

# Rethink on cities to see kids thrive

EXCLUSIVE

STEPHEN LUNN  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

Too many Australian children growing up in urban areas live far from the green spaces and amenities they need to thrive, often because cities are designed by, and for, adults, a leading children's advocate says.

The Covid-19 lockdowns brought disparities between children in different socio-economic areas into stark relief, with local parks, fields and playgrounds out of reach for some living in high-density, poorly designed areas, said UNICEF Australia chief executive Tony Stuart.

Mr Stuart said the needs of young people are an intrinsic element of urban design, and their voices should be heard in future city planning.

"The wellbeing of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy urban environment," Mr Stuart said.

"Research shows that young

people who grow up in greener areas are often less depressed, less stressed and healthier. Yet overwhelmingly, cities continue to be designed exclusively for, and by, adults.

"This was highlighted during the Covid-19 lockdowns where many high-density urban areas had limited facilities and green spaces in which children could play and exercise close to home."

UNICEF Australia has in conjunction with the Bupa Foundation introduced a global UNICEF program, the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, into the country.

It is already running in 40 countries including Canada, Denmark and Germany, guiding local councils as they grapple with how to design cities and towns to support those under the age of 24.

Urban designer and architect Michelle Cramer, and a nine-member Youth Advisory Committee made up of 18-24 year olds, will drive the initiative in Australia.

"There has always been community consultation about how cities should look, but the consul-

tation tends to be with adults, who only guess at what they think children want," Ms Cramer said.

"Young people today are very ambitious about the future. They have very specific thoughts on issues like climate change, social equity, sustainabil-

**'A child-friendly place is where they can safely travel to and from their homes and school by foot or bike'**

GEORGIA WITHEY  
ARCHITECT

ity and on transport, which are all critical elements of future city design," she said.

Landscape architect Georgia Withey, who lives with her husband, Angus, and children Otis, 6 and Rem, 4 in Auburn in Sydney's west, said they had lived in the inner suburbs, but as the family grew they searched for a bigger house.

"A significant part of our deci-

sion was based on how child-friendly Auburn is," Ms Withey said.

"It has a lot to offer. There's the train and there's good access to both public spaces and green space such as playing fields, parks and the remnant Cumberland Plain bushland area.

"A child-friendly place for me is where they can safely travel to and from their homes and school by foot or bike, where there are places for them to play and roam, and when they're a bit older places where they can safely gather with their friends," she said.

Hayley Sherry, a Bupa employee and a 21 member of the youth advisory committee for the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, said transport for children was one of her clear priorities.

"I look at things like bike lanes that help you get to school safely rather than being driven in a car as being crucial," Ms Sherry said.

"And climate change is a huge part of our thinking. We want urban design to be sustainable and make a positive impact on the world around us," she said.



BRITTA CAMPION

Otis, 6, and Rem, 4, with parents Georgia and Angus Withey near their home at Auburn in Sydney's west

# Indigenous deal to help safeguard culture

EXCLUSIVE

PAUL GARVEY

Indigenous groups from around the country will have a direct say in the reform of the nation's cultural heritage protection systems under an agreement set to be signed by the federal government.

In the latest step taken by the government after last year's destruction of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters by mining giant Rio Tinto, the government will announce on Monday a partnership with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance in which a majority-Indigenous working group will develop proposals to shape the reform of federal heritage laws.

It comes just a month after a federal parliamentary inquiry into the Juukan Gorge incident slammed state and federal cultural heritage legislation as inadequate and called for an overarching federal legislative framework that would bolster the protection of culturally significant sites.

Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt said the views of Indigenous Australians needed to be central to the overhaul of cultural heritage laws.

"Indigenous Australians should have the right to determine the heritage that is important to them, the ability to access applicable policies and laws to safeguard that heritage, and the choice of how they generate revenue on their land," he said.

"As we look to modernise Indigenous protection, it is fundamentally important that we are

working in partnership with Indigenous Australians and recognising the rights of traditional owners to manage their land and heritage as they deem fit."

The alliance will be chaired by Kado Muir, the chairman of the National Native Title Council.

Mr Muir said he welcomed the opportunity for Indigenous Australians to partner in the design of the reforms.

"It is important that our cultural heritage places are recognised and protected on the basis of inherent cultural heritage values,

and not as an element of land access and development approvals," he said.

State and federal Indigenous cultural heritage legislation has been under intense scrutiny since Rio Tinto detonated the Juukan Gorge rock shelters in Western Australia's Pilbara region in May last year.

Rio Tinto had the legal authority to blow up the caves under the controversial section 18 provision under Western Australia's Aboriginal Heritage Act. Ash and animal bones had been recovered

from the floor of the shelters as part of a salvage excavation before the blast, with testing of the material showing that the site had been occupied by humans as long as 46,000 years ago.

The destruction of the caves sparked a firestorm of criticism within Australia and around the world, and ultimately led Rio Tinto to sack chief executive JS Jacques and two senior executives.

The federal parliamentary inquiry into Juukan Gorge found that representatives of the traditional owners of the rock-

shelters, the PKKP, had contacted the offices of Mr Wyatt and federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley before their detonation in an unsuccessful attempt to save the site.

Western Australia's long-awaited Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill was pushed through the state's Labor-dominated lower house last week. Some Aboriginal Corporations and the National Native Title Council have criticised the new laws, arguing that they don't do enough to prevent the repeat of similar incidents in

the future. Ms Ley said the alliance would represent more than 30 Indigenous stakeholder groups and would consult with many others.

"Indigenous Heritage Protection remains an all-too complex interaction of state, territory and commonwealth law and it needs to be addressed through a national conversation," she said.

"This is about the government working with Indigenous Australians and recognising their right to determine what is important to them."

## Let's thank our frontline workers this Christmas with urgently needed medical equipment

2021 has been a challenging year, especially for our doctors and nurses. Even in a pandemic, kids still get sick, and babies continue to be born with a range of conditions that need medical treatment.

Travel restrictions mean rural and regional hospitals depend on having medical equipment immediately available to assess and treat incredibly challenging medical conditions. Access to this equipment is the difference between life and death. Unfortunately for our medical teams, the life-saving equipment they need is often not where they need it.

So how can you help? By donating a life-saving piece of medical equipment from Humpty's Wish List. Each piece of medical equipment on the list has been requested by a hospital to meet an urgent need.



*Let's say thank you to our medical teams this Christmas by gifting them the medical equipment they need.*



Call 02 9419 2410 or email [humpty@humpty.com.au](mailto:humpty@humpty.com.au) to view current wish list or to donate.

[humpty.com.au](http://humpty.com.au)

