

Cocos (Keeling) Islands

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

Although research found that no child labor exists on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, in 2024, the government made moderate advancement in efforts to prevent the worst forms of child labor. In December 2024, the Australian parliament approved the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Amendment Bill, which aims to disrupt a key resource stream for organized crime, thereby helping to prevent illegal activities such as drug trafficking, tax evasion, cybercrime, human trafficking, and arms trafficking. Although the Cocos (Keeling) Islands made meaningful efforts in all relevant areas during the reporting period, they do not meet the international standard for free public education as the government does not afford free public education to children without legal or permanent resident status.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Research found no evidence that child labor exists in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the continued prevention of child labor in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Area	Suggested Actions
Legal Framework	Ensure that free public education is afforded to all children, regardless of legal or resident status.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are non-self-governing and are included as part of the territory of the Australian Commonwealth. Under the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 (Cth), all laws of the Commonwealth are applicable to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands as if they were a part of mainland Australia. Australia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands' laws do not meet the international standard related to free public education because free public education is not afforded to all children.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	17.5	✓	Section 190 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CKI); Section 29 of the School Education Act 1999 (WA) (CKI)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Part 7.1 Division 2 r.336 of the Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations; Section 634 of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulation 2022 (WA); Section 193 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CKI)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Application for a High Risk Work License; Section 634 of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulation 2022 (WA)
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Sections 270.1A–270.7 and 270.8 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Divisions 270.3, 270.7, 271.1, 271.4, 271.7, and 271.7F-7G of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		✓	Sections 3, 4, and 16–18 of the Prostitution Act 2000 (WA) (CKI); Sections 3 and 192 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) (CKI); Section 217 of the Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA) (CKI)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Divisions 309 and 310 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	17	✓	Art. 14 of the Canberra Act 2600
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓*	Art. 14 of the Canberra Act 2600; sec. 59 of the Defense Act of 1903
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Sections 268.68 and 268.88 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)
Compulsory Education Age	17.5	✓	Section 6 of the School Education Act (WA) (CKI)
Free Public Education		✗	Sections 4, 8, and 97 of the School Education Act (WA) (CKI); Sections 12–14A, and 62 School Education Regulations 2000

* Country has no conscription

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands' laws on free public education are not in line with international standards because free public education is not afforded to children without permanent resident status, including undocumented children. In December 2024, the Australian parliament approved the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Amendment Bill, which aims to address and eliminate organized crime, including human trafficking.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for enforcement actions to address child labor, including its worst forms. However, the Government of Australia has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
Australian Federal Police: Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Lead the Australian Center to Counter Child Exploitation.
Western Australia Department of Communities: Enforces laws related to the minimum age for work through a Service Delivery Arrangement, under which Australian government services are provided in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for mechanisms to coordinate efforts to address child labor. However, Australia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to prevent child labor.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Inter-Departmental Committee on Human Trafficking and Slavery: Deals with child labor law enforcement and policy, including the worst forms of child labor, from a counter-trafficking perspective. Comprises 11 government agencies, including the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Employment, and the Department of Foreign Affairs, and is chaired by the Department of Home Affairs. The Committee meets at least twice a year, including once at the ministerial level, and includes an Operational Working Group subcommittee. During the reporting period, the committee met six times.

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for policies to address child labor. However, Australia has established a policy to prevent child labor.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–2025: Sets five strategic priorities for addressing modern slavery, which the National Action Plan defines as trafficking in persons, slavery, slavery-like practices, and the worst forms of child labor. Priorities include: (1) prevention; (2) disruption, investigation, and prosecution; (3) support and protection for victims; (4) partnerships; and (5) research. In alignment with the National Action Plan, the Australian parliament approved the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Amendment Bill in December 2024. The bill aims to disrupt a key resource stream for organized crime, thus helping prevent illegal activities such as drug trafficking, tax evasion, cybercrime, human trafficking, and arms trafficking.

As there is no evidence of a problem, there appears to be no need for programs to address child labor. However, Australia funded programs that include the goal of preventing child labor.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Cash Assistance Programs: The Child Care Subsidy Program provides support for the care of children ages 13 or younger using an approved childcare service, and the Parenting Program provides an income support payment for the principal caretakers of a child under age 8. The program was active during the reporting period.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports