



LISTENING TOUR

reflections

We need a platform where young people can express the things they want to change - as I have done today at this meeting. Let youth decide their own futures!

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Hearing the voices of South Australia's
children and young people



Commissioner
for Children &
Young People

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Thank you to all of the children and young people who were so generous, open, honest and willing to share their thoughts, views and ideas with me throughout my Listening Tour.

Thank you to the agencies, schools, children's centres, service providers and others who provided support and assistance – without you, these face-to-face conversations could not have happened. Thank you also to those agencies who expressed an interest in being involved but for reasons beyond their control could not be included in the schedule.

Thank you to Strategic Engagement and Participation Officer Jodie Evans, who was invaluable in scheduling, facilitating and recording each consultation. Her commitment to not missing any child's contribution is outstanding.

Disclaimer

All artwork and images in this report have been produced by children and young people on the Listening Tour and represented in its original form.

Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The SA Commissioner for Children and Young People acknowledges the unique contribution of Aboriginal people's culture and heritage to South Australian society. For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses South Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises those of Torres Strait Islander descent. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities do exist.

Suggested citation

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Commissioner's message



Helen Connolly

Commissioner for Children
and Young People

As South Australia's first Commissioner for Children and Young People I advocate for systemic changes to policies, programs and practices impacting the rights, development and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people. I collaborate and partner with stakeholders, inform and raise awareness of issues, conduct research and provide advocacy and advice. My work is underpinned by the voices and experiences of children and young people with a specific focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.

The development and wellbeing of South Australian children must be a priority in our community, and the Commission aims to lay the foundation for that to happen by valuing the participation of children and young people, and amplifying and supporting their voices and views.

Children and young people were significantly involved in my recruitment and selection process and I wanted to continue that engagement. Indeed, I felt it was critical to inform my focus, direction and priorities. Therefore, my first major task as Commissioner was to ask children and young people to share their views on what the priority areas should be.


And so, the Listening Tour was born.

The tour has taken me across the state to meet, discuss and build relationships with children, young people, community service agencies, schools, preschools, child care centres, hospitals, libraries, places of worship and clubs. I have met with thousands of children and young people, aged from two years to twenty, from diverse backgrounds, including those doing it tough. I have had one-on-one conversations with amazing, expressive, thoughtful and future focussed young South Australians. They have generously shared their views with me.

This document summarises the Listening Tour and my initial reflections on these conversations. However, it is merely a starting point – it is not intended to fully reflect on or respond to the rich and invaluable voices of children and young people that we have gathered so far. Over the coming months, we will continue to reflect upon, analyse, act on and share what we have learned.

I am committed to continuing to engage, consult and collaborate with children and young people, and to work with other child advocates, to represent their views and interests in the public arena. Together, we will build communities where children and young people can be safe, healthy, engaged and valued and are able to access all available opportunities, with a positive view of their future.

Thank you to all of the children and young people who participated in the tour, and the organisations and agencies that so willingly and enthusiastically supported them to do so.



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Introduction

The Listening Tour was launched on 15 June 2017. Its aim was to give me, as Commissioner, the opportunity to meet with as many children and young people across the state as possible.

The purpose was to find out what matters to them and how they think their lives can be improved. It was also to find out what they want me, as Commissioner, to focus on.

I sought to ask these questions of as many groups representing South Australia's diverse population as possible.

My office worked with a range of hosts involved with children and young people across the state, who not only provided invaluable insight and assistance in facilitating safe environments for our sessions, but in supporting participants throughout the process.

Our focus was on ensuring consultations were respectful, safe, inclusive and engaging, and that they drew upon the key principles of providing child-safe¹ environments:

- The safety and wellbeing of children is a paramount consideration.
- The opinions and views of children are valued and embraced.

- Children are encouraged and assisted to build skills that enable them to participate.
- Action is taken to protect children from harm, discomfort or distress.

Underpinning all this is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I have drawn from a range of theories and modalities to develop our approach to our conversations with children and young people.

Following three and a half-months of face-to-face conversations across the state with 1,419 children and young people, my staff and I have created a repository of their views that will be used to inform further work conducted by the Commission.

This document looks at my key reflections from the Listening Tour.

1. *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice*. Issued by the Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child Development, (Section 8A, Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA), July 2012 (Updated 2016)).

Background

In 2015, the Council for the Care of Children asked 682 children and young people from South Australia what they wanted in a children's commissioner. The answer was: a commissioner who, "cared about, likes, knows and respects children and one who listened to them and took them seriously".

Children and young people believed the best way a commissioner could find out what matters to them was to have face-to-face contact² and to travel all over South Australia. They suggested that visiting children who are vulnerable or who don't usually get to have a say was also important.

It wasn't until 2016 that the role of Commissioner was created: set out under the *The Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*. The Commissioner's purpose includes promoting and advocating both:

- The wellbeing of children and young people in South Australia.
- The participation by children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives.

