

Gaming and esports essential to building 21st century communities that young people will want to be part of

The Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly has chosen **Youth Week** to launch her latest report examining how collaborative gaming can be deployed as a youth engagement strategy that can build the kind of 21st century communities young people want.

The report, titled *Community Building in the 21st Century - collaborative gaming to build connection, confidence and creativity*, examines how opportunities for local communities to deliver engaging cultural and recreational activities for young people, needs to include formal esports and gaming clubs, organised and operated in the same way those for traditional sporting and recreational activities have always been. Prioritising establishment of formal esports and gaming clubs in community settings would demonstrate to young people that their interests and activities are respected and valued.

With more than 265,000 young people aged 12 – 24 years living in South Australia, the incentive to ensure we build strong communities that engage young people in ways that are relevant to them is paramount, particularly if we want them to remain connected and committed to building their lives in their local communities. This requires a willingness for government and community organisations to deliver what young people themselves have told us they want. Even better would be to invite young people to co-design the services they want in partnership with government and community.

Advances in technology and game access via the Internet, means game competitions and tournaments can be easily ‘stitched together’ in local community centres and youth friendly places and spaces with only small scale investment in gaming and esports infrastructure needed. When delivered via existing youth development and community development resources, it has the added benefit of bringing young people into closer contact with the full range of health and community services, events, and initiatives already being operated by local organisations.

If government and community organisations do pivot their efforts toward formalising opportunities for collaborative gaming and esports in the community setting it should also include managing and addressing any perceived or associated risks linked to this pursuit. This involves establishing codes of conduct and developing risk management strategies that ensure young people know where to seek support if they need it, as well as educating young people to self-identify if they find themselves engaged in gaming in ways that have become aggressive, negative and or harmful to themselves or others – no different to how codes of conduct operate for more traditional sports.

In turn, this should increase potential for participation by young people from diverse backgrounds; female gamers, those living with disability, and those from less advantaged situations to potentially deliver them substantially better outcomes than perhaps their involvement in more traditional sport and recreational activities ever could.

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

Just as with traditional sporting activities, collaborative gaming has a role for players, organisers, promoters, communicators and audiences. Like other community sporting clubs, at the core is community spirit, having fun, improving skill development and achieving recognition. It is also increasingly clear that esports and gaming offers future employment opportunities. Not just for professional players, but for game developers, sound engineers, broadcasters, commentators, referees and competition organisers and promoters, to name a few of the roles this burgeoning industry is creating. Supporting grassroots development of collaborative gaming and esports opportunities in local community settings, requires a fundamental shift in our thinking around the potential it offers. It requires an understanding that gaming and esports is a healthy, fun activity that builds resilience, communication, teamwork and self-discipline that can provide pathways to positive outcomes for individuals and communities in the same way more traditional sports clubs do.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the work of the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People and to download a copy of the report go to www.ccyp.com.au

Media Contact

Sharon Cleary

Senior Advisor External Relations and Communications

M: 0407 990 983 | E: sharon.cleary@sa.gov.au