalised and saw the report to completion.

### Suggested citation

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