

## SA's Aboriginal young people would like more say on their future

Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, says South Australia's Aboriginal young people want to have a greater say on matters that impact on them. They're also interested in participating in events that strengthen their voice and in taking up opportunities that enable them to gain leadership and organisational skills.

The findings have come out of the Aboriginal Youth Engagement Project initiated by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and undertaken in partnership with Reconciliation SA and Tauondi Aboriginal College.

The engagement project which ran from October 2018 through to March 2019, asked 112 young Aboriginal South Australians, representing regional, remote and metropolitan communities, to consider the feasibility of establishing an Aboriginal Youth Council (AYC) in South Australia. Similar to those already operating in other states and territories, the AYC would be tailored to meet needs identified by South Australia's Aboriginal young people.

Participants either completed a survey, participated in a consultation session or attended a workshop where they were asked to identify issues of concern and to prioritise these in order of greatest importance. They were also invited to suggest what structure or governance model might best work if an AYC were to be established and for any ideas they may have on facilitating involvement by remote and regional Aboriginal young people in an advisory council.

The Aboriginal Youth Engagement Project came out of conversations Commissioner Helen Connolly has had with South Australian Aboriginal young people, since commencing in her role in 2017. Common themes emerged around the importance of knowing, experiencing and respecting Aboriginal culture, and of having a safe and supportive space in which to learn from each other. Many of the participants felt an annual summit of Aboriginal young people might be the best format for an initial gathering. The youth summit could be held within National Reconciliation Week or NAIDOC Week.

Commissioner Connolly will work with newly appointed Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, April Lawrie, to develop the summit idea. Commissioner

Lawrie would lead the development process applying a co-design framework to ensure the agenda and desired outcomes are determined with input from Aboriginal young people. Aboriginal young people would also have opportunities to build skills and take on leadership, presenting and organisational roles. The summit could include cultural elements such as performance and ceremony in which Aboriginal young people would be encouraged to participate.

Government, non-government and community organisations or groups with a demonstrated commitment to supporting South Australia's Aboriginal young people, who are interested in partnering on an inaugural summit are invited to get in touch.

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

"It's important that we find a way to enable Aboriginal young people in South Australia to strengthen their own agency and increase their opportunity to be heard. An annual summit lead by Aboriginal young people for Aboriginal young people, with the appropriate support, will assist in identifying the issues and concerns of greatest importance to them and ensure they are part of designing solutions."

Quotes attributable to Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People,  
April Lawrie:

"Providing an opportunity for South Australia's Aboriginal young people to meet via a summit format held on an annual basis will enable connections to be made and networks to be expanded in a culturally safe space. This will in turn help to build confidence, strengthen voices, and enable concerns and issues that Aboriginal young people face to be addressed in ways that they understand, thereby positioning them as co-designers in the solutions proposed."

To download a copy of the Aboriginal Youth Engagement Project report click here:  
<https://www.ccyp.com.au/reports/ccyp-reports/>

For more information about the work of SA Commissioner for Children and Young People go to [www.ccyp.com.au](http://www.ccyp.com.au)

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