I was appointed in April 2017, and when deciding how to seek feedback directly from South Australia's children and young people, I looked to the Council's results to inform the decisions around how to conduct the Listening Tour.

It was important that questions were asked in a face-to-face setting, so support agencies, schools, childcare centres, church groups, councils, clubs and government departments who have direct contact with

children and young people were asked if they could host those conversations.

The Listening Tour kicked off in Mount Gambier as the Mount Gambier City Youth Advisory Group had written a letter to the Council outlining what their members thought the role of a Commissioner for Children and Young People should be. This included: "someone that uses social media, who is prepared to be in the community having two-way discussions with children and young people and who is guided by and accountable to young people and children"³.



² & ³ Madden, M., & Chapman, S. 2015, *Conversations Report 2015: Rights and a Commissioner for Children and Young People*. The Council for the Care of Children in partnership with Save the Children Australia and the Department for Education and Child Development, Adelaide.

Who are
South
Australia's
children
and young
people?

South Australia's population of 403,337⁴ children and young people is diverse in many ways.

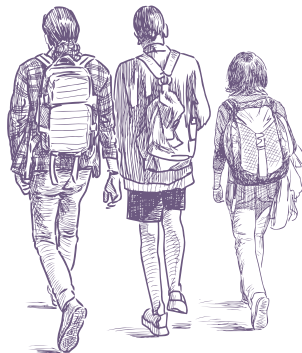
Currently, there are:



101,392 newborns to four year olds



96,788 10 to 14 year olds



104,377 15 to 18 year olds



100,774 five to nine year olds



17,048
identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Of those:



91,591
live outside of Adelaide



24,009
are from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds

Some have differing abilities.
Some have complex communication needs.
Some are doing it tough or are considered vulnerable.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Age structure – Five year age groups (South Australia). Australian Bureau of Statics, Canberra, viewed 21 November 2017
<<http://profile.id.com.au/australia/five-year-age-groups?WebID=130>>.

The Listening Tour

The Listening Tour was launched on 15 June 2017 and involved three and a half months of face-to-face meetings with many children and young people across the state.



1,419 children and young people took part

94 one-on-one consultations

Purpose

The tour was designed to give me an opportunity to meet South Australia's children and young people face to face to:

- Gain an understanding of what matters to them and what they think is important.
- Hear, from their perspective, how the lives of young South Australians could be improved.
- Find out what they think my role, as Commissioner, should focus on and what my priorities should be.

The questions

These intentions determined three key questions I asked:

1. What's important to you?
2. What would you change in South Australia to make life better for children and young people?
3. What do you think the Commissioner should do in her role to help make life better for children and young people in South Australia? (Participants were asked to write their "number one thing" for me.)

Age groups involved

- A quarter of the sessions had 0-5 year olds participating.
- A quarter of the sessions had 6-19 year olds participating.
- Two-thirds of the sessions had 11-15 year olds participating.
- Two-thirds of the sessions had 16-18 year olds participating.
- One-third of the sessions had young people over 18, as many hosts support young people until they are 25 years.



78 were small group consultations

Diversity

My goal was to meet with as many groups representing South Australia's diverse population as possible.

- 190 identified as Aboriginal
- 143 from culturally and linguistically diverse families
- 186 were refugees or recent arrivals in Australia

I also met with children and young people from the LGBTIQ community, those experiencing homelessness, young carers children, in care and those involved in the youth justice system.

Note: Particular population groups were represented in specific small groups as well as being part of some of the larger groups. We recorded this detail in relation to the small groups, only.



The Listening Tour



Where we went

The tour visited remote and regional South Australia – Mount Gambier, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, the Fleurieu Peninsula and the Adelaide Plains. I also spent a week on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

Exceptions to the rule

APY Lands

Given the logistics of travel on the APY Lands, I took the opportunity to travel with the Minister for Education, Susan Close, and senior leadership. I visited Pipalyatjara, Murputja, Amata, Pukatja/ Ernabella, Kenmore Park, Fregon, Mimili, Indulkana and Umuwa communities.

In my conversations with children and young people, I could see how they are engaging with learning, technology, culture and art. I also heard their hopes and aspirations for themselves and their community.

Under fives

The youngest participants – the two to four year olds – were happy (with the exception of the occasional shy, sick or grumpy child) to share their thoughts.

This age group was asked to draw us something that was special to them, something that made them happy, something they liked doing or that made them feel good. I was also guided by the early educators in the locations I visited. Their very special contributions have been captured in drawings, separately from the themes, to ensure they are not lost.



Methodology and practice adopted by the Commissioner

Our approach

The methods used to coordinate, develop and facilitate the face-to-face consultations was carefully considered and chosen for their effectiveness in line with a child-safe approach.

That is, the focus was on ensuring consultations were respectful, safe, inclusive and engaging, and that they drew upon the four key principles of providing child-safe environments (as set out previously).

The conversations and interactions with children and young people were built on principles gathered from a range of theories and modalities, such as social group work, strengths-based approaches and narrative techniques.

The key strategy was to build a safe, respectful and trusting rapport and to show children and young people that they were the people who mattered most in the room.



Example two:

Levelling the playing field.
When adults outnumbered children and young people, I good-naturedly asked some of the adults to leave the room. Or when a child presented as shy, I would give them my phone and ask them to be resident photographer for the session, placing trust in them and treating them as an equal.



Example one:

Showing respect.
Upon arrival at each session, I playfully shook the hand and remembered the name of every participant in the room. Also, before the session began, all participants were given the opportunity to ask me any question they liked.



Hosts provided invaluable assistance and insight in helping to facilitate the sessions.

Schools were not the main setting as some children feel disengaged from school, while others are not comfortable openly sharing their thoughts and opinions in the school environment. See Appendix 2 for full list of settings.

The most important role of our hosts was supporting participants before, during and after each session. Although no sensitive questions were asked, participating in groups, sharing viewpoints and meeting with people they do not know can have perceived risks.

Each of the methods used to coordinate, develop and facilitate the face-to-face consultations was carefully considered and chosen for their effectiveness in line with a child-safe approach.

A risk and needs assessment was conducted before each session. The key elements of this assessment included:

- Considerations about these elements were made in conjunction with the hosts, although I often took the lead on what was most appropriate for a particular group.

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Methodology and practice

The sessions

I found that sessions are most successful when we are prepared and flexible, show respect, apply no pressure and make no assumptions.

In most cases, the sessions followed a specific format, but it was inevitable that there would be some variation, based on the needs of the children and young people involved.

Activities and materials were chosen for the consultation sessions that would be engaging, fun, interactive and non-confrontational. They were also designed to be inclusive – taking into consideration age, communication needs, literacy levels and sensory needs. Cultural considerations were also a factor – this was often guided by our hosts in regard to what strategies best suited their groups.

Children and young people got to choose their preferred method of expression – writing, drawing or just talking. They also chose which materials they worked with and whether they worked as part of a group or individually. The options to not participate or to remain present without contributing were also made available.

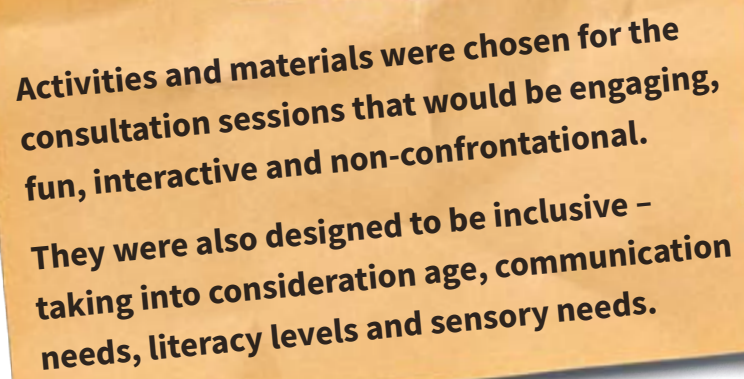
Decisions around the materials used and activities conducted drew on three understandings:

- art encourages self-expression
- ‘fidgets’ help some children concentrate
- having fun builds confidence.

A different activity was included for each question. This ranged from mind maps, canvases and scrolls to ‘stations’⁵ and the ‘one thing’⁶ note. This was crucial to keeping things active, focused, engaging and energised.

Participants chose between various types of writing and drawing implements, some with differing sensory features. I also scribed for individuals and groups when that was found to be the most suitable or preferred approach.

When the ‘formal’ part of the session – asking my three questions – was complete, I allowed for ‘aha’ moments. These are when some participants realise that they do have something to say or ideas about solutions they want to share, and that they really do care about a lot of diverse things, personally and globally.



Activities and materials were chosen for the consultation sessions that would be engaging, fun, interactive and non-confrontational. They were also designed to be inclusive – taking into consideration age, communication needs, literacy levels and sensory needs.

⁵ Three change stations were set up for large groups for the second question. I asked what participants would change at home, at school, around the world to make life better for children and young people.

⁶ These are the notes that participants wrote to tell me one thing I should know, do or prioritise in response to the third question.

Methodology and practice

Confidentiality and anonymity

Names were not recorded during the Listening Tour. While some younger children wrote their names on their drawings, these have not been recorded in our documentation.

Children and young people were asked to record their age with their comments, but we respected those who preferred us not to record them.

At each session, I explained that I may want to report on what I heard in relation to particular groups of children and young people, and that groups may be determined by age, where they live or other points of difference or similarity.

