

Key Asks and Policy Position Papers 2023



Save the Children

Save the Children New Zealand

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Key Asks and Policy Position Papers 2023

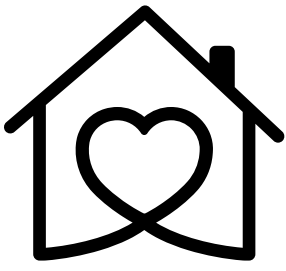


Save the Children is committed to speaking up for **children** and their **rights**, and calling on all political parties to commit to **implementing policies that uphold the rights of tamariki and support their wellbeing**. Positive policies for children have important flow-on effects for whānau, communities, and New Zealand as a nation. When our children do well, we all do well.

Save the Children New Zealand has **five key policy asks** for children and their whānau this General Election:

- 1** Climate Action now for a Sustainable Future
- 2** An Affordable and Healthy Home for Every Child
- 3** Lift the rate of the Child Disability Allowance
- 4** Continued and sustained funding for Ka Ora, Ka Ako - Healthy School Lunches Programme.
- 5** Access to quality and affordable early childhood education for all children up to 6 years of age.





Climate Action Now for a Sustainable Future

Save the Children NZ calls for urgent climate action now for a sustainable future.

To achieve this, we can for a continued commitment to:

- 1 Children and young people to be at the centre of political action to mitigate climate change and implement adaptations in the face of the climate crisis.
- 2 Children to be recognised as a key stakeholder group and explicitly included in legislation, policy and provision related to climate change and emergency management.
- 3 A government led platform where children can share their concerns and contribute their views to policy development, and be fully informed about climate change and how government is responding.
- 4 Funding initiatives that limit emissions such as investing in affordable safe, reliable green public transport, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy sources.
- 5 A just transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources that includes and supports all whānau on low incomes.
- 6 Reduction in pollution and waste, including an immediate reduction of single use plastics and a focus on refuse and reuse.

Every child deserves the **right** to a positive and sustainable future.



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'There is no Planet B!'

The Climate Crisis is a Children's Rights Crisis

Our children and young people are at the forefront of calling for climate action. In 2019 more 170,000 children marched in Aotearoa to call for political action on the climate crisis.

In July this year around 200 children aged 6 to 22 years shared their concerns and calls for climate action. These messages were presented to political representatives from the Greens, Labour and National parties and can be found via [Messages in a Bottle](#).

General Comment 26 on Children's Rights and Environment¹ (GC 26), emphasises the urgent need to address the adverse effects of environmental degradation, with a special focus on climate change, on the enjoyment of children's rights, and clarifies the obligations of States to address environmental harm and climate change. GC 26 was inspired by the efforts of children to bring attention to the climate crisis, the impact on their future, and the need for urgent action now.

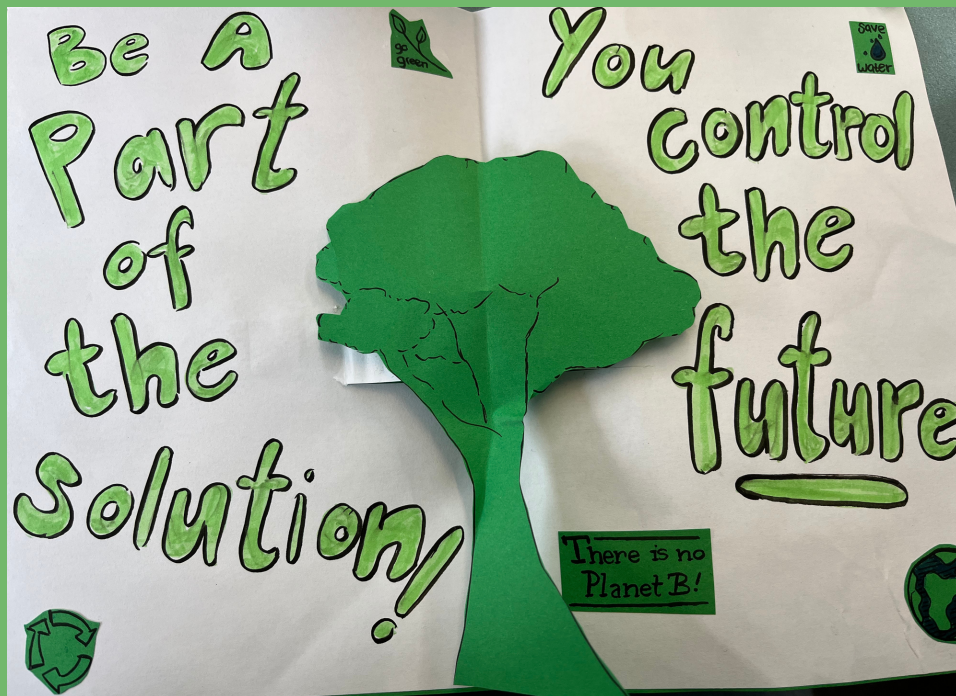


Image by student at Selwyn College

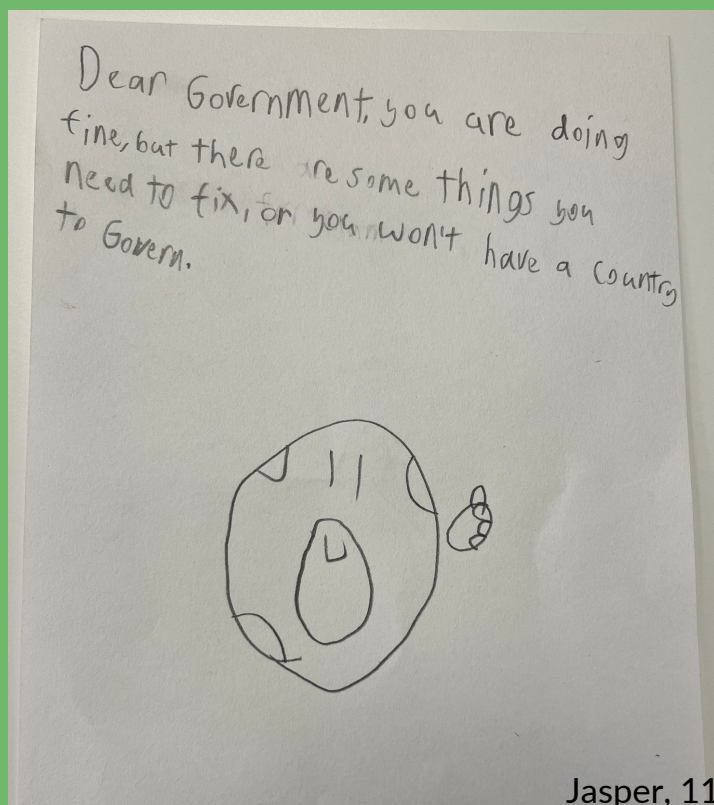
The Climate Crisis is here.

Children in Aotearoa are already being impacted by climate crisis, and our Pacific neighbours are on the very frontlines and also feeling significant impacts. Climate change is having a huge impact in the Pacific, affecting all sectors, islands, demographics, and undermining economic prosperity and human rights.

While Cyclone Gabrielle and flooding events destroyed homes and livelihoods in New Zealand, Pacific countries such as Vanuatu were decimated by back to back to cyclones. Here in New Zealand, we have not yet recovered, and neither has Vanuatu.

Those with the least resources are more acutely affected. Many families are unable to afford insurance or are underinsured. Those on low incomes struggle to replace lost belongings or to move to areas less at risk of climate change impacts. After the initial response to climate related disaster, people are often left to struggle to put their lives back together.

Having well-resourced and funded systems that support people during, immediately and in the rebuild of their lives after a climate emergency is crucial.



