

Cambridge expert in Adelaide for series of talks on education innovation

South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, is pleased to welcome education expert and author, Professor Colleen McLaughlin PhD, to Adelaide.

Co-author of 'Positive Alternatives to School Exclusions', Professor McLaughlin is visiting from the United Kingdom where she is Director of Educational Innovation at the Faculty of Education University of Cambridge, as well as team leader of the Education Reform and Innovation group.

A former school teacher, Professor McLaughlin has been an advisor to governments and NGOs on the personal and social dimensions of schooling and how to achieve systemic change.



Above: Professor Colleen McLaughlin

Commissioner Connolly invited Professor McLaughlin to Adelaide, after hearing firsthand from many children and young people throughout regional and metropolitan South Australia that they are concerned about the impact school exclusions are having on individual students and their families. The children asked the Commissioner to support them to 'help everyone get an education'.

A complex issue, Professor McLaughlin's visit will provide a perspective on approaches and strategies being adopted in the United Kingdom in a variety of settings at the primary, secondary and further education levels. She will also share her insights and expertise across areas from her most recent research, which has focused on wellbeing in schools (for the Welsh Government and the Nuffield Foundation); relationships in schools; sexuality and HIV related education in Africa (for the Commonwealth Centre for Education); bullying and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities; counselling in schools; and aspects of personal, social and emotional development in schools. Support for international educational reform is now the major area of her work.

While in Adelaide, Professor McLaughlin will deliver a series of talks to specialist audiences on a range of subjects including 'positive alternatives to school exclusion', 'bullying prevention', 'schools as nurturing environments for mental health' and 'youth education and employment'.

The latter will be the subject of a forum hosted by the Australian Migrant Resource Centre with other guest speakers, who include author and senior lecturer in Education from the University of Adelaide, Dr Nina Maadad; trainer, writer and consultant, Andrew Cummings; youth motivator and multi-linguist, Zahra Bayani; and youth coordinator within Adelaide's Congolese Community, Ackim Mulumba. The forum will explore the impact and contribution of the education system to mental health, wellbeing and young people's sense of self and agency. The role of education to provide support and promote ongoing school engagement as a critical part of resettlement will also be explored.

Quotes attributable to Commissioner Connolly:

South Australia's children and young people have told me that exclusion from school is a problem. They want me to find ways to ensure everyone can get an education. They're worried about the impact exclusion has on the individual and their families who have to find alternatives for their child when the mainstream system has rejected them. Ongoing schooling is also a critical part of resettlement for refugee and migrant young people, as is supporting English language learning for newly arrived young people to ensure they have the skills that will enable them to achieve an education standard that offers a pathway to employment. If we are to meet our obligations under the United Nations, to ensure every South Australian child has access to quality education, we need to examine alternatives to exclusion and what support is required for teachers and those in the education system to reduce, or better still, eliminate it as an option. The onus needs to be on improving the system to meet the child's needs, not exclude the child when their needs don't fit the system.

For further information about the work of the Commissioner visit www.ccyp.com.au

Interviews with Professor McLaughlin are available upon request.

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