



Charles Sturt
University



Children draw health to
advance health equity: Insights
from children with disabilities.

Children's Voices Centre

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Children draw health to advance health equity

Children across the world were invited to create and describe an artwork to present their perspectives about health and healthcare by considering the following prompts:

1. **What makes you healthy?**
2. **Who helps you be healthy?**
3. **Where do you go to get healthier?**
4. **What would your ideal hospital or health service look like?**

A children's advisory group considered 126 drawings by children from 18 countries to create this summary document. The views of children with disability are featured.

Children's Voices Centre:

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Article 13 CRC

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, 1989

Article 21 CRPD

Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United Nations, 2006

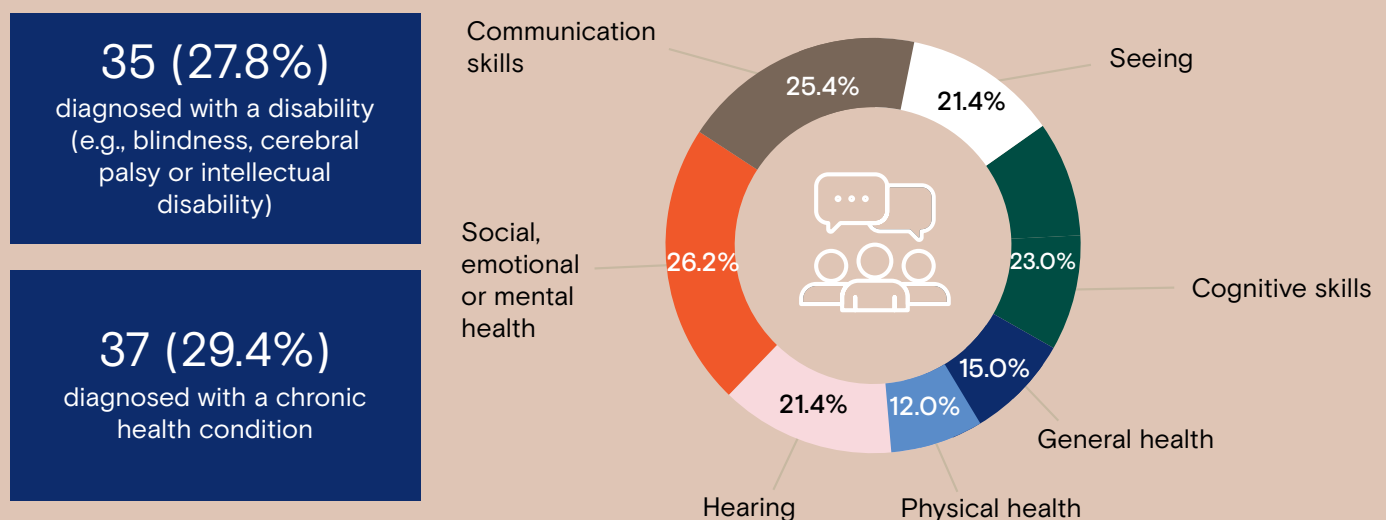


Children's insights about health and healthcare

We analysed 126 drawings submitted by children (2-18 years) from 18 countries.



There were 60 (47.6%) drawings from children* who had a disability, chronic health condition or health concern including:



*Some children were identified in more than one category.



What children want the world to know about health and healthcare for children with disabilities.

“Just by doing a little bit you can cure a lot.”

Children with disabilities showed us that having a healthy body and a healthy mind involves lots of different people and places:

- **Family:** parents
- **Community:** sports coaches
- **Health services and other professionals:** hospitals, doctors, dentists, teachers, speech-language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dieticians, psychologists, radiographers.

The children's advisory group noticed that the children with disabilities focused more on hospitals and doctors. Children with disabilities were less likely to mention that friends, grandparents, pets, nature, going to the gym, pool, supermarket, and vegetable gardens kept them healthy.

Some children with disabilities were afraid when they visited hospitals, doctors, dentists and allied health professionals. The noises, needles and machines were “scary.”

Suggestions:

- **Children want their parents with them:** “My dad stayed with me the whole time.”
- **Children want staff to listen:** “Listen to me and really take in what I say and try to help,” “Talk to me when I’m upset.”
- **Children want staff to be kind:** “My doctor is kind and funny, but sometimes doctors are not so kind and that is bad for kids.”
- **Children want to hear music** instead of noisy machines.

To promote more inclusive and child-friendly healthcare environments for children with disabilities consider:

- **Environment:** Include rainbows and fun. Think about colours, sounds, pictures on the walls and textures. Have calm and quiet spaces.
- **Communication:** Spend time talking with and listening to children using communication strategies that are appropriate to the age and capacity of the child.
- **Size:** Think about heights of toilets, taps, beds and chairs
- **Before and after visits:** Children miss school and fun events to visit health professionals. Travelling can take a long time. It is hard to find carparks and snacks. Waiting rooms can be boring and scary. Provide information, flexibility and assistance.

We propose three areas of policy action to better support children's health and healthcare:

1. Promoting more child-friendly practices in healthcare settings.
2. Enabling co-creation of child-friendly services and environments with children with disabilities, their families and other relevant stakeholders.
3. Training healthcare workers about communication strategies that are appropriate to different ages, abilities, and capacities (e.g., non-verbal children).



Feelings about health

The majority of children felt happy about their health.

82.5%
felt happy

9.5%
felt in the middle

3.2%
felt sad

4.8%
felt unsure

Children with disabilities, chronic health conditions or parent concern.

76.7%
felt happy

18.3%
felt in the middle

0.0%
felt sad

5.0%
felt unsure

“I’m healthy ‘cause I eat healthy foods and my teeth are healthy ‘cause I brush them. My ears are healthy ‘cause they have grommets [PE tubes].”



Marley, 4 years Australia English

“I am physically fit and healthy even though I have health concerns, they don’t take away my strength. My strength is my colouring...Drawing makes me feel happy.”

Gauri, 8 years India Hindi and Marathi

Feelings about healthcare

The majority of children felt happy about their healthcare.

72.2%
felt happy

11.9%
felt in the middle

8.7%
felt sad

7.1%
felt unsure

Children with disabilities, chronic health conditions, or parent concern.

75.0%
felt happy

6.7%
felt in the middle

5.0%
felt sad

13.3%
felt unsure

“I am healthy. I receive good services”



Abhishek, 18 years India Kannada

“I am a healthy boy because I like going to speech, physio and OT [speech-language pathology, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy]. In the school holidays we go to the dentist, and I am getting an eye test”

Arlo, 6 years Australia English

“I am very scared. I’m afraid they will hurt me.”

Máté, 4 years Hungary Hungarian

“I take care about my healthcare according to my need. If I feel concerned about my health I go to the doctor and follow the procedure given by the doctor.”

Dudhnath, 13 years India Hindi

CVC Children's Advisory Group

To plan the research, the Children's Voices Centre (CVC) research team received advice from 24 children over three sessions to design questions and procedures. Then we invited children across the world to create an artwork to answer the following questions:

1. **What makes you healthy?**
2. **Who helps you be healthy?**
3. **Where do you go to get healthier?**
4. **What would your ideal hospital or health service look like?**

The Children's Voices Centre Children's Advisory Group considered 126 drawings by children from 18 countries to create this summary document. The views of children with disability are featured.

The Children's Voices Centre Children's Advisory Group have provided recommendations for decision-makers policymakers, including the World Health Organization to advance health and healthcare in the future. The views of children with disability are featured to provide insights about health and healthcare to advance health equity.

The Children's Voices Centre Children's Advisory Group were eight children who met in rural Australia for eight hours over four weeks. The children were aged 5-17 and spoke English, Sami, Norwegian and Bengali. Three children identified as Indigenous/First Nations. Some had diagnosed disabilities including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, and dyslexia. The children provided assent to participate in the research and all but one provided assent for their images to be included, so their image was not included. The parents provided consent. Some children chose pseudonyms, others chose to use their own names.