Jasper, 11



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The Global Climate Crisis.

Around 1 billion children, or nearly half of all children worldwide, live in countries at extreme risk of the impacts of climate change. Data on the impact of the Climate Crisis shows that children bear the greatest brunt of climate change despite contributing least to it.

Limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels will reduce the additional lifetime exposure of newborns to heatwaves by 45%, droughts by 39%, river floods by 38%, crop failures by 28%, and wildfire by 10%.

We know that climate change is unequivocally driven by human action, primarily from a small number of high emitting (mostly high-income) countries and corporations and that the window of opportunity to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is rapidly closing.

Children most impacted by inequality and discrimination and living on the frontlines of the climate crisis will face the highest costs, deeply affecting their capacity to thrive and survive.²

Sources

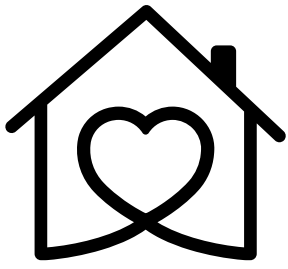
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Our **children** have led the calls for climate action in Aotearoa. They are demanding **political action** for a healthy environment that protects people, the planet, and animals.



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An Affordable and Healthy Home for **Every Child**

Save the Children NZ calls for an affordable and healthy home for every child and their whānau.

To achieve this, we call for a continued commitment to:

- 1 Build new and refurbish existing public housing stock.
- 2 Retain, enforce, and build on the Healthy Home Standards to continue to lift the quality of housing in New Zealand.
- 3 Retain policies to support warmer homes such as the Winter Energy Payment and Warmer Kiwi Homes- insulation and heating grant programme for low income households.
- 4 Implement policies to facilitate renting as a positive, affordable, safe and viable long term housing option and
- 5 Continue to invest in housing solutions for Māori, Pasifika and disabled whānau who are too often excluded from accessing affordable and healthy housing.

An affordable and healthy home is the **right of every child** and central to child wellbeing.



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Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child accords every child the right to a decent standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.¹

And that, “States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.”

Improving the standard of living for New Zealand children is a priority area recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in New Zealand’s 6th Periodic Review.²



Our Tamariki need an affordable and healthy house to call home.

A home should be a place of safety, a place to rest and re-energise, a place to connect with family and whānau, a place to learn and a place to grow. When housing is affordable and healthy, it allows children to put down roots in their community and provides a stable base for them to grow, develop and form their own identity.



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Public Housing Waitlist

As of June 2023, Aotearoa has more than 24,000 households on waitlists for public housing, with 43% of these waitlisted households consisting of children. Only those with the most serious housing needs are eligible for Public Housing. The waitlist provides an indication of the high number of families struggling to access affordable housing and unable to afford market rental rates. Being in these types of conditions can be detrimental to a child's upbringing and ability to thrive in education and impacts their overall well-being.⁹

We are living through a housing crisis, and it's seriously harming our children.

Access to affordable and healthy housing has reached crisis point in New Zealand.

All across the country, families are being pushed into poverty due to the high cost of housing, while tens-of-thousands of children each year are being admitted to hospital with preventable diseases caused by unhealthy living conditions, many which are rarely found in most of the world's wealthier nations.

3

The housing crisis is not evenly felt. According to the Housing in Aotearoa report, rates of severe housing deprivation were highest among young Pacific peoples and young Māori, while overall, severe housing deprivation prevalence rates for Pacific peoples and Māori were close to four and six times the European rate.

4
5

According to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), parents finding housing for their families is a major stressor. Research shows direct links between quality of housing and income levels on children's health and wellbeing outcomes.

Furthermore, the results of the research support current policy and legislation aimed at ensuring rental homes are warm, dry, and safe, and requires continued focus on reducing crowding through families accessing housing that meets their needs.