Hosts provided details regarding children's cultural backgrounds, communication needs and vulnerabilities in a broad context. However, in the larger groups, individual children's demographics were not specified or recorded, and therefore not reflected in this document.

The written reports and direct quotes for each of the 94 consultations of the Listening Tour have been uploaded to secure, cloud-based, qualitative research software called Dedoose. With this data, themes have been identified and coded, creating a repository of the views and aspirations of the children and young people to be used to inform further work conducted by the Commission.



Reflections

mainstream
Schools should
focus on preparation
for living out of
home; i.e. budgeting,
taxes, job finding
as well as the already
on going curriculum.

Children and young people have conveyed some clear messages from the Listening Tour and there is a lot to reflect on. The analysis of the rich data gathered throughout the Listening Tour has only just begun.

There are many stories, anecdotes, descriptions, explanations and other details to be shared from the dynamic dialogue that occurred. The initial reflections on the data have highlighted some common themes that have emerged across the discussions.

This section documents my reflections on what children and young people have said in response to my questions.

Question one: What's important to children and young people in South Australia?

1. School, education, learning

School is not just about which subjects you study or what job you might be working towards, but about forming relationships, developing your own identity, and feeling and being connected – learning how to participate in social structures and systems while also finding your way to being independent.

“Doing well at school is crucial, as it is a gateway into achieving my goal.”

“Education makes you grow as a person, determines my future, broadens knowledge.”

Children and young people of all ages spoke about how important school, education and learning is to them. Many mentioned a “love of learning”.

Key themes included the importance of having supportive teachers and being taught things they really need to know. They see being given opportunities to experience new things as a positive.

Reflections

Many discussed the different ways that they learn and how sometimes they don't fit into what is described as 'mainstream school':

- Some children and young people said they respond better to smaller class sizes, different settings and different teaching styles.
- Many spoke about the benefits of being provided alternatives, choices and variations.

2. Family

It is clear that no matter the age, circumstance or family composition, families and family-style relationships are very important to children and young people.

Children and young people spoke about family being important to them because "they stand by me no matter what", "they help you" and they "would be lost" without them.

Young people talked about how important it is to spend time with their family:

- One young person told us she loves the Crows because that's when she spends quality time with her mum.
- Another loves fishing as his parents are separated and that is when he spends one-on-one time with his dad.
- Another young person described the most important thing about family as, "they all listen, they care about me and they help me with things I don't understand".

Some young people also talked about family in terms of their culture, values, learning what they believe in and being given guidance:

- They described having respect for their families and learning from them what respect for others means.
- Some young people also talked about wanting to give back to their families, saying that doing well at school, getting a good job and making something of their lives are all ways they can do this.

Some young people I met were experiencing homelessness or were in care and some were estranged in some other way from their family. Many of them still identify family as being important – they talked about individual family members such as siblings or grandparents, or described, generally, how important it is for all children to have a good family:

- One young woman talked about the approaching birth of her baby and explained how she was committed to not just creating her own family, but a better family than she had experienced.



Reflections

3. Activities

Children and young people talked a lot about activities that were important to them: playing sport, spending time with friends, hobbies of all types, social media, and participating in creative activities.

When asked to explain why activities are important to them, children and young people are clear – it's about much more than just being entertained or not being bored. Activities are about connections, relationships, social engagement, community participation, health and wellbeing.

Children and young people said:

- Riding skateboards, scooters and bikes is important because “it keeps you fit, gives you something to do and [you] meet new people every day”.
- “Drama opportunities give students a chance to meet new people and break out of their comfort zones”.

- Gaming is an opportunity to “meet people who enjoy what I enjoy even if we never say a word”.
- Books “bring joy”.
- Social media is about “chatting with friends” and being able to “talk to my family that live far away”.

A lot talked about the importance of playing sport for health, social and personal reasons. Sport is important because “it keeps me happy”, “it's something that's part of me” and because “I will be healthy”.

4. Meeting places

A recurring issue was the need for “places to hang” specifically designed for young people. Children and young people felt these would need to be safe, accessible, inclusive, free of alcohol and drugs, and filled with things that young people enjoy such as music, food and activities.

Young people provided details about age range, costs, ways to manage safety and even suitable locations. While this was a topic that came up everywhere we went, it held particular significance in regional areas.



Reflections

Areas they identified as important included jobs, further education, access to sport, and pathways into the arts.

5. Opportunities

'Opportunity' is a broad term, and as you would expect, there were many discussions about the different types of opportunities that matter to children and young people. It is clear that children and young people think a lot about what opportunities they do and don't have, and what this means for those who don't have the same opportunities.

Overall, they spoke about how important particular opportunities are to them, the different types of opportunities that matter and why. Areas they identified as important included jobs, further education, access to sport, and pathways into the arts.