- **Weeks 1 and 2: Children of the world.** All drawings and explanations were considered and categorised by the Children's Advisory Group into the following themes: food, friends, doctors, rainbows, hospitals, abilities, workout and sports, energy and stuff.
- **Week 3: My ideas.** Each child described who, where and what supported them to have a healthy body and a healthy mind.
- **Week 4: Children with disabilities and health conditions.** Drawings and explanations created by children with disabilities and health conditions were used to create collages and interview summaries. Similarities and differences between artwork created by children with and without disabilities were discussed.





What makes children healthy?

Healthy body and healthy mind



"It's a person who has good mental health and a person who has bad mental health."

Bartholemew the 3rd,
12 years

📍 Australia

💬 English



"What makes us healthy?
Key M = mental health, P = physical health, C = cognitive health. Healthy food (MP), a good amount of exercise (MP), doing what you love (MP), performing arts (MP), reading (MPC), water (MP), a balanced diet (MP), feeling loved (M), dogs (MP), sport (MP), relationships with people (M)."

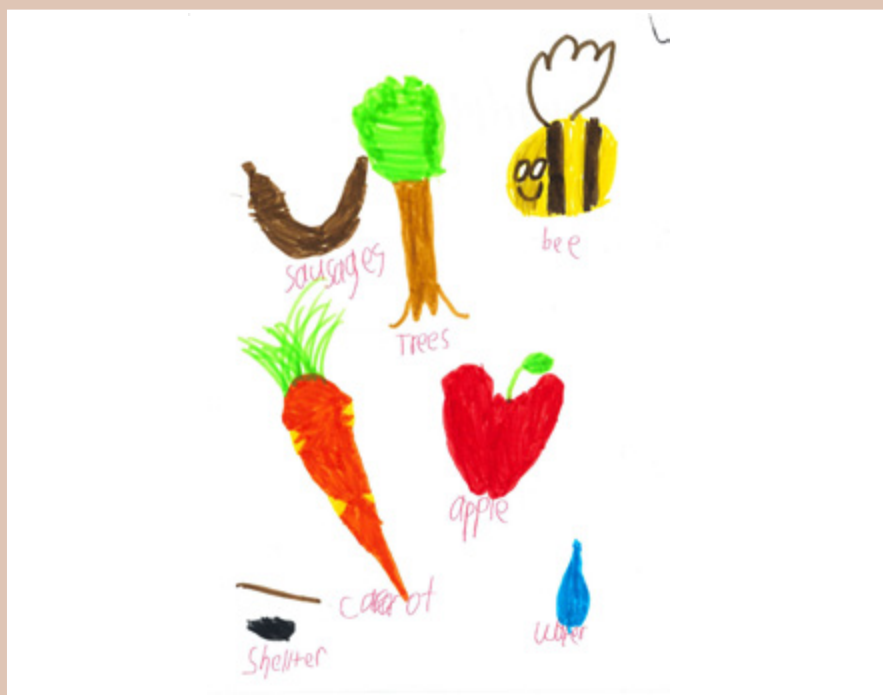
Elsie, 12 years

📍 Australia

💬 English

What makes children healthy?

Healthy food



"Sausages, trees, bees, apples, carrot, shelter and water. Bees are the most important because if we don't have bees we won't have trees and if we don't have trees we won't have air and if we don't have air we will die and it will be our fault."

Hayden, 7 years

📍 Australia

💬 English and Spanish



"What makes me healthy is healthy food so I drew broccoli, which I love eating, and water because everyone needs water, and I drew a bed because sleep is really important for keeping me healthy. And when I am healthy I feel happy so I'm smiling and saying 'yay'!"

Zac, 7 years

📍 Australia

💬 English

What makes children healthy?

Healthy food



"Saying NO to junk foods makes me healthy. I am always feeling fit."

