

Commissioner urges leaders to listen to South Australia's regional young people

The Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly says that many young people in regional South Australia are not hopeful about achieving their dreams because the opportunities they need are not currently available. She has urged community leaders to listen to young people and to support what they are trying to achieve, so they can feel connected to their communities and can contribute in ways that will help to make them more sustainable.

The Commissioner has today released her 'Hopes and Dreams' report - the first to provide information on what South Australia's regional children and young people have to say about what life is like for them in regional locations; what their hopes and dreams are, what they wish for by the time they are 25, and what decision makers can do to help them realise their goals.

The report captures feedback from the Commissioner's regional engagement tour, which included consultation with more than 600 children and young people at 43 sessions held across the Riverland, Murray Bridge, Yorke Peninsula, Ceduna, the Barossa Valley, Whyalla, the Adelaide Hills and the Mid-Murray regions throughout 2018. The feedback gathered from children and young people aged 0 to 26 years of age, from various cultural backgrounds and of differing abilities and circumstances, built on the information gathered from earlier visits to regional communities undertaken on her 2017 Listening Tour.

Emerging themes detailed in the report include the need to feel more connected to their communities, to have creative opportunities supported, and to be given roles in their communities that build their confidence and competence. So they can look towards the future positively and see opportunity in challenges, they want to have more say in decisions that impact on them, to feel they belong, and to have their opinions and ideas valued.

The report will be distributed to local leaders and decision makers in the communities visited. Further work will include discussions with government and non-government organisations to provide more opportunities for the voices of children and young people to be heard in key decision-making forums to help create regional communities in which children and young people want to build their futures. On average children and young people represent 25 percent of the total population residing in each of the major locations visited, indicating the substantial value this group offers for creating sustainable futures in these regions, if decision makers work to facilitate realisation of their hopes and dreams as expressed.

Quotes to be attributed to Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly:

Community leaders and decision makers need to take note of what these young people are saying and factor opportunities in for their voices to be heard in future planning and policy development forums. But more than this, they need to be supported to achieve their goals. Most want to have a good home, live with people they care about and get a good job. But when asked to describe what these things mean to them as individuals, we learnt that they know they are part of a global youth generation. They know more than prior generations about what they can achieve, and what support they expect from leaders to enable them to do so. They also know how they want to be treated and what value they can bring their communities if their interests are placed front and centre in everyday life, amplifying their voices and increasing their visibility to leaders, decision makers and regulatory frameworks.

Background: The Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly, was appointed in April 2017 and is responsible for promoting and advocating for the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people across South Australia.

The Hopes and Dreams regional engagement tour builds on the engagement undertaken by the Commissioner on her 2017 Listening Tour, which included consultation with children and young people living in Mount Gambier, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Fleurieu Peninsula, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and the Adelaide Plains.

For more information about the work of the Commissioner for Children and Young People visit www.ccyp.com.au

For general enquiries regarding this Media Release and to be sent a copy of the Hope and Dreams Report, please phone Sharon Cleary on 0407 990 983 or email sharon.cleary@sa.gov.au