8

Emergency Housing

There were more than 3,552 households in emergency housing including 3,978 adults and 3,576 children as at 31 July 2023.¹⁰ Those living in emergency housing are families in the most desperate housing situations without any other housing options. Reports by the Human Rights Commission found that Emergency Housing provision is too often falling short in upholding human rights.

To solve the emergency housing situation, we need to solve the overall housing crisis to ensure there are enough healthy and affordable homes for all.

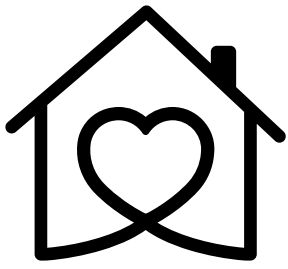
**An affordable and healthy home is the
right of every child.**

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Lift the Rate of the **Child Disability Allowance**

Save the Children NZ calls for children living with a disability to be lifted out of poverty by increasing the Child Disability Allowance.

To achieve this, we call for a continued commitment to:

1

A substantive lift to the Child Disability Allowance (CDA) to levels that will lift disabled children and their whānau out of poverty.

2

That the CDA is proactively made known to all whānau with a child eligible to receive the CDA.

Children living with a disability have the **right** to a decent standard of living and support to enjoy **full and decent lives.**



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Every child has the right to a decent standard of living.

Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child accords every child the right to a decent standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development,¹ this equally applies to disabled children.

Article 23 accords disabled children the right to enjoy full and decent lives, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. This includes the right to financial assistance to ensure disabled children can access education, readiness for employment, health and rehabilitation care, recreation, and active participation in their community.

What is the Child Disability Allowance?

The Child Disability Allowance is a fortnightly payment of \$56.60 made to the main carer of a child or young person with a serious disability. The purpose of the CDA is a financial payment in recognition of the extra care and attention the child needs

The Link Between Child Poverty and Disability

Children and with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by poverty. Many experience intersectional adversity, health challenges and associated costs. Additionally, parents of children with disabilities are constrained in their ability to earn an income outside of the home as they are already committed to the caring needs of their children. These challenges are well recognised including by the Committee of the Rights of the Child who stress the importance of allocating disabled children with adequate budgetary resources.²



Ensure Equitable Access to the CDA

Equitable access to the CDA needs to be improved as barriers exist that prevent all whānau with disabled children from accessing it despite their eligibility. Barriers include costs and accessibility associated with obtaining relevant documentation and medical certificates, difficulties in navigating an overly complex system, discrimination, and racism, and even knowing that this allowance exists.³ Disabled children and their whānau not accessing the CDA are more likely to be living in poverty, and/or identify as Māori, or Pasifika.⁴

The Data is Clear that Disabled Children are Overrepresented in Child Poverty Measures.

According to Stats NZ 2021/22 Child Poverty Statistics for Aotearoa, disabled children and children in households where someone is disabled are more likely to be in poverty according to the nine child poverty measures.⁵

For disabled children, results for the primary child poverty measures for the year ended June 2022, indicated:

- 1 in 6 (17.0 percent) lived in households with less than 50 percent of the median household income before deducting housing costs (measure 'a'), with no statistically significant change compared with 2020,
- 1 in 7 (15.1 percent) lived in households with less than 50 percent of the baseline year's median income after housing costs were deducted (measure 'b'), a statistically significant decrease in the rate compared with 2020 (21.5 percent).
- 1 in 5 (21.5 percent) lived in households experiencing material hardship, with no statistically significant change compared with 2020.⁶

Material hardship rates show that disabled children are missing out on more than 6 of the 17 basic things most people would regard as essentials. Such as, regular access to a healthy diet, not being able to pay for a household energy bill on time, lack of warm clothing or shoes.