Other opportunities that matter to children and young people are "being involved in my community", "meeting new people", "trying new things" and "having a say".

- Some young people who have these opportunities recognise that others do not, and feel their opportunities should be available to all.
- Children living in remote South Australia would really like to "see more kids".
- Some children from culturally diverse backgrounds want "more cultural festivals".
- Aboriginal children often want to be able to learn and share more about their culture.

6. Jobs

One of the main types of opportunity that young people talked about was jobs.

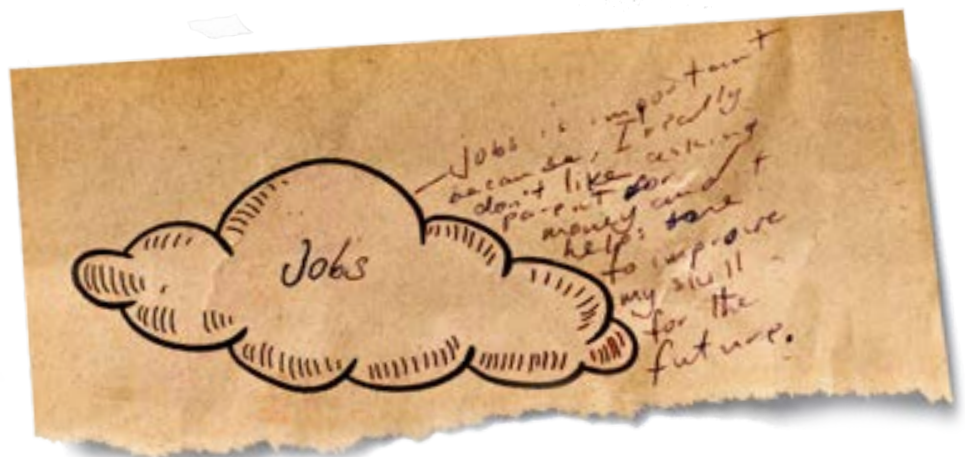
- They want part-time work now and more options in the future.
- They talked about needing work "to gain an income to support self-needs".
- Some talked about the importance of networking as they see getting a job as being "all about who you know".

Young people face difficulties getting a job, often being told in interviews that the problem is, "[I] don't have experience," that they need more access to work experience because "it's hard to build up a resume".

Other barriers to work include:

- Living in regional or remote towns.
- Not having or being able to get their licence.
- For some, having a disability is something they believe will limit their job opportunities.

They also talked about how young workers are treated, pay rates and the impact of age on getting certain types of jobs.



Reflections

Children and young people talked a lot about how important their friends are to them and acknowledged the complex, intricate and prominent nature of their peer relationships.

7. Friends

All age groups identified friendships as being extremely important and the reasons are numerous, multifaceted and varied. Clearly, having positive friendships throughout childhood, adolescence and young adulthood is paramount to the wellbeing of all children and young people.

Children and young people talked a lot about how important their friends are to them and acknowledged the complex, intricate and prominent nature of their peer relationships.

Friends were described as being:

- The “family that you can choose”.
- Those who “make me laugh”.
- The people you can count on for “support, comfort and good times”.

- Those who have “always got my back if something goes wrong”.

Important aspects of friendship included “loyalty, honesty, generosity, kindness, laughter, respect, empathy”.

There was also a detailed conversation with one small group about friendship classification – they told me that friendships are many and varied:

- One young person told me that online friends can sometimes be more important than we (as adults) might imagine.
- Another said that, when he was nine years old, he didn’t have any friends “so online friends replaced friends, gave me a social aspect that I was lacking at school”.

- Pets got a special mention, too. They were often described as friends or family. Many included their pets on their ‘what is most important to them’ list, explaining that:

- “I love my dog, coz it’s little, keeps away all the cats.”
- “My cat Lucky has been there ever since I was born.”
- “My cats, I don’t have any siblings so they act as stand-ins.”

Once again, they were able to tell me why pets are important to them: because they make them love, provide companionship and, as one young person said, “animals are better therapists because they don’t talk and they calm you”.



Reflections

The APY Lands

The highlight of my time on the APY Lands was attending the Fund My Idea session at Umuwa, meeting children and young people and hearing first-hand what they want for their communities.

Young leaders from each school on the APY Lands plus Yalata and Oak Valley schools attended to develop skills in designing and pitching an idea that would improve their community.

The young people overwhelmingly expressed a desire to live in communities where:

- there's no fighting
- culture is strong and everyone is safe
- there are happy and strong people
- people are learning and respectful
- people are fit and healthy
- it is clean and quiet
- there are jobs and things to do after school
- there are activities like youth sheds, bike tracks and softball cages.





Reflections

Question two: What would you change in South Australia to make life better?

