

Commissioner
for Children and
Young People

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Youthful Cities

What young people have said will
make Adelaide more youthful





Introduction

Between August and November 2018, South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly met with 130 young people between the ages of 12 and 22 to ask them what they thought would make the City of Adelaide a more youthful place.

The Commissioner wanted to hear directly from young people as to whether they thought Adelaide demonstrated the dynamic, innovative and youthful energy young people naturally bring.

The Commissioner also wanted to hear what they thought embodied the qualities of youthfulness in a city, and asked them to share their ideas on how these qualities could be embedded into future design to create the spaces and places that would ensure young people would want to gather, contribute to and spend time within the City of Adelaide.

To explore this question of what could make Adelaide a more youthful place, the Commissioner spoke with primary school and secondary school students, international students, young people in homeless accommodation and young activists.

What emerged in these discussions can be grouped under three distinct themes identified by the young people as being connected, creative and confident. They felt a city that could display these three characteristics was going to be very attractive to young people from everywhere.

These three broad themes were not dissimilar to those raised by other young people around the world, perhaps best captured via Canada's Youthful Cities Index which takes input from more than 10,000+ young people who live in 55 mega cities across 6 global regions and which ranks cities according to what matters to young people. Adelaide is not ready to be ranked in this way, but we can consider each of the indicators included as criteria for young people in Canada to assess their city and establish our own report card. These criteria included youth employment, public space, transit and education, and diversity of food, nightlife and entrepreneurship.

For Adelaide to successfully assert its future role in Australia's economic and cultural life and to enable it to take its place on the global stage, we must listen and incorporate the ideas and opinions of our young people. That way we can be confident our state's capital will appeal to our young people, encouraging them to build their lives here, share their youthfulness and vitality in ways we haven't yet thought of, contributing to building a future that is both vibrant and relevant.

The ideas conveyed in this report have implications for leaders, decision-makers and public policy influencers at both the state and local community levels. It means creating opportunities for young people to have direct input into shaping the City of Adelaide in meaningful ways.

Numbers of Children and Young People who earn, learn, study and play in the City of Adelaide

Number of children and young people who reside in the **City of Adelaide**

1,482 **2,796** **7,496**

Under 18 Under 20 Under 25

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census.

8,018

Total number of school student enrolments in the **City of Adelaide**

Source: 2017/2018 Annual Report, SA Department for Education



81,000*

inc. 17,000 from abroad

Total number of university enrolments in Adelaide based universities

*Number is approx. Source: UniCurve 2019 <https://universityreviews.com.au/list-of-universities/adelaide-sa/>



Number of universities, schools, kindergartens and child care centres located in the **City of Adelaide**

Source: 2017/2018 Annual Report, SA Department for Education

Universities	4
Schools	19
Preschools	5
Child Care Centres	24

25% City Users (Under 24)

Young people under 24 years make up the largest percentage of people who use the **City of Adelaide**.

A 'City User' is defined as anyone who visits the City for any reason during the survey period.
Source: Adelaide City Council – City User Profile 2018



Percentage of overseas arrivals

In 2016-17, 59% of overseas arrivals to South Australia were aged between 15 and 34. Although this figure includes international students, the propensity to attract young migrants is likely to have substantial impacts on the age profile of the population.

Source:
City Growth Story 2018,
City of Adelaide



City Workers **U24**

Workers under 24 years make up the largest percentage of workers in the areas of:

Accommodation and Food Services	4,137 workers under 24	39.2 % of Workforce
Retail Trade	2,357 workers under 24	32.4 % of Workforce

Workers under 24 years make up the second largest percentage of workers in the areas of:

Tourism and Hospitality	3,691 workers under 24	34.5 % of Workforce
Arts and Recreation Services	575 workers under 24	19.5 % of Workforce

Source: 2016 .id Community (based on ABS Census data)



Percentage of Population Growth

The age profile of **City of Adelaide** continues to show an increasing number of young adults, typically of tertiary education age.

City of Adelaide	Year 2016	Year 2036	% Total Population
Under 24	8,040	12,875	34.13%

Source:
.id Community (Forecast id/Atlas id) based on ABS Census data



Number of visits by Young People

South Australian Museum	43,645
Art Gallery of South Australia	53,000

Source:
2016/2017 Annual Reports





Vision for Adelaide

‘Vibe: friendly, not overly busy, community, closeness of everything’

Young Person – 16

We know improving our children and young people's opportunities is a great way to build a strong state.

