

Young People and Families call for a new approach to careers education in SA

Young people, as well as parents and carers, are calling on schools, career advisors, business leaders, industry and government to provide a system of careers education that is far better suited to the needs of the next generation of young South Australian innovators, entrepreneurs and community and business leaders; one that is co-designed with input from young people themselves.

Their recommendations are summarised in a suite of reports released today by South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly. The reports are the culmination of a two year in-depth examination into what young people need to successfully transition from school into the world of work, and who needs to support them to get there.

The major report in the series – [Off to Work We Go](#) – examines what young South Australian school students (aged 12 – 18 years) recommend be done to improve their prospects of being future work ready while they're at school. Two companion reports – [Spotlight on Parent/Carer Careers Advice](#) and [Spotlight on Work Experience](#), cover the perspectives of parents and carers, business owners and operators, and school careers educators and advisors. The suite of reports provide a 360 degree view of careers education from the perspective of these key stakeholders.

The release of the suite of reports comes on the back of concerns the Commissioner has raised that youth unemployment may skyrocket if young people are left to bear the brunt of the economic impact of COVID-19, while simultaneously recognising that traditional pathways from school into the workforce no longer apply, and that specific skills young people need in order to be 'future work ready' need to be taught at school.

Commissioner Connolly gathered the material via surveys, focus groups, and consultations undertaken over a two-year period. Committee for Adelaide partnered with the Commissioner on the work experience component of the project undertaking a survey of its members, while more than 400 parents and carers responded to a survey relevant to the critical role young people say they play, as a trusted source of careers information.

Young people have recommended two key changes that if implemented would significantly improve current careers education to better support them in their transition from school into the workforce. The first is an independent, up-to-date, online resource containing careers information on post-school options that has been developed specifically for the benefit of South Australian school students and local businesses looking to employ them; one that offers children and young people a single source of truth in relation to their future work prospects. The second is their input into the design and implementation of school career education programs.

Young people said that a dedicated careers resource with a South Australian focus would enable them to find this critical information more easily, and save enormous time and energy spent best guessing where jobs trends and industry growth is likely to be.

Parents and carers, who young people said they rely upon most to guide them in their career choices, said a dedicated online resource relevant to the State's employment landscape would enable them to better support young people to become future work ready, particularly those interested in pursuing jobs arising out of 'Industry 4.0' developments across artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and the Internet-of-Things.

The second recommendation to involve young people in the design and implementation of school career education programs, could see students involved in programming guest speakers at every year level, facilitating regular career-based discussions across a broad range of subject areas, participating in dedicated career skills development lessons starting in primary school, and benefitting from relevant and well-organised work experience opportunities that are well supported by business and industry. It would also ensure a more personalised school career counselling service that extended well beyond those currently being provided and also commencing in primary school.

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

Not only have I heard that many young people are worried about what skills they will need to ensure they can find work, many have also told me their limited knowledge about the 'future of work' is having a detrimental impact on the decisions they need to make now. It was these conversations that prompted me to examine careers advice young people receive at school and to work with young people to identify the barriers and challenges that currently exist. Young people and parents want a single trusted source of information and advice focused on the South Australian employment situation that identifies trends and growth areas, and greater integration between key stakeholders to ensure the pathways from school to the world of work are clear, and that everyone including business and industry are supporting our young people to be future work ready.

To download copies of the Commissioner's suite of career education reports go to www.ccyp.com.au/ccyp-reports

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