1. More opportunities

Children and young people care about opportunities. They are focused on educational and job opportunities, access to sport and recreational activities, opportunities to participate in community life and other factors that impact on their participation and connection. Some of their suggested changes are:

- More free after-school activities.
- Funding for sport – because it is too expensive.
- Assistance for employment opportunities.
- Making it easier to get a licence.
- More places to hang out.

2. More positive relationships

Overwhelmingly, family relationships matter and have a huge influence on a child's life. However, children and young people talked a lot about what they need from their teachers, how important it is that friendships are “real” and that they want people to be “good to each other”. The children and young people provided many suggestions about what they would change to make life better in regard to relationships, including:

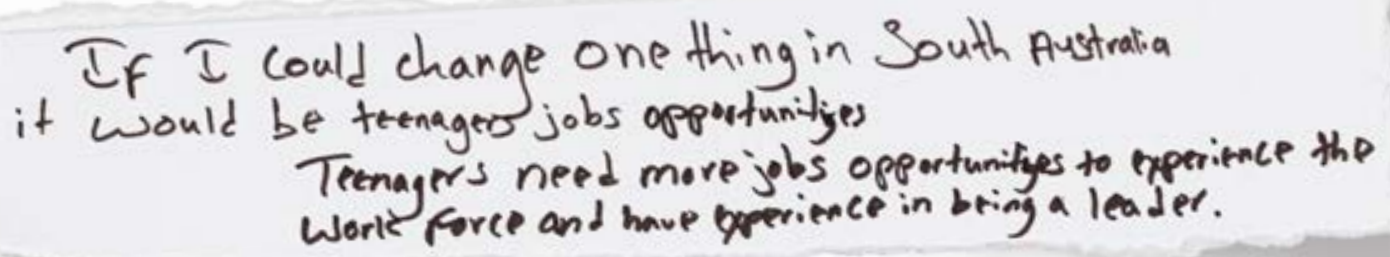
- Every teacher to be kind, helpful, funny, amazing, awesome.
- Better and kinder people in the work space.
- Being respectful and kind towards themselves and others.
- Stopping bullying by spreading kindness.
- More youth workers in schools.

3. Prioritising mental health

Young people of all ages are worried mostly about their own mental health, as well as the mental health of others. They talked about the impact of, and the barriers to, getting what they described as the “right help”. They gave examples of friends being suicidal, parents suffering depression, and the struggles of stigma, lack of understanding, embarrassment and isolation.

There were many suggestions about possible ways to address this. Some changes they suggested include:

- More counselling.
- More support for youth.
- More mental health education.
- More people understanding what people are going through.
- Easier transition from youth to adult services.



If I could change one thing in South Australia
it would be teenagers jobs opportunities
Teenagers need more jobs opportunities to experience the
World Force and have experience in being a leader.

Reflections

Prioritising mental health:

The impact of, and the barriers to, getting what they described as the “right help”.

Equality:

Children and young people are positive about and committed to achieving acceptance and equality

4. Equality

Children and young people are positive about and committed to achieving acceptance and equality – something they really want and believe in. They talked about it in relation to race, gender, sexuality, religion and socio-economic circumstances.

The wish for equality was also implicit in many of the conversations about what children and young people want to see happen, or want to be available, for all. They talked about equality in terms of equal access, equal rights, equal opportunities and equal treatment and acceptance.

Some young people simply made clear statements about what should change, such as “equality for everyone” or “stop racism”. Other suggestions include:

- Giving all kids education.
- Eliminating homelessness.
- A fairer share of money.
- Education on multiculturalism and race.
- A better space for young people inclusive of religion, race, gender and age.

5. More help in planning for the future

Children and young people talked about not feeling prepared for adulthood and leaving school. They believe they need to know more about everyday things like voting, completing a tax return, and renting or buying a house. They feel that it would be useful to learn some of these things at school as it is not always taught at home. It was surprising how often this was raised during our conversations.

Some of the suggestions include:

- Learning about life at school.
- Identifying skills that kids possess at school to help them choose jobs.
- Teaching more about Australian society.
- Incorporating more education about social issues.
- Teaching more life skills in school.

What would I change?

IF I could change something in South Australia is Mental Health Awareness. Unfortunately, in recent years depression and suicide rates have been high due to people often neglect their Mental Health because we do not speak about it enough at schools, and students are being placed under immense stress to be the best and continuously be on top of work. This causes their mental health to be forgotten as they are told they are being 'dramatic' or being 'silly' and this leads to students becoming depressed and beginning thinking no one else cares about them or understands, causing them to believe there's no point in living anymore. Through speaking at schools and workplaces about mental health and the signs of depression to prevent suicide, as well as train to take a break when we become overwhelmed.



Question three: What should the Commissioner prioritise in her role to help make life better for children and young people in South Australia?

