

MEDIA RELEASE

September 2020



A SPECIAL REPORT REVEALS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS AND RESTRICTIONS ON THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Released today, **A Lasting Legacy** report, has revealed the immediate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on children and parents across Australia, with many parents fearing the residual harm that will continue beyond the spread of virus.

Conducted before Victorians entered the tough stage four restrictions, the national report shows that one in four parents felt they were already failing their children and more than a third stated they had lost confidence in their parenting abilities.

A third of parents felt isolated and left without adequate support. Almost 40% were worried that their own stress and mental health was adversely affecting the wellbeing of their children.

Concerningly, almost a third of parents were frightened that the impact of COVID-19 will have lasting mental health impacts for their children such as ongoing heightened anxiety and stress. 1 in 5 parents were concerned about their children's future social development and self-confidence.

The everyday lives of children, families and communities have been significantly affected by COVID-19. Our sense of normality is most often associated with predictability, routine and a rhythm to how we live our lives. Changes to the way we live, the way we learn and the way we work bring inevitable stressors, concerns and threats to our health and well-being. Family life has been impacted significantly.

Social distancing restrictions and lockdown measures have resulted in a significant number of children experiencing a range of shortfalls in their daily routines. The absence of their ability to play with friends during lockdown was acutely experienced by eight out of 10 children. More than two-thirds of children missed their grandparents and extended family. The loss of face to face school and sporting activities was also significant for many children.

Dr Joe Tucci, the Chief Executive Office of the Australian Childhood Foundation and lead author of the report said the ACF's **Lasting Legacy** research has highlighted the need for a renewed focus on addressing parental well-being and supporting families as they navigate their way through the pandemic.

"It is critical that the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments realise that support needs to be offered to parents to help them perform better in the various roles and with the responsibilities they have as parents in the family unit.

"While additional government funding has brought relief, the research highlights that parents are not only concerned for their children's wellbeing now, but also their own. They know that COVID-19 is impacting their children's development in the long term."

But it is not all doom and gloom. Most parents emerged from the first experience of lockdown with an increased appreciation for their family and time with their children. The results reveal families enjoying extra time together, facing unique challenges with love and using the comfort of each other to face adversity. Almost half of the parents (48%) believed that the experiences of COVID-19 will lead them to change their long-term approach to parenting and family life. Indeed, almost eight in 10 parents believed that COVID-19 would result in the experience of a stronger and more cohesive sense of family in the future.

"Parents have a role in caregiving. They are family and household leaders. In this pandemic, parents are also on the front-line of their children's daily experiences. They interpret the signs of danger that children and young people see around them. They help answer children's questions" said Dr Joe Tucci.



The insights point to the critical need for ongoing support of children, young people, and parents. As the reality of the pandemic is fully being realised, optimistic notions of economic bounce backs are replaced by forecasts of economic hardship for years to come, suppression strategies require us all to live with ever present vigilance and uncertainty.

“As COVID-19 crisis moves into different phases, children will feel the legacy of their experiences linger. They will have been through a collective trauma – the likes of which had not been part of their life to date. They will have missed out on friends, anniversaries, birthdays, sport. They have lost a lot and found only a little in return” added Dr Joe Tucci.

In response to COVID-19, the Australian Childhood Foundation has extended its delivery of specialist therapeutic support and intervention with children, young people, families and carer households using digital modalities, such as texting, emails, telephone, and video-calls. The Foundation has also created a range of parenting resources and tools to assist parents as they face the challenges of parenting in the time of coronavirus.

These resources are available to all for free by visiting <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/covid-19/>.

The Australian Childhood Foundation, in partnership with Lewers Research, undertook an online survey of a nationally representative sample of parents in June 2020

A *Lasting Legacy* report can be accessed here <https://www.childhood.org.au/covid-impact-welfare-children-parents/>

-ENDS-

For more information and enquiries, please contact Bastion Effect:

Tatsiana Baibak | 0402 612 652 | tatsiana@bastioneffect.com

Stephanie McMullin | 0447 582 557 | stephanie@bastioneffect.com

KEY INSIGHTS

- During the COVID-19 lockdown, children have relied more on the care and support of parents who themselves have struggled to cope
- Parents are more likely to access family and friends for support
- Contracting COVID-19 is understandably on the minds of many parents
- Parents are worried about the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on their children’s well-being
- Parents are also worried about the long-term consequences of COVID-19 on the mental health and well-being of their children
- Overwhelming numbers of children felt the impacted caused by the loss of friends, family, and usual activities
- Many parents are worried about the impact of COVID-19 is having on their child’s education
- COVID-19 has increased children’s screen time and parents worry about their children’s safety online
- Positive strategies were the most important for parents to manage their behaviour during COVID-19 lockdown
- COVID-19 has made many parents rethink their approach to parenting and family life
- Many families plan to continue doing some of the things together after the lockdown ended



ABOUT AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION

The purpose of the Australian Childhood Foundation is to ensure that all children are loved, protected and prioritised, especially those who have been affected by the trauma of child abuse and family violence.

The Foundation runs a range of programs across Australia including:

- Specialist Trauma Counselling. We provide a range of specialist counselling services for children and young people affected by abuse and for their families.
- Therapeutic care programs. We provide a range of therapeutic care programs within residential and foster care settings.
- Advocacy for children. We speak out for effective protective and support services for children and young people. All our programs affirm the importance of children.
- Education. We provide community and professional education, consultancy and debriefing programs. These programs aim to improve responses to children and young people who have experienced or are at risk of abuse, family violence and neglect.
- Child abuse prevention programs. We run nationally recognised child abuse prevention programs that seek to decrease the incidence of child abuse and raise awareness about how to stop it even before it starts.
- Inspiring and supporting parents. We provide ongoing parenting education seminars and easily accessible resources to strengthen the ability of parents to raise happy and confident children.