

## We must do better for our trans and gender diverse children and young people

Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly, says South Australia's trans and gender diverse children and young people have told her they want their health care needs to be a priority for the government.

Other jurisdictions throughout Australia already deliver models of care that cater to the specific needs of trans and gender children and young people, however South Australia is lagging behind with children and young people and their families consistently report that access and support is 'ad hoc' and 'inconsistent'.

Delays and barriers to accessing services often worsen the health outcomes of trans and gender diverse children and young people, who are reliant on timely treatment to minimise the costs and impact on their physical and mental health.

Trans and gender diverse children and young people told the Commissioner they want a health care system that provides them with timely, clear information about the options available to them along with the pathways to accessing them. This includes training GPs and health care professionals who are usually their first port of call to have a better understanding of the therapeutic services that are needed by trans and gender diverse children and young people and their families, particularly those who live in regional areas or who are from CALD or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

The findings have come out of the **First Port of Call** report released by the Commissioner today. The report was compiled following consultation with trans and gender diverse children and young people, their families, advocates and therapists.

The Commissioner makes four key recommendations to government. They range from providing more visibility for trans and gender diverse children and young people to provision of better information and training for health professionals, and more gender-affirming services. This includes ensuring the time taken and cost of accessing treatment is kept to a minimum.

Issues trans and gender diverse children and young people identified when accessing health care services in South Australia included feeling 'judged', 'misunderstood',

'marginalised' and 'isolated'. They also spoke about the importance of affordability and accessibility to services, particularly given the vital role the health care system plays in their mental health and wellbeing and development. Universally, children and young people said that they want health care services that respond well to their particular needs, and which affirm their identity.

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

A health care system that is inclusive, welcoming and affirming will enable trans and gender diversity to be 'normalised'. It will also allow these services to be available when they're needed, taking into account the significant impact delays in treatment can have on a trans or gender diverse child or young person as they reach adolescence and all that that entails in terms of physical and psychological development. We know there is much more that needs to be done for our LGBTQIA+ children and young people and this report aims to bring these voices into consideration. It is our responsibility to find solutions that keep up with social change so that these children and young people's rights to health services are upheld.

For more information about the work of South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People and to download a copy of the **First Port of Call** report go to:

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

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