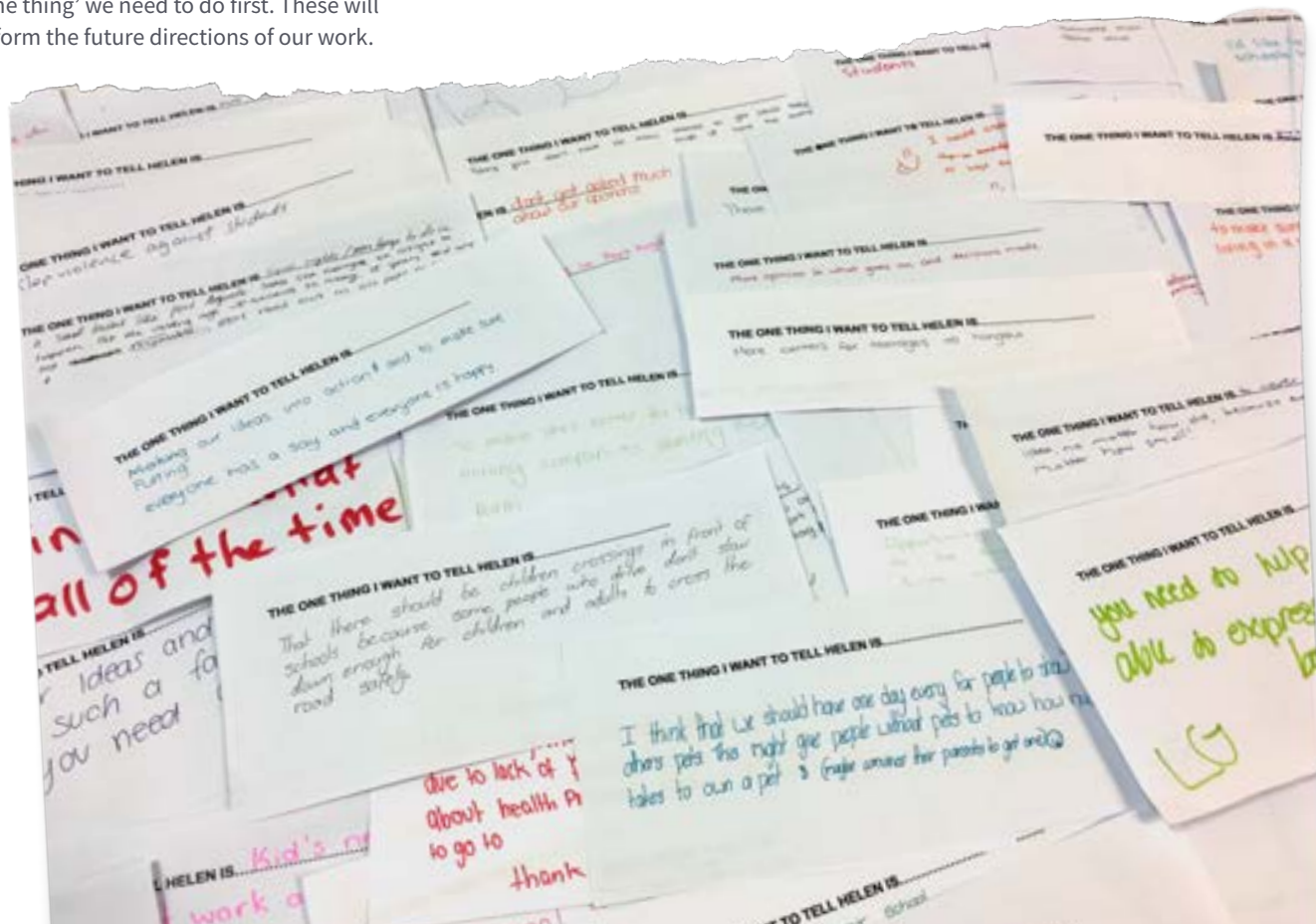
I treated this question differently to the others, asking it of most but not all children and young people who took part in the Listening Tour (for a range of reasons).

Children and young people were asked to write down the one thing they want me, as the Commissioner, to do right now. There was no conversation so they could individually reflect on their response.

As a result of this question, the Commission now has more than 1000 notes telling us the 'one thing' we need to do first. These will inform the future directions of our work.



- 
- The top five 'one things' are:**
- Keep listening to kids.
 - Help poor kids.
 - Make sure everyone gets an education.
 - Help stop bullying and cyberbullying.
 - Opportunities – how to make decisions, to be involved, jobs, education and sport.





Key learnings

I have learnt an enormous amount from this Listening Tour. These learnings have come not only from the contributions of the children and young people who have participated in the consultation sessions but also from the process, approaches and methods used.

Children and young people aren't used to being asked what is important to them

Initially, many children and young people found it difficult to identify what was important to them. They struggled to think about what truly mattered most to them as individuals rather than what they thought they should care about. Children and young people were asked to be entirely inward focused, and were told that there were no wrong answers and that they did not need to censor themselves. Some young people said it was weird or unusual, and many said they don't get asked these types of questions, which at first, made it difficult for them to think in this way.

