

What children and young people say about road safety

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As South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, I advocate for the rights, interests and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia, especially those groups of children whose voices are not normally heard.

The Your Say consultation on South Australia's Road Safety Strategy to 2031 is timely. This Office has been talking to young people about road safety and many other transport issues over the past couple of years. We have recognised this as an issue, as reflected in your statistics that reveal the disproportionate amount of young people aged between 16 and 24 years old whose lives have been lost or have been seriously injured due to road accidents.

Transport and infrastructure is of major interest to children and young people and it has been regularly discussed in conversations with them. The Department for Infrastructure and Transport has a significant impact on children and young people's lives, both directly and indirectly. Children and young people should be viewed as critical stakeholders in any consultation process.

This Office has already reported about children and young people's experiences while accessing Public Transport in our [It's Not Fine](#) report, which highlighted the need for child safe and friendly transport systems that are affordable for everyone and free for families living in poverty.

Our [Hopes and Dreams](#) report highlighted that children and young people across regional South Australia recognise the importance of transport and how it affects their lives. Many children and young people were concerned that the roads in their areas were not safe. They thought there needed to be more overtaking spots, safer footpaths, cheaper and easier ways of getting a driving licence and more public transport.

This year the Office decided to pilot a civics program in five high schools across South Australia working with year 10 students. The program asked young South Australians to develop solutions to some of the biggest issues that impact their communities. One of the issues the Commissioner identified for students to address was 'how we can make roads safer for South Australian young people'?

One of the participating schools addressed road safety and students used their problem solving skills to provide solutions. It is interesting to note that most children and young people in the program did not initially think that road safety was an issue. They instead wanted to focus on global issues such as climate change. This lack of awareness not only highlights the importance of children and young people being educated at an early age, but it also may be part of the reason why there is an over-representation of injuries and deaths in young people on South Australian Roads. What young people have told us suggests that

approaches to education that provoke fear are less effective than those that upskill and empower young people to understand road safety.

For these year 10 students on the cusp of learning to drive, understanding the extent of road safety and related issues is crucial. The next five years of their lives is full of firsts: when they first get behind the wheel, book their first driving lesson, buy their first car and drive their mates around for the first time. Apart from the initial challenges, these students did end up understanding the extent of the problem and they developed interesting solutions to address young people's safety on SA roads.

Their solutions are outlined below and emphasise how important it is to include young people in setting the agenda of policy making. It not only provides organisations with innovative solutions, it also equips young people with a better understanding of the issues that affect their everyday lives. It also sets them on the path to becoming active and informed citizens in adulthood.

This Office hopes that these solutions are heard and considered in the feedback and will result in safer roads in South Australia for all.

If you have any questions or queries please contact the Principal Policy, Research and Advocacy Officer Monique Bianchi at monique.bianchi@sa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Connolly
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Solution One: Awareness raising campaigns by young people, for young people

Tom (15) discovered that “the road statistics for the 16-25 age gap are on the rise in a bad way”. To address this issue, Tom wants “to create a successful social media campaign with ideas from the youth themselves as to what they want to see in ads for them to watch them”. This can be done in collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and Commissioner for Children and Young People. He believes that “through gathering responses from different youth groups we can get a strong idea of what is needed for the success of this social media campaign for youth road safety”.

Tom says that “the advertising of this campaign will be mainly led by the youth who create the ideas for the ads and where the ads should be posted so they are most effective. Spotify, Instagram and Snapchat are the perfect platforms to get the youth talking and maybe save a few lives in the process. Simple and small ideas like this can make a big difference to those statistic goals”.

Solution two: Driver Education and Incentivised Learning

Sam (15) identifies that the process of getting your license is a long one, but often something that is easily forgotten once a person passes and gets their full drivers licence. This often results in people disregarding, or unlearning what they have learnt. Also, if young people are not taught by professionals, young people may not even be learning correct lessons in the first place.

Sam came to this conclusion after conducting a brief survey of year 12s in his school who drive. His survey found that education was an area that might need improvement as many of them didn't know the road rules.

Sam has asked that the government lead an initiative to better educate young people on the correct road rules, which he found was one of the root causes of the over-representation of young people in road trauma statistics. He urged the Government to offer incentives to encourage new young drivers to undertake professional lessons. He argued that “if we begin to educate our young drivers prior to them learning from their family, we can ensure that their driving knowledge is up to speed and current”.

Sam's solution includes the government creating a register of accredited driving instructors. He also suggested that there could be an incentive program for young people – based on road safety quizzes – where young people could win and receive free driving lessons or free tickets.

Solution three: Better lighting on roads and public areas and a better public transport system

Liam (15) and HW (16) identified that a majority of street lights are used inefficiently. They believe that heavy bright lights may not be the best way to solve the issues as often they are found in busy places, instead of places where children and young people go and want to feel safe, such as at bus stops when they are waiting for a bus at night. Their solution was to ensure the better placement of lights so that they are effectively illuminating the bus stops and other spaces where children and young people are.

Liam and HW also said that public transport should be reviewed – including in relation to the needs of children and young people – so that it is a more attractive option. They found that this will result in many benefits. For example, “parents and young people can think more when deciding whether to buy a vehicle/car and commit money, or to allow the child to take public transport”. They believed this may be “an extreme help to people struggling with poverty”.

Solution four: Workshops and rehabilitation for those caught driving under the influence

Mojan (16) came up with the idea “to build a centre where people get to have a fresh start”. He described this centre as “being specifically for people that have just been caught on roads or have caused an accident due to an influence of drugs and alcohol. In simpler terms, if any person is caught on roads and has been under the influence of drugs and alcohol, they would be sent to this centre as a consequence”.

The centre would mean the government can spend less money for the equal amount of services, prevent more accidents in the future, and would meet the needs of the community. From this Office’s perspective, this centre could provide this group of people to access other services, including services to address addiction, health services, social services, support for housing and any other services that may be needed.

Solution five: Government low interest loan scheme for young people under 30 to buy their first car

Cam (15) identified that young people are more likely to buy older cars than new ones because of financial reasons. He found that older cars tend to be more dangerous than newer models as there are less safety features. They can also be more difficult to drive, or they might be damaged or have faults.

He found that “if someone’s car is 15 years or older they have a 71% higher chance of dying in that car”. Cam explored ways the government can enfranchise young people to buy newer cars. One solution he developed was a government

matching loan scheme where young people can apply for a loan – and match the amount they might already have saved for a car – so they can buy a newer, safer model. The loan would be a low fixed rate one and would have a similar payback scheme to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS).