

06 NEWS

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# SA laws for jailing kids is archaic, says UN

REBECCA DIGIROLAMO

SOUTH Australian laws that allow children aged as young as 10 to be arrested and jailed has been labelled "archaic" and contravenes updated UN guidelines.

The powerful global Child Rights Committee wants laws changed to ensure children aged 14 and under should not be held legally responsible for a crime, previously the age was 12.

The South Australian Young Offenders Act sets the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 10.

"It's clear that South Australia does not currently comply with these minimum standards despite all government agencies being required by law to align with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its other instruments," said SA Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly, pictured.



"There is clear evidence that the earlier a child comes into contact with the child justice system, the more likely they will be to remain in it through to adulthood, "Diversion is the key to preventing this."

"There are many children in South Australia who are being locked up for their own protection, or simply because they have 'no home to go to.'"

South Australia is part of a national 12-month review of the age of criminal responsibility.

Attorney-General Vickie Chapman said a uniform national position on the age of criminal responsibility was the preference.

"Ten-year-old kids belong in schools and playgrounds, not in prisons, but Australia's archaic laws are ripping children from their families," Human Rights Law Centre senior lawyer Shahleena Musk said.

# SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT CHOICES, NEW TECHNOLOGY AND Education boss predicts the end of ATAR system

FROM PAGE 1

The paper says a "systemic shift toward school improvement" has produced an "undue emphasis" on narrow academic outcomes, such as ATARs, rather than a broader view of students' achievements, skills, maturity, community involvement and workplace experience.

It suggests students leave school with a "learning passport" detailing their various capabilities.

Mr Perse said he did not believe the ATAR "will be around in 10 years".

"There is much more to an individual's capacity to excel at their study and excel at their workplace than what their ATAR is," he said.

"Did you go on a gap year and volunteer in Cambodia building schools? Have you been involved in your local footy club or Rotary or whatever? Did you win the Anzac school prize? All that talks to how well-rounded people are."

Mr Perse said he had never considered anyone's ATAR when hiring staff for public or private-sector roles.

"You can't just hire a bunch of people who can't communicate, who can't work with a client, can't work in a team, lead a team or be a team member. I don't think ATAR is the best measure for that," he said.

The discussion paper for the national review, commissioned by the Education Council of federal, state and territory education ministers, says the ATAR system is biased toward "high socio-economic" students. And it is too often misinterpreted as an indicator of the quality of schools and unis.

The paper points to a national survey of young people in 2017 that found more than half "felt their school cared more about their ATAR than them".

Despite SA universities introducing new entry methods, the vast majority of school-

leaver admissions are still by ATAR alone. The Advertiser last week revealed Adelaide University would allow students from all high schools to gain entry to a range of degrees based on results in combinations of two or three relevant Year 12 subjects, as an alternative to the ATAR pathway.

The degrees include engineering, science, psychology, arts and commerce. The aim is to persuade school students to pick SACE subjects that align with their passions and future study and career aspirations, instead of ones to maximise their ATAR.

Asked yesterday why the new scheme would cover entry to commerce, for example, but not the rest of Adelaide University's wide range of business degrees, deputy Vice-Chancellor Pascale Quester said the chosen degrees represented about 80 per cent of the uni's undergraduate intake.

"We have limited the pool of degrees captured by this scheme for now, as we will need to assess the success of subject-based entry and whether it is encouraging students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to make the right decisions about subject selection," she said.

"As we continue to assess the success of subject-based entry, the university may decide to open the scheme to other degrees. Many students will still gain entry based on ATAR, but many others, who we know will succeed based on their subject choices and performance, will be given access to a quality education."

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**TELL US: What do you think of the ATAR system?**  
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CHANGING GUARD: University graduates Daniel Stone and Melissa Weston have exciting

## Each day is rewarding, exciting

DIXIE SULDA

DANIEL Stone is on a mission to change public perceptions of the defence industry.

And the 25-year-old software engineer for defence company Saab said he couldn't be more excited about the growing opportunities.

"I feel like defence careers often get overlooked because the public believe it's very rigid and lacking engaging opportunities," Mr Stone said.

"I really value the long-term career stability and growth op-

portunities afforded to defence careers in South Australia."

Mr Stone, who has been in the defence industry for three years and holds a computer science degree from the University of South Australia, said he found himself working in "dual worlds".

In both the real and virtual world, Mr Stone produces new environments for defence and non-defence projects through software engineering.

He said he was motivated by doing something purposeful.

"Knowing that I contribute to the safety and security of the Australian public is something that personally motivates me," he said.

And when Melissa Weston, an ASC Structural Engineer on the Collins Class Submarine program, was 18 she never imagined working with subs.

Originally interested in joining the air force, the engineering, mechanical and aerospace graduate from Adelaide University started looking to the world of opportunities the defence sector offered quite late in

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