"Consultation" doesn't capture the interactive nature

The term "consultation" is often defined quite differently and carries different sets of expectations. The Commission encountered many assumptions about the processes that would be used during the Listening Tour. Consultation is often used to describe approaches such as surveys, presentations, quizzes and workshops, but the Listening Tour had no PowerPoint presentations, questionnaires or any other formal processes. The hosts were often pleasantly surprised by the interactive, inclusive, two-way dialogue that was the feature of the sessions.

Hosts are essential to creating safe, supportive environments

Recruiting young people and providing a safe and supportive environment can be difficult. Collaborating with our hosts enabled the Commissioner to get children and young people together and ensured key elements could be achieved – such as meeting in a space that is familiar to them and being supported by people they know.





Reflections

Good intentions can stifle young people

Sometimes an adult would try to help a child or young person express themselves during these conversations – the adults felt they knew what the child/young person was trying to say or that they knew what it was they were thinking. Although they had the best intentions, when adults provide the words or tell a young person what they are trying to say, children's voices can be stifled, children's abilities are minimised and adults can get it wrong. My own limitations in this regard had to be recognised early on.

More work is needed for all-inclusive participation

Throughout the Listening Tour, I remained committed to including as many groups of children and young people as possible, including the youngest children, those who do not communicate verbally, those who are hard to reach and those whose personal circumstances are a barrier to participation. However, this is an area that requires further work to ensure that a platform of participation can be developed for all children and young people.



Conclusions

What has been evident throughout the Listening Tour

What has been evident throughout the Listening Tour is that children and young people do have views, opinions, ideas and solutions. They are passionate, involved citizens with a global view and they do want to participate in the decisions that impact on them and others, today and in the future.

The children and young people of South Australia have told me their priorities for action and their expectations of me. I must now respond and develop an action plan that takes their lead and works with children and young people and the broader South Australian community to realise their aspirations.

I remain committed to:

- Continuing face-to-face conversations with children and young people across the state.
- Developing ongoing platforms and opportunities for participation for all children and young people in decisions that impact on them.
- Amplifying the voice of children and young people for self and systemic advocacy.





Appendix 1: Hosts

Hosts in consultation order

Aboriginal Family Support Service	Yourtown	Australian Climate Coalition, UN Youth,
Acacia Kindy	Uniting Care Wesley Country SA	Barossa Council – Youth Advisory
Australian Migrant Resource Centre	CanTeen	Committee, Australian Red Cross,
Australian Red Cross	South Australian Family Law	Amnesty International, Headspace,
Carer's SA – Young Carers SA	Pathways Network	Campbelltown City Council – Youth
Lobethal Community Kindy	Mission Australia	Advisory Committee, Adelaide Hills Council
ac.care	Headspace	– Youth Advisory Council, YWCA, YACSA,
Barkuma	Davenport Community	Reconciliation SA (Collaboration)
Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation	Port Augusta Secondary School	African Communities Council of SA
Mount Gambier Council – Youth	OAC Port Augusta School of the Air	Adelaide Youth Training Centre
Advisory Committee	Paralowie R-12 School	Stepping Stone (SA) Childcare &
Mount Gambier Children's Centre	Country Arts SA @ Hopgood Theatre	Early Development Centres
Mount Gambier North School	Our Lady of La Vang School	Victor Harbor High School – Special
Tenison Woods College	Kirton Point Children's Centre	Education Sub School
Uniting Communities	West Coast Youth Services, Eyre	St Aloysius College
Women's and Children's Health Network	Futures Inc, Baptist Care Services,	City of Playford @ Northern Sound System
OSHC Southern Hub @	Australian Red Cross (Collaboration)	Elizabeth Vale Primary School
Pimpala Primary School	Port Lincoln High School	Julia Farr Group (JFA Purple Orange)
Omega Fire Ministries	Navigator College	Scotch College Adelaide
OSHC North Eastern Hub @	Southern Queer Youth Drop in	St John's Youth Services @ Ladder SVS
Keithcot Farm Primary School	Anglicare	Women's and Children's Hospital School
Key Assets	OARS Community Transitions	The Salvation Army Youth and
Multicultural Youth SA Inc.	YMCA	Community Services
		Onkaparinga City @ Youth Enterprise Hub
		Junction Australia

Appendix 2: Consultation settings

Consultation settings

Childcare centres
Churches
Community centres
Agency sites
Youth group venues
Detention facilities
Hospitals
Libraries
Parks/outdoors
Recreational facilities
Theatres
Residential care facilities
Schools
Kindergartens
Supported accommodation properties
Vocational centres
Youth hubs
Youth shelters
Alternative education sites





LISTENING TOUR

reflections

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