Jakkariya

India

Tamil

Sport



"Playing soccer makes me healthy. I feel happy and healthy. The doctors are always really friendly. They are talking a lot to me and are helping me so that I feel better quickly."

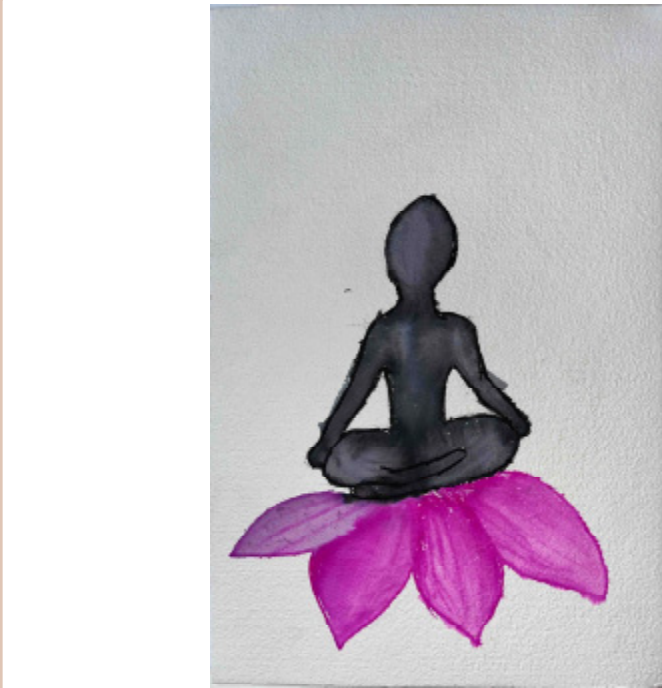
Jonas, 6 years

Denmark

Danish and German

What makes children healthy?

Relaxation



“Relaxation relieves stress.”

A. Nesanraj, 16 years

📍 India

💬 Tamil

Playing



“Up the steps and down the slide” (pink) “Swing. Back and forth, side to side” (red and blue) “Balancing, balancing” (purple) “I feel strong. Happy because I was using my muscles.”

Chloe, 7 years

📍 Australia

💬 English

Who helps children be healthy?

Doctors



"Doctor helps me [be] healthy."

Sarvesh, 8 years

📍 India

💬 Tamil

Doctors



"This is Dr Mark's office. Dr Mark. His door. His computer. His height monitor and a picture of a dragon... I feel happy because I get a lollypop. They're in Dr Mark's wardrobe."

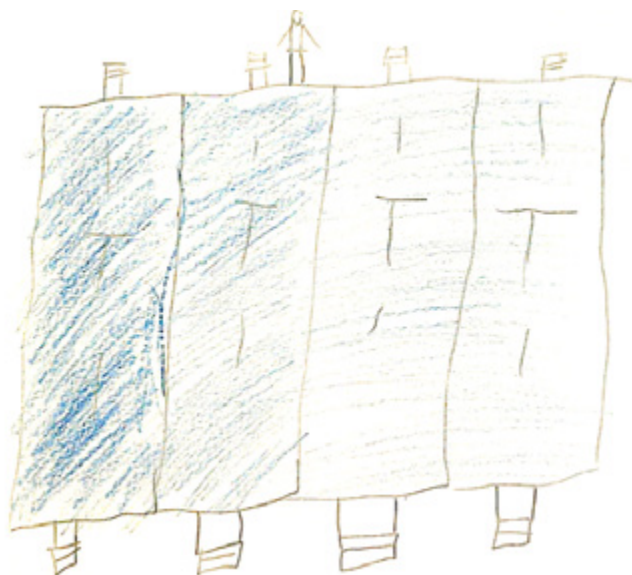
Hayden, 7 years

📍 Australia

💬 English

Who helps children be healthy?

Sports coaches



"My drawing is the swimming pool with my coach. He makes me better every day. He tells me what can I eat."

