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Dear Michael,

Connected Youth Justice State Plan

Thank you for the invitation to provide feedback on the Connected Youth Justice State Plan. I was pleased to see that the plan aims to touch on many of the dimensions that contribute to vulnerable young people's marginalisation in our community through the '*Young People Connected, Communities Protected*' Blueprint and the *Connected Youth Justice - Connections Map*.

This Strategy appears to be consistent with section 4 of the *Child and Young Person (Safety) Act 2017* where the Parliament of South Australia commits to promoting – with early intervention as a priority – the following outcomes:

- To be safe from harm;
- To do well at all levels of learning and to have skills for life;
- To enjoy a healthy lifestyle;
- To be active citizens who have a voice and influence.

Under *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* (OAB Act) each "State authority must, in carrying out its functions or exercising its powers, protect, respect and seek to give effect to the rights set out from time to time in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) and any other relevant international human rights instruments affecting children and young people". As Commissioner I must ensure that the State satisfies its international obligations in respect to children and young people (s 14(1)(e) OAB Act).

Overall, I have reservations about whether this strategy will actually improve the outcomes of children and young people touched by the youth justice system. There is a lack of recognition to the State's commitment, CRC and other international instruments, including "The Beijing Rules". Further, there is a lack of detail over what the outcomes are, what the performance measures will be and any steps taken to achieve any outcomes. These factors are vital to bring about concrete outcomes.

Please find some detailed feedback and comments below on how the blueprint and connections map could be improved and where the best areas of focus are. I trust you will consider this feedback in detail to ensure that we are able to support our vulnerable children and young people and work towards the best solutions for them.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Connolly
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Overall

Aligning this strategy to other state and national strategies

One of the questions that has been asked is who should be involved. This can be determined by looking at the other strategies, programs and plans currently in play and who is leading them. Particular strategies with which the current strategy should attempt to align more closely with include (but are not limited to):

- Commonwealth Department of Social Services 'The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children'.
- The Department for Education's 'Every Chance for Every Child' and the 'Aboriginal Education Strategy'.
- Department of Premier and Cabinet's 'Getting it Right Early', South Australian Government's Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy for Child Abuse and Neglect 2018-2019'.
- The 'Family Matters' National Roadmap and related principles.
- The DCSI Youth Strategy for South Australia.
- The Australian Institute of Family Studies 'Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect'.

Any strategy and/or partnership should be clearly articulated within this strategy and mapped to better articulate how agencies will work together to achieve any outcomes. Doing this will better inform overall accountability and transparency in the State Plan's objectives.

Feedback on *'Connected Youth Justice – Connections Map'*

Children and young people are not at the centre of the picture

For the strategy to be truly child-centric, children and young people should be at the centre of this picture with protective factors surrounding them, not appearing on the edge - with protective agencies, such as Health, Education and Community Services surrounding them. This would better reflect the importance children are within this strategy and ensure every decision is child-centric.

The connections should be made more specific

The green and orange arrows at the bottom of the diagram should not be so linear. It makes it appear that, for example "culture and respect" can only be used as an intervention when at the "DCP" level. Factors such as culture, community support, early intervention and diversion should be seen as factors across the entire cycle for a child on the 'lower pathway'. These interventions can be explicitly linked to services or programs that could support these factors, providing a roadmap of what services, when and how.

The Connections Map also raises some questions:

- What does child-inclusive practice look like for SAPOL?
- What assessments are you talking about and should they not be earlier?

Feedback on *'Young People Connected, Communities Protected'* Blueprint

More inclusive language

Central to the blueprint is the inclusion of young people, but regrettably the title of the blueprint suggests that young people are not a part of our community and instead that they are the "others". These young people (who are often the most vulnerable) should not be seen as a threat, but integral members of our community who need support. The title should be reworded to more accurately reflect this and should incorporate more positive language to better reflect the opportunities for their constructive contribution in our community.

The 'change lever' of young people under Aboriginal community support also requires rewording. At the moment it is worded in a way that suggests that all Aboriginal young people are disengaged from their communities. This is not an accurate reflection of the entire cohort and risks promoting assumptions about them and further marginalisation.

Ensuring young people play a central role

Children and young people are central to the implementation of this blueprint and consequently the 'change levers' should be reprioritised to reflect this, making the map more child-centric. This better reiterates the role that young people are able to make and helps to establish a place for their voices, in-line with Articles 12 and 13 of the CRC.

There is significant opportunity for the involvement of young people in the blueprint. The development of 'our people' could incorporate youth influenced practice and 'Young People's Wellbeing' should factor in consultations to determine what young people want. Ensuring that a young person is an active participant in a plan would also assist in keeping young people central to the blueprint. These will help to ensure support services are tailored in a way that are child-centric and that supports, programs and services, remain relevant, usable and accessible to them at all stages.

Where the blueprint identifies that creation of opportunities, or the empowerment for young people through collaboration, it should clarify exactly how this will work in addition to the actions that are necessary. This will provide more certainty for the involvement of young people and the capacity in which they will be engaged in.

Clarifying the blueprint's direction and focus

The blueprint should provide more clarity regarding its direction and projected path. This could be achieved by incorporating an outline of what has been done to date and what the next steps are for the shared statements. An outline should also incorporate action steps, outcomes and time frames.

The value statements and themes also need further clarification in their wording. This is applicable to a number of the themes. In particular the theme 'our people' and who these people 'are'. The value statement of this theme should seek to focus on understanding and supporting young people and also valuing, respecting and listening to them to reflect the rights that are afforded to children and young people in the CRC. The value statements regarding young people similarly should incorporate their rights, needs and interests. This is also necessary where the Blueprint references safety; the focus here should not just be on this but rather on developmental potential and rights.

Transparency and accountability

It is good to see that the blueprint identifies transparency and accountability as key components. For this, it will be necessary that data collected to inform business intelligence includes data on outcomes and not only outputs. Connected services should be informed by similar principles and should also seek to remain transparent in keeping open notes in addition to data. In informing business intelligence what strategic and tactical responses are being developed in response should also be better defined to determine the involvement of partnerships and improve transparency across the blueprint.

The openness of the blueprint should also be matched by accountability. I commend the blueprint for including KPIs on outcomes. Accountability could be further strengthened with CEO accountability for the outcomes.

Building on better progress

I am pleased to see that the plan seeks to improve sharing and collaboration across the numerous partners. It is important that where integration is sought that this occurs across systems and jurisdictions. This will help to ensure that progress in other jurisdictions can be built upon and lessons learnt elsewhere can be incorporated in our own state.

It is important however that better collaboration does not come at the expense of providing young people with the supports, programs and services that they need. The process of interlinking a range of support services, for examples, assumes that there is equal access to support across Adelaide. As this is not always the case a focus area should also consider strengthening accessibility in addition to collaboration.