We know too that South Australia is focused on making good things happen for children and families, and is committed to thinking about how best to support children and young people to learn and develop, to realise their talents and to take their place in our communities.

With approximately 70% of the state's population living within the Adelaide metropolitan area, South Australia is very much a city state, with many young people regularly accessing the City of Adelaide to live, learn, earn and play.

It is not surprising that many of our young people look for spaces and activities located within the centre of the city that reflect their needs and interests with many of South Australia's young people, telling us that what they seek when they come into the City of Adelaide is something akin to the Melbourne, New York, or Silicon Valley vibe.

When we ask them what this 'vibe' is the response is pretty unanimous. They describe a youthful city as somewhere which has at its core a 'young people friendly feel', 'comfortable and welcoming', 'a place where risk taking is accepted and innovation is encouraged'.

A place that creates the sense that 'anything is possible here' and where 'tribes' of young people can get together to try out new ideas, express themselves, and just 'be young and hang out' without fear of being hassled, judged or moved on.

We know that for some years now the largest group of people using the City of Adelaide are young people aged 15 – 24 years. They use the city for study, for leisure, for work, and increasingly for older young people, as their preferred place to live.

Young people are seeking opportunities to participate in building communities that value their energy and their naturally innovative approach, as well as an understanding that they play an important role in creating sustainable places that reflect how they themselves want to live, learn, earn and play.

Young people want to participate. They want people to listen to and consider their ideas, to validate their contributions and demonstrate their value through outcomes that reflect they have had input. They want adults to demonstrate that their contribution as young people is valued, devising solutions that cater for their needs and which reflect their interests and expectations.

They want us to understand that what is important from a young person's perspective is seeing their interests and values reflected and celebrated in the spaces and places that they live and go.

This visibility builds in our young people a sense of optimism and positivity for their future; one that openly embraces their ideas, skills and interests but most of all – their youthful vitality.



Why listen to young people?

Leaders in cities across the globe are recognising youth as their city's greatest asset and untapped resource. According to the **Youthful Cities Global Index Report 2015** young people are the secret source for future growth – possessing both economic and social currency – who if supported, will crack the code on what it takes to create a liveable, smart, and innovative city.

By 2040, it is estimated there will be an additional 40,000 young South Australians aged 0 – 26 years. This will mean increased numbers of children and young people accessing and living in the City of Adelaide both within families and independently.

If Adelaide gets it right and looks at our city from the perspective of children and young people now, we will have a far better understanding of what is needed to create a future City of Adelaide of which we can all be proud.

We can actually change the narrative about South Australia being a “retirement state” and suffering from a “brain drain” by understanding what it is we need to do to be more youthful, and by consulting with those who know most about this; young people themselves.

Leaders across State and Local Government, the business sector and the broader community are currently hosting think tanks and visioning exercises about what they need to do to retain talent in our state, how to grow the population, support the international education market, enable the entrepreneurial start-ups to flourish and create new technological opportunities in the digital economy to ultimately grow Adelaide's reputation as a dynamic, innovative, connected and sustainable city. But despite the reality that today's 14 year olds will grow to be 2030's young leaders, entrepreneurs, middle managers and graduates, similar conversations with our children and young people are rare.

Our young people have unique perspectives on what makes a place tick. They provide lived insight into how to attract and retain young talent; how to be resilient, how to be clean and green, and how to ensure our actions are inclusive and visionary. They know what they want and they would like to be invited to participate in meaningful opportunities to share their ideas with decision makers and community leaders.

Given the significant numbers of young people who already interact with the City of Adelaide on a regular basis it makes good sense to include them in the various conversations, consultations and surveys that are occurring, and in ways that tap into their preferred communication styles and channels.

'There are currently 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world. This is the largest youth population ever. Youth need safe spaces where they can come together, engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests, participate in decision making processes and freely express themselves. [...] Safe spaces such as civic spaces enable youth to engage in governance issues; public spaces afford youth the opportunity to participate in sports and other leisure activities in the community; digital spaces help youth interact virtually across borders with everyone; and well planned physical spaces can help accommodate the needs of diverse youth especially those vulnerable to marginalisation or violence. [...] When youth have safe spaces to engage, they can effectively contribute to development, including peace and social cohesion.'

International Youth Day,
12 August. (2018)

What young people want

Young people have told us they want dedicated spaces that support their need to connect, build relationships, participate in community and have positive experiences. This includes physical and online spaces with common themes being the creation of spaces that support inclusion and safety, have a multi-purpose approach, involve young people in design and in day to day operations.