Benett, 9 years

📍 Hungary

💬 Hungarian

Parents and speech-language pathologists



"My mum always gives me vitamins. Because I am always learning and happy here. These are us in the mirror of the speech therapy room. Above us is a window with a shutter."

Liza, 7 years

📍 Hungary

💬 Hungarian

Where do children go to get healthier?

Hospital



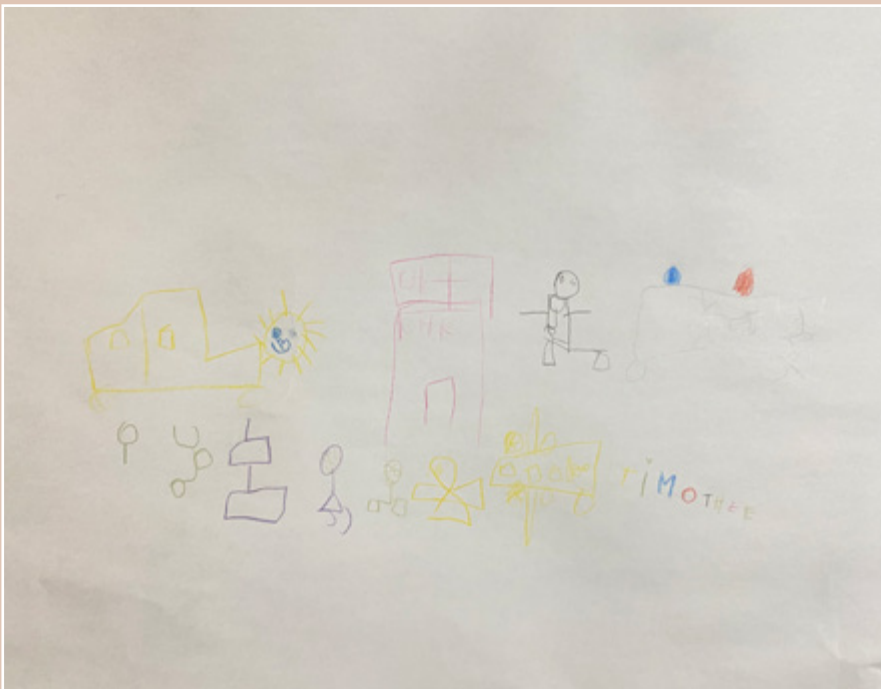
"I drew a hospital because that's where I pick up health. Because in the morning I kept coughing. The hospital makes me feel better."

Malaika, 7 years

📍 Uganda

💬 English

Hospital



"My parents take care of me, take me to hospital when I do not feel well. I rarely get sick."

Tim, 5 years

📍 Rwanda

💬 French, Spanish and Kinyarawanda

Where do children go to get healthier?

Nature



"It's a guy under a apple tree. I feel good. I don't use healthcare much."

Anonymous



Iceland



Icelandic

What would children's ideal hospital or health service look like?



"It is a hospital with a big rainbow. I have to go to hospital a lot. I don't know. I don't like hospital, but doctors are nice to me. I don't like to speak. I like to be quiet."

Zsombor, 4 years



Hungary



Hungarian

What would children's ideal hospital or health service look like?

