



RIGHTS IN ACTION

A newsletter for kids in the ACT about your rights and wellbeing



What's new?

There's been a lot going on in the world lately. More Covid, more protesters, a war and floods. It's difficult not to feel a bit unsettled while still wanting to stay informed, so here is some good news to highlight!

- Epic Games promised to give the profits from in-game purchases on Fortnite to help people impacted by the war in Ukraine. The money from purchases made between March 20 to April 3 will be donated to organisations working in Ukraine.
- Canberra's free Kite Festival is back on Sunday 3 April 2022 at EPIC (Exhibition Park). Click the kite for more info!
- The bush fires in 2020 led to unstable river banks, making it hard for platypus to build burrows, leading to their numbers dropping. But scientists say they are making a comeback! Work to support river banks and good river management in the Snowy River region mean the numbers are bouncing back! They also say more attention is needed on the platypus because helping now will stop them suffering in future.



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Hi everyone, welcome to the March edition of our **Rights in ACTION** newsletter!

In this edition we are focused on your environmental rights. Did you know you have the right to a clean environment that supports your health? The ACT Government is thinking about adding this right to ACT's Human Rights Act! Find out more about the right to a healthy environment in our feature article and check out what my friend Sophie has to say about her role as the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Then you can get sustainable yourself with some simple *green* activities you can do at home.

Covid is still hanging around, even though sometimes it feels like people are telling us it's over, so we have a few tips on coping if you are in quarantine, or missing friends who are.

As always, I'd love to hear your thoughts about this newsletter... or about anything that interests or concerns you. You can send us your thoughts in writing or through art or any other way that suits you. You can also ask questions so that I can try and find some answers for you.

Jodie



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Environmental justice

You have a range of rights that rely on the environment: the right to life, development, health, food, water, education, culture, play and more. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an agreement between countries that sets standards for how governments should make sure everyone up to the age of 18 can live a healthy, safe life. One of the standards (article 24) says children have the right to a clean environment that supports your health. Countries should put these standards into their laws.

Often the impact of the damage humans do to the environment is felt by vulnerable people first, including children. Many say that a lot of this damage could be addressed with better laws or enforcing laws that are already there. Environmental justice is the idea that people of all cultures, races, ages and economic backgrounds should have proper protection from the impact of hurting the environment, as well as being able to contribute to the decisions on environmental policies.

People have started highlighting the impact of environmental damage on children specifically, and demanding that governments make better laws so that your rights to a clean environment can be protected.

Children and young people are increasingly leading action on climate change but are often left out of decisions about how the environment is protected through a country's laws. Here are a few things happening around the world to get environmental justice for all children!

A court case in Australia



In 2020, a group of Australian teenagers aged 13-17 took the Government to court. They argued that the Federal Environment Minister has a duty to protect young people from climate change. The Judge agreed with the young people. A year later the Government went back to the Court to ask them to rethink that decision and a new group of judges said the Environment Minister did **not** have a duty of care for Australia's children. The young people are working out their next steps but are not giving up their fight.

Laws in focus



An organisation called the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) launched a project called *Children's Access to Environmental Justice*. It will research 43 countries' laws to check if they protect children's environmental rights. They have a team of 14 climate justice advisors who are between the ages of 9 and 18 and are from around the world, including Australia. These advisors will make sure CRIN's work is shaped by children and that it supports the environmental work children and young people are already doing.

School strike 4 climate

This grassroots, student-led movement aims to get governments to take climate change seriously and protect the future. Inspired by Greta Thunberg, the movement is now led by many passionate young people in countries around the world. [Learn more about the Australian movement here.](#)



ACT takes the lead

In February 2022, the ACT government began talking to people about whether the right to a healthy environment should be recognised in ACT's Human Rights Act. Every law passed in the ACT has to be in line with the *Human Right Act 2004*. If the right to a healthy environment is included it would mean the environment, and the impact of climate change on people, would have to be considered too. Other countries already recognise this as a right but if the ACT includes it, we will be the first jurisdiction in Australia to do so.





What's my job? Protecting our environment!



Dr Sophie Lewis has an amazing job! She is the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, which means she helps to make sure Canberra looks after our environment. We chatted to her about what she does, and what she loves about it.



Dr Lewis and Flip

What does the right to a healthy environment mean to you?

The Right to a Healthy Environment covers everything I work on. This recognises that we have to protect the whole of the environment and our ecosystems to make sure that people can have healthy food, water and air to live in. It also ensures that we are taking care of our environment for the future, for our kids, and their kids.

You've been working on environmental issues for a long time, what first got you interested in this?

I've always loved being out and about in nature, ever since I was a little kid. I also have always loved science, so it was pretty easy to apply my science skills to environmental issues.