Young people have told us they want spaces that are well planned, have open borders, allow connections virtually and physically, are open, inclusive, public, and welcoming. They want places which offer things to do and places to be, including somewhere that you can speak your mind, stand up for what you believe in and express your rights.

Young people say they want relationships founded on acceptance, equality, fairness, inclusion, respect and trust. These concepts go beyond their relationships with family and friends, and include relationships with business institutions and systems, governments and political representatives. For our young people their health and wellbeing, now and over the long term, will be impacted by the extent to which they feel included and respected.



Young people say they want to live in a place that recognises the fresh ideas, perspectives, enthusiasm, skills and value they bring to the table. Young people express concern that South Australia overlooks young people and is far too focused on retirees and those with young families. **They want to be embraced - not tolerated - and their progressive ideas and contemporary leadership style to be nurtured.**

Young people say they want creative arts to be more valued, more accessible and seen for their value. They want careers in the arts to be sustainable and provide economic pathways and strategies that support the creative activity of young people so it is included, so their skills are recognised, and so that they feel connected, empowered and celebrated.

The creation and consumption of a vibrant creative youth scene that supports music, arts, festivals and events is likely to have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing and will certainly develop more interesting public spaces.

In summary, children and young people want the places in which they live, learn, earn, and play to be connected, creative and confident.





Connected Adelaide

For the City of Adelaide to be more connected young people want to see initiatives that promote the movement of young people throughout the city. They also wish to see more youth oriented spaces activated across the CBD.

‘You see less young people in the city because there is less reason to be there. [Where are the] designated places for street art or young people to express themselves.’

Young Person - 16

Many young people gravitate toward Hindley Street and Rundle Mall, including Rundle Street east during the Fringe. They don't really see the new hospital university precincts, Convention Centre and Adelaide Oval as spaces that are specific to them, but they like that these areas have been reinvented and revitalised. They look forward to seeing their skate park reinstated.

They like the nuanced combination of old and new that exists side by side on North Terrace, well frequented by university students. Currie and Grenfell Streets are known as the main streets where buses to the suburbs arrive and leave. Beyond these spaces and places young people's use of Adelaide's city centre is somewhat limited.

‘It's hard for youth to consume/share their music because a lot of music is shared in places that only adults can attend. This makes it hard for young people to express their [music and] art.’

Young Person - 17

Access to speciality shops and precincts are a major reason for young people to travel outside Rundle Mall, with many young people expressing the view that clustering fashion, music and coffee together is the best way to activate areas in which young people will want to gather.

Getting around the city should be efficient and easy so that young people can get to the work, school and leisure venues they need to, at the times they wish to, with many young people travelling into and out of the city outside business hours.

Young people said that having a central hub for young people to gather is critical to their needs. This hub would ideally be an all-weather structure, open and centrally located, with space to sit on the ground, as well as other seating. The hub should be big enough for high volumes of young people to gather, and for it to be 'neutral territory'.

Creating spaces where groups of young people can coexist and connect, but are also able maintain their independence is considered critical. A space that is neutral, communal and owned by young people has the hallmarks of an ideal youth hub. The hub must also have interconnectivity, Wi-Fi and phone charging stations, with access to high-quality Wi-Fi seen as essential.



Creative Adelaide

‘Employ local artists to create pieces for landscape architecture in new spaces, have shelters for rain and shine, seating on the ground and benches, under 18 events around the city to bring people together with bands and other groups performing in this space.’

Young Person - 17

As the Festival State, young people think it is time to give more prominence to arts based events that feature young South Australians. The city should reflect the diversity and creativity of our population. Their motto is “if you see it you can be it”.

There is pride in the festivals and events for which Adelaide is well known – although these are seen by young people as being primarily aimed at adults or families with young children, rather than as stand-alone events for young people. They want creative arts and creative spaces to be a feature of the way young people connect to their city, seeing themselves as both audience and creators.

‘It’s hard for youth to consume/share their music because a lot of music is shared in places that only adults can attend. Young artists can’t share their art because the consumerism is targeted towards adults, with 18+ age limits. This makes it hard for young people to express their [music and] art.’

Young Person - 16

Affordability is a key concern for many young people so combining arts, music and film with public spaces and transport is essential for a youthful and vibrant city.