Banana hospital



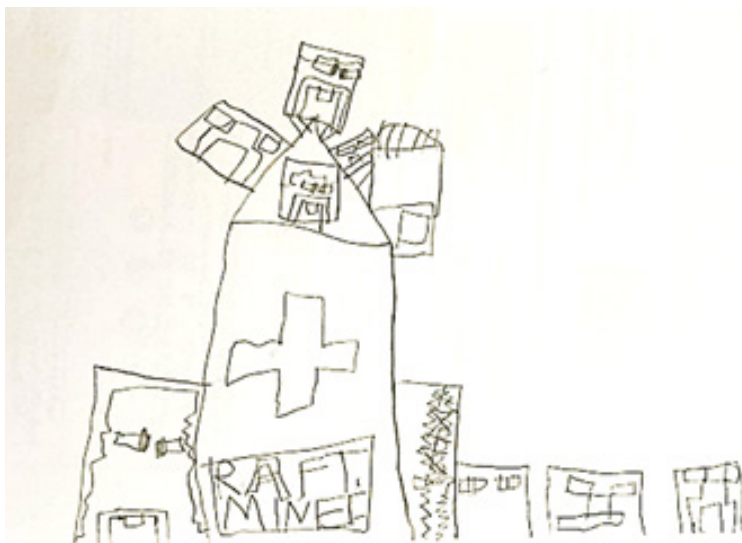
"I drew a picture of a doctor because it keeps me healthy at the doctors and I drew an ambulance, but it is a banana because bananas keep me healthy. Because I have been to the doctors before and they help me keep healthy and they give me needles, but I don't like needles. I like going to the dentist and the doctor because they keep me healthy, but sometimes I get a little scared at the dentist because of all of the machines."

Adelaide, 9 years

📍 Australia

💬 English

Minecraft hospital



"It's a Minecraft hospital, where kids get chocolate while they do speech therapy. All cubic and cheerful. If I drink lots of fluids, when I eat vitamins, I'm healthy if I get plenty of rest. I'm referring to going to day care, I'm not healthy there. I am angry at the speech therapy because my parents are not there. I am afraid of doctors."

Márk, 6 years

📍 Hungary

💬 Hungarian

What would children's ideal hospital or health service look like?

Quiet and kind hospital



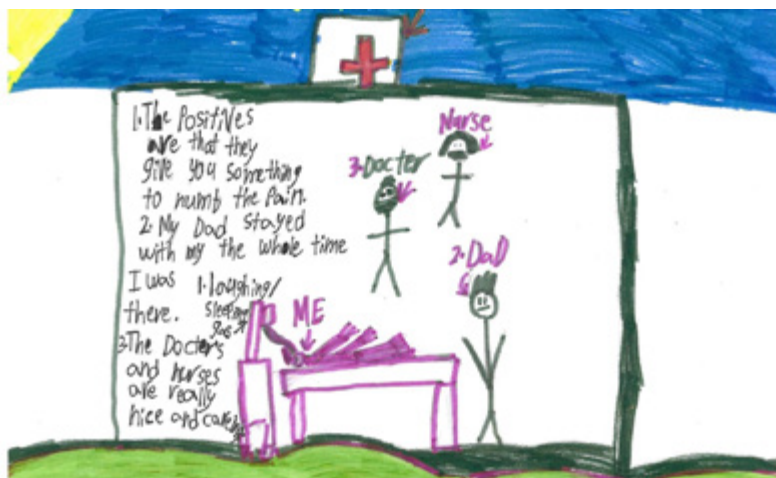
"It's about all the positives and negatives about going to the doctors and what can be frightening and what can be easily fixed. Like the noises can be loud and that can be frightening so maybe you could put on music. Because I feel fine and I feel like I'm taken care of really well and people at the doctors are always really nice and reassuring. Sometimes I feel a bit sad like when I have to get a needle as it can really hurt, but other times I feel happy as the doctors listen to me and really take in what I say and try to help and are kind."

Jocelyn, 11 years

📍 Australia

💬 English

Nice and caring hospital

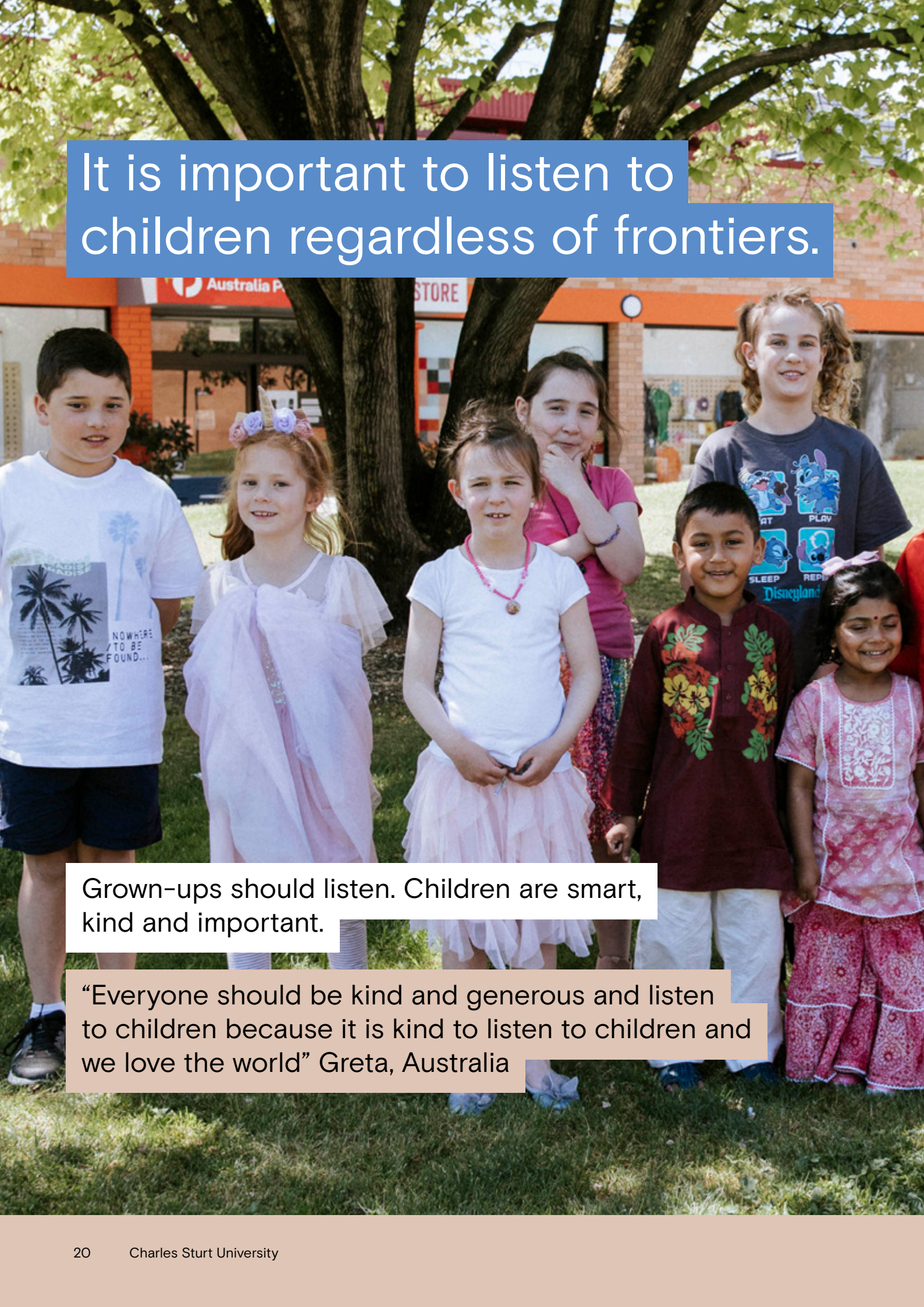


"This was me when I was in hospital. My dad stayed with me the whole time I was there. The doctors and nurses were really nice and caring... They talk to me when I'm upset. They give you something to numb the pain."

Knox, 11 years

📍 Australia

💬 English



It is important to listen to children regardless of frontiers.

Grown-ups should listen. Children are smart, kind and important.

“Everyone should be kind and generous and listen to children because it is kind to listen to children and we love the world” Greta, Australia



We're trying to figure out who we are.

"I really liked how self-aware the people were in the drawings... they all tried their best to communicate it how they thought it should be communicated. And I think that we should always listen to things like that cause you may not think it but we're trying to figure out who we are too."

Jocelyn, Australia

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