What's the best thing about your job?

The best thing about my job is that I get to work towards protecting our environment. It's so easy to get so caught up in feeling worry and stress about environmental issues like climate change. My job is working to improve our environment for the future with other Canberrans, which makes me feel so much better. I have kids myself, a pre-schooler and a little baby, so it helps to work for their future.

Your job is focused on 'ecologically sustainable development'. Can you tell us what that means?

Ecologically sustainable development sounds complicated but it really just means that when we are making decisions about Canberra, we are making sure that we look after the environment and we aren't just focused on short term plans.

What is your favourite place to connect with nature around Canberra?

This is a tricky question to answer! One thing I love so much about Canberra is how much nature we have here in the city and how much of Canberra is national parks and reserves. We have nature everywhere! I really love doing trail runs around home on Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie. I also love walks on Mt Tennent, which is at the start of Namadgi National Park.

What is your favourite animal or insect?

I love love love black cockatoos. I see a few of them around Canberra, especially near my house near Mt Majura. They are big birds and graceful flyers but very noisy and silly when they are feeding and they make me laugh.

What can young Canberrans do to help the ACT be a environmentally sustainable?

There is so much that young Canberrans can do to help our city develop sustainably, from within our homes through to looking after the whole city. Talk to your parents and carers about how important the environment is to you. Bring it up with your teachers and principals and find out if your school has a sustainability group. Volunteer with your local environment group to take care of a local park or wetland area. And if you are really keen, write to the Ministers or your local Member of the Legislative Assembly and tell them your concerns and what is important to you about your local environment.



Green Activities

People often refer to environmentally friendly things as 'green'. This means they are either good for the environment or do not have a negative impact on the environment. Here are a few activities that will be good for your local environment and some of the creatures that live in it with you!

Bee Bath



Bees are really important to keep plants growing, including lots of our food. They need to drink a lot of water but risk falling in. Build a bee bath so they can drink safely.

Recycling check



Use Recycle Right to check you are recycling everything you can and not putting the wrong stuff in the recycling bin.

Green fashion



See what fashion you can create from rubbish or old clothes, by transforming them into something new!

Wildflower seed bombs



Create these awesome seed bombs to decorate neglected spaces with flowers or give as gifts! It's best to use native seeds so that they are good for local insects and animals.

Rubbish art



Can you create a work of art from rubbish? Let your imagination go wild and clean up a bit too! Check this site out for inspiration.

Take a walk



Walking, riding or scooting to school is a great way to help the environment. Cars use a non-renewable resource (oil) and create air pollution through their exhaust.

Animal of the month

Positive interactions with animals are proven to reduce stress and can speed up healing when you're hurt. Unfortunately, we don't always show them the same kindness. This month we are profiling a Canberran icon that needs some love! Earlier this month Gang-gang cockatoos were listed as an endangered species. They are not coping with increasing heat-waves and lost a lot of habitat during the bushfires. Being endangered means building developments have to be checked if they are in areas important to Gang-gangs.



Name: Gang-gang

Breed: Cockatoo

Why we love them: They sound like creaky gates. They also make happy growling sounds while eating! They are the ACT's bird emblem but are the least researched cockatoo. We need to know more about them so we help them recover.

Still coping with COVID!



People keep talking about being 'post pandemic' but with so many students, teachers and families in quarantine at the moment, sometimes it doesn't feel that way! I know lots of you are missing friends who are isolating, and some of you have had to cancel parties and other special events because you, or a family member, have Covid. I'm still feeling worried and unsettled so I bet some of you are feeling that way too. There's still a lot that is different and challenging because of Covid so it's important you take time to look after yourselves, especially if you are in quarantine. Here are some ideas to help you chillax.



Celebrating Autism and Neurodiversity

The 2nd of April is World Autism Awareness Day. If you want to do something to celebrate on the 2nd, how about watching a film about what it's like to be autistic? This one, [Autism Explained](#), was suggested by a 10 year old who says he likes it because "it helps people understand what it's like for me having autism." You might like it too, or you might need to find another one that makes sense to you. Finding out more about the different ways people experience the world around us can help us support people with autism better so it's a great way to mark World Autism Awareness Day!

Are you autistic or do you have autism?

We are celebrating neurodiversity and autism by dedicating our April newsletter to contributions from you! You can tell us something you think other children and young people or adults should know about autism or neurodiversity or you can tell us about something you love, like a passion or hobby.

You can send a picture you have created, leave a voice mail which we can type up for you, write a poem or an article. If you want to contribute but need some support, let us know and we will help you to have your say in your way. Check out actkids.act.gov.au for more info and to send your contribution to us in a way that suits you.