Music in particular, was a unifying theme across the diversity of young people consulted. There were concerns about the lack of unlicensed venues and low levels of promotion of local young talent through small scale festivals, venues and/or competitions. Young people want the full power and potential of music to be unleashed and celebrated.

In addition to experiencing and having opportunities to participate in creative pursuits, young people spoke about the significance of seeing more colour, art and greenery in Adelaide’s city centre, both from an aesthetic perspective, and in terms of the pride and optimism this generates.

Many young people commented that when ‘passions are showcased’, when they can ‘see young people succeeding and excelling’, when ‘something is created that is Instagramable’, that’s when you have a youthful city.



Confident Adelaide

Confidence for young people is about being proud of who you are. It's about risk taking, having your interests, thoughts and views valued, pursuing passions, being engaged, and taking a "can do" approach.

They want a city that is confident, that invests in them, supports them to contribute to the vision, creates tangible ways to be engaged, builds trust and accountability, and gives them opportunities to thrive.

Engagement, participation and representation are signs of confidence in cities. Young people want to know more about what is happening, what is being planned, and how they can contribute.

Young people are interested in public issues like employment, environment and diversity. They are interested in working alongside decision makers and in developing ways of connecting and building trust across the city.

'Have longer hours (where it works) in the city or advertise the spots that are open [late] better, so that businesses get better and people talk highly of Adelaide when they visit.'

Young Person - 17

'Make it a prouder place to be and draw tourists and migrants here to create a new generation of Adelaideans.'

Young Person - 18

Adelaide's size and its 'one degree of separation' is seen as a positive. Many feel that connecting across generations is very "doable" and that trialling new ways of sharing ideas, building inclusiveness, and developing a vision for the city with young people involved would be very worthwhile.

Young people want the City of Adelaide to be confident of its place in the world. They want to celebrate its cultural foundations, acknowledge its historical context, and look to its youthful future.

They want a city that celebrates Aboriginal culture, preserves old buildings, and builds new smart ones. They want a city which better utilises our precious green spaces, celebrates the diversity of our international students and incorporates these longer term visitors into our new vibe.

In their minds a confident city is one that involves the voices, opinions and solutions of children and young people as consumers, contributors and partners. A confident city embraces all its citizens, promotes their passions and takes up their ideas to build a strong sustainable place that is both 'of the now' while being positioned well to take advantage of the future.

Where to next?

Given the numbers of children and young people already living, learning, earning and playing in the City of Adelaide, there is a real opportunity to trial some innovative ways to hear the views of these young people and to strengthen their connections with decision makers and planners.

By enabling our young people to influence how we develop a more youthful city we simultaneously nurture their sense of belonging through validation of their opinions and ideas.

Whether we use traditional forms of engagement or new blue sky tools such as Minecraft (used in the Block By Block program initiated by the UN in partnership with Microsoft in 2012) we need to introduce mechanisms for young people that can show urban planners and decision makers how they envisage future spaces and places in our cities will look and feel.

CCYP is keen to work with organisations who are interested in establishing a mechanism to bring young voices and views into the mix for the benefit of decision makers and planners currently involved in shaping the City of Adelaide's future. This includes consideration of adoption of a youthful city framework and associated messaging to work as a driver of engagement with children and young people over the longer term.

‘Let the youth decide what they want. It allows Adelaide to become more youthful.’

Young Person - 15

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Who are we?

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position established under the Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016 ("the Act").

The Commissioner promotes and advocates for the rights, development and well-being of all children and young people in South Australia. The Commissioner is committed to advocating for children and young people's involvement in decision-making that affects them, giving particular consideration to the needs of vulnerable and at-risk children and young people.

A key objective of The Commissioner for Children and Young People is to position children and young people's interests, development and wellbeing front and centre in public policy and community life, and to advocate to decision makers to change laws, policy, systems and practice in favour of children and young people.

In the Commissioner's work she listens to the views of children and young people, collaborates with them and represents their diverse voices in the public arena with a special focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard. Much of her advocacy is directed by the experiences and issues that children and young people talk about and have asked her to focus on.

This work is underpinned by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which says children and young people have a right to have a say on all issues that affect them and for their views to be taken seriously. By improving our children and young people's participation in decisions that impact on them, we will strengthen our democratic institutions and structures, and build a strong state for the future of all children and young people throughout our nation and in turn the world.

Thank you to the young people who shared their ideas and suggestions. All photographs appearing throughout this report have been reproduced with permission.

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