

A State of poverty for SA children and young people is 'not acceptable' says Commissioner

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly, has today launched her **Poverty Report: 'Leave No One Behind'**. The report documents outcomes of her poverty project with South Australia's children and young people who told her what living in poverty is like for them, and what they think needs to be done to address the impact of it right now.

From December 2018 through to June 2019 the Commissioner consulted with more than 1,400 South Australian children and young people aged 12 – 22 years via workshops, focus groups, a poverty survey, and a poverty summit. The children and young people included a proportion who have a 'lived experience' of poverty, with the remainder drawing on their observations of those in their schools and the broader community who they see living with the impact of poverty every day.

That poverty is real in South Australia is undeniable. In 2018, SACOSS reported that more than 60,660 SA households live below the poverty line. This figure represents 9% of all households and equates to 131,945 South Australians of which 22,350 are children and young people between the ages of 0 and 18yrs.*

The report outlines six recommendations in which the Commissioner calls upon relevant government and non-government organisations across industry and community to work together to implement change. The recommendations are made in consideration of what steps could reasonably be taken to alleviate poverty in ways that will make a practical difference to the lives of South Australia's poor children and young people now.

In the short term they include delivering free public transport for those children and young people who are in receipt of a school card; increasing access to free Wi-Fi 'hotspots' to support children and young people without access to the Internet at home; introduction of a free non-stigmatising sanitary products distribution program; and expansion of telecommunication hardship programs to include an Internet voucher system.

In the longer term they include the establishment of a dedicated Child Poverty Expert group and development of an audit tool to measure the real costs of education at an individual and school level, both of which would be reported upon annually.

The report is a culmination of work undertaken by the Commissioner to meet the standards set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which recognises

that children are in a different situation than adults and that they therefore need to be supported in ways that are uniquely relevant to them.

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

Child poverty in South Australia is real. I have heard from children and young people who live with the impact of poverty every day. Their personal stories are heartbreaking. Our children and young people are telling us that they want to live in a society that leaves no-one behind.

We must stop thinking poverty is something that happens to 'others' 'overseas'. We must instead work with those organisations and community groups who have been shouldering the burden for far too long, addressing poverty across our community in ways that SA children and young people have told me will help them the most. To choose not to address their needs with commitment and determination is simply not acceptable if we are to call ourselves an inclusive and caring community.

To download a copy of the report visit:

<https://www.ccyp.com.au/reports/ccyp-reports/>

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.

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

*[SACOSS Submission](#) to the Legislative Council of South Australia Select Committee on Poverty in South Australia. August 2018

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