Recent improvements in data collection are heartening where Stats New Zealand can now report on data that shows how disabled children are impacted poverty.⁷ However, limitations still exist where further disaggregation is not available, for example how many disabled children in poverty also identify as tamariki Māori.⁸ For more accurate insights into how disabled children experience poverty, improvements to data collection are still required.⁹

Every Child has the **right** to a decent standard of living and support to enjoy **full and decent lives.**

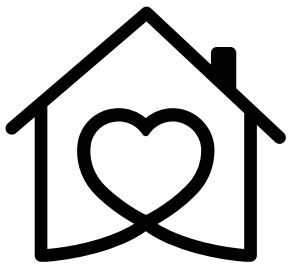
Lift the **Child Disability Allowance** and help close the poverty gap.

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Ka Ora Ka Ako - Healthy Lunches in Schools for **Every Child**

Save the Children NZ calls for further commitment to the healthy lunches in schools programme.

To achieve this, we can for a continued commitment
to:

- 1** Continued and sustained funding to embed this programme as part of education delivery in New Zealand, and,
- 2** For this programme to be extended to more schools and to early childhood education centres.

Every child has the **right** to
good **nutrition**.



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Ka Ora, Ka Ako provides free healthy lunches to 220,000 children in eligible schools and kura. Budget 2023 has allocated \$323.4 million (total operating) to continue delivering these free lunches in schools.¹

It is our very strong view that **Ka Ora Ka Ako** is an important **investment** in the **well-being and education** of our children, and directly contributes to **healthy** food systems in our **communities**.

Investing in regular access to nutritious food to promote food security for our children.

Every child has the right to a decent standard of living to ensure their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, this includes regular access to good nutrition, Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Improving the standard of living for New Zealand children is a priority area recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in New Zealand's 6th Periodic Review.

For children to learn and to grow healthy bodies and smart brains they need regular access to good nutrition.

However, too many of our children are going without the food they need. The Growing Up in New Zealand study, Now We are Twelve² has found that nearly one in five New Zealand children are experiencing food insecurity and are going to school or ECE hungry.



The cost of living crisis has seen extreme rises in healthy food prices.³

This is having a dire impact on families already struggling to get by on too low incomes. When families are in financial distress their ability to buy healthy food is seriously limited, and this can translate to children going to school without food.

New Zealand has made a positive commitment to tackling food insecurity through Ka Ora Ka Ako – Healthy School Lunches Programme. New Zealand has invested in building the systems and infrastructure to deliver equitable access to a healthy lunch. There are positive social impacts from eating together, along with support for local food systems, local jobs, and a significant reduction on the reliance on cheap, packaged unhealthy food that is bad for bodies, learning, and the environment.

Providing healthy food in schools is a targeted way the Government can directly address poverty and food insecurity and consequently improving child wellbeing. Despite this promising start and significant investment to set up systems to deliver the Healthy School Lunch programme, Budget 2023 only allowed funding to deliver the programme to 2024. Future funding past 2024 has not been guaranteed.

Save the Children calls for a long-term funding guarantee; a sustained investment in this programme that would see it become embedded in the culture of attending school in Aotearoa and be extended to include early childhood education centres.

Evidence supports the continuation and growth of Ka Ako Ka Ora.

Researchers from the University of Auckland, Te Kura I Awarua Research Centre at Te Pūkenga Hawke's Bay and consultancy Synergia reviewed data from the Ka Ora, Ka Ako Healthy School Lunch programme, along with international literature.¹¹ The study found that the programme is having positive effects on children's wellbeing and educational outcomes and additionally enriches school environments, boosts local economies, enhances availability and affordability of healthy foods and encourages innovations, such as sustainable packaging.¹²

Taking a universal approach where all students in eligible schools are provided with lunch removes the stigma associated with singling out children that are coming to school without food largely due to socioeconomic reasons. There are many benefits for children including health, nutrition and social benefits gained from eating together.

Why New Zealand tamariki need this programme.

Food insecurity is related to low disposable household income and material deprivation. It is currently used as an indicator to monitor progress in line with the Child Poverty Reduction Act.⁴

The Growing up in New Zealand study Now we are Eight,⁵ revealed that children living in households with moderate to severe food insecurity are less likely to receive the nutrition they need for healthy development. Compared to children in food secure households, children with food insecurity have lower fruit and vegetable intake, are less likely to eat breakfast at home before school and have more fast food and more fizzy drinks because these are cheap, filling alternatives. Research indicates that reducing food insecurity for children and young people through a school lunch programme improves diet quality and academic achievement.⁶

Due to structural and systemic problems such as poverty and inequality, Māori and Pasifika children and those living in socioeconomically deprived neighbourhoods are disproportionately affected by food insecurity.⁷

For more than a decade children's advocates⁸ have been calling for government to provide food in schools to support equitable attendance, wellbeing and learning outcomes. Ka Ora Ka Ako is a long awaited and valuable response.

Schools are reporting the value of the scheme.

Principals from a number of schools have spoken up in support of the programme and benefits they are seeing for the students. Examples include Bishop Viard College Porirua,⁹ Flaxmere College Hawkes Bay, Bankwood School Hamilton and Huntly West Primary Huntly.¹⁰



Every child has the **right** to a decent standard of living, to promote their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

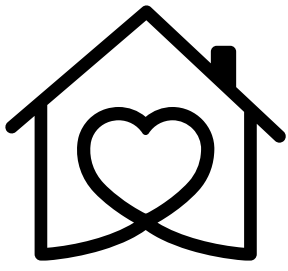
This includes regular access to **good nutrition**.

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Quality and Affordable Early Childhood Education

Save the Children NZ calls for access to quality and affordable early childhood education (ECE) for all children up to 6 years of age.

To achieve affordability and quality, we call for:

- 1** A review of the ECE system with a focus on funding to ensure that is affordable for all whānau to access early childhood education and care for their children.
- 2** Improve the ratios of adults to children under the age of 3 years in teacher-led centre-based early learning services.
- 3** Expand the number of early childhood education services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau.
- 4** Commit to the progressive implementation of the Early Learning Action Plan.¹

Early Childhood Education Supports the
Rights and Wellbeing of our Children



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Early Childhood Education supports the rights and wellbeing of our children.

Engagement in early childhood education is important in upholding the rights of children under six years of age, interalia, two key examples include:

- Article 29 accords all children with the right to a quality education that develops the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.²
- Article 23 accords all children with any kind of disability the right to be supported so they can lead full and independent lives.³

A child rights approach to ECE relates directly to the Early Learning Action Plan's expectation that high quality early learning settings support and include children with disabilities to participate, learn and achieve regardless of their individual needs or differences.⁴

Participating in Early Childhood Education is an important part of a child's life.

Save the Children recognises early childhood as a critical stage of the life course, beginning from birth up to 8 years of age. It is the foundation of a child's future health, growth, development, achievement at school and throughout life.

Experiences in these early years shape the brain architecture and have a direct impact on social, emotional and learning skills.

High-quality and accessible early childhood care and education is associated with a range of positive outcomes including reduced parental stress, decreased rates of child maltreatment and better social and cognitive outcomes for children.⁵

The important support provided by ECE for parents in caring for their children is affirmed by research published by Save the Children finding that ECE teachers are the most frequently used source of professional support for parents and their parenting practices.⁶ 87% of parents in the study reported engaging with ECE teachers for support on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.



Early Childhood Education is an important support for whānau.

Engaging in ECE is important for parents and children. Increasing numbers of parents are in the paid workforce outside of the home. Returning to work or study was the main reason parents reported for accessing care for their children.⁷ Therefore, there is a high reliance on ECE to support working parents and creates a situation of sharing the roles and responsibilities of early learning and caring for a child between parents and their ECE provider.

For some whānau, ECE can provide a critical link to other supports they may need. ECE services that provide wrap around services play an important role in helping whānau to access additional services such as health, housing, or social supports. Further investment is needed to ensure ECE centres with wrap around services are well-resourced and are accessible to the families that need them.

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