



# KEEPING KIDS CONNECTED TO LEARNING AND SCHOOLING SUMMIT

## Feedback Report



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## Introduction

The **Keeping Kids Connected to Learning and Schooling Summit** took place on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The Summit was co-hosted by the Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion (CRESI) at the University for South Australia, South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, the South Australian Primary Principals Association (SAPPA) and South Australian Secondary Principals Association (SASPA).

The Summit was organised following the release of two reports on the impact of school exclusions in October 2020. These reports were:

- *The Final Report of the Inquiry into Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian Government Schools* (the Graham Inquiry) by Professor Linda J. Graham and the Centre for Inclusive Education; and
- *The Blame Game: The perspectives of South Australian children and young people on the causes and impacts of education exclusion and why we need to stop blaming children for system failure* by Helen Connolly, South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Both reports made recommendations that could fundamentally change the shape of South Australian schools, making them more inclusive for all South Australian children.

The Summit offered the South Australian community a unique opportunity to identify and map the issues associated with current exclusionary practices being used in South Australian schools, and the barriers to the successful inclusion of all students.

The summit attracted approximately 100 participants, including principals, educators, school support staff, organisations supporting children, families and schools, academics and researchers, the DCP, Department for Education ('the Department') and child practitioners working both in government and private practice.

Participants reflected on the biggest challenges and opportunities facing teachers, schools, students and the community, and the supports they need to ensure the schools and systems they are working in are keeping all children connected to learning and schooling.

This report summarises what the participants thought were key issues for the Department to consider in its response to the findings and recommendations of the Graham Inquiry and the Blame Game reports.

This office would also like to thank Anna Sullivan, Angela Falkenberg and Peter Mader for their contribution to the day and this report.





## Methodology and overview of the Summit

The day was divided into three sessions with small-group discussions at the end of each session.

The first session set the scene, with Associate Professor Anna Sullivan from University of South Australia providing an overview of the key recommendations made in the Graham Inquiry in the context of the research evidence about children's connection to learning and schooling.

Dr Andrew Bills from Flinders University then reflected critically on what could be learned across the system from 15 years of supporting kids through FLO, and Lara Golding from the Australian Education Union provided context and experience from an educator perspective. Participants were asked to think about the best way to respond to the Graham Inquiry's recommendations and who are the important players in that process.

The second session focussed on what keeps children connected to schooling and learning. Angela Falkenberg (SA Primary Principals Association) and Peter Mader (SA Secondary Principals' Association) spoke about tensions at the school and system levels in SA schools. The discussion questions asked participants for their input on how they keep children connected in their schools and what supports at a system level can help further support schools.

The final session of the day focussed on wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people, what system changes are needed to keep children connected to school and learning, which key stakeholders can be involved and support this change, as well as how momentum for change can be sustained.

Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly presented findings from the Blame Game Report and the causes and impacts of school exclusions from the perspective of children and young people. South Australia's Commissioner for Mental Health David Kelly spoke about the direct relationship between learning and wellbeing, and the importance of strengthening the relationship between schools and the community. Finally, Liz O'Connell (Director, Young People and Practice, SYC) reflected on the challenges and opportunities for service providers working in schools.

This report outlines the key themes and issues raised by participants and speakers, as well as the key questions and concerns that they would like to see the Department and the Minister clarify and address.





## Key messages

### What is keeping children connected to learning and school?

1. Strong school and class leaders promote inclusion through positive role modelling for educators, staff and children and young people.
2. Schools and teachers recognise the direct link between positive wellbeing and learning outcomes and focus on building trust and positive connections with students before focusing on the curriculum.
3. Students are engaged when schools encourage them to feel heard and valued, listen to the voices of children at school, acknowledge their views and act upon them.
4. Strong partnerships with community and government organisations and services keep students and families engaged and guide them to the correct services in a timely manner.
5. Educators and students have access to direct support and advice from people with expertise, including trauma-related expertise.

### What are the key opportunities for the Department to consider to best support schools moving forward?

1. It is important that the Department consult with educators and service providers and keep them informed in relation to the future of FLO and potential alternative supports and structures to replace it.
2. KPIs should reflect the need to measure a “world class” education on multiple levels, giving as much attention to “equity” as to “excellence”.
3. Participants seek clear and practical guidance from the Department on what inclusion means and how they can promote it in their schools.
4. Principals need support, both in terms of time and resources, to make more connections with outside services, such as health services, including those in the community.
5. Guidance on education becoming more child centred through improving relationships between educators and teachers and amplifying student voice.
6. Better support structures for both teachers and students at a school and system level are required in order to reduce suspensions and exclusions.
7. Participants seek more information about what is working well in other schools, and greater support to scale up programs or services that have proven to be effective.



## What is helping to keep children connected to school?

Participants told us that there is no single thing, act or program that keeps children connected to school and learning. Rather, there are a number of inter-related factors that help children remain connected, including leadership, support from the department and better connections to the community.

It is notable that many participants shared examples of key factors, programs, services and strategies in place that were helping them keep children connected in different education contexts. However, one of the biggest challenges that participants identified was having limited opportunities and resources to continue, expand and scale up models that are working well. They wanted more opportunities to share knowledge and experiences with other educators and service providers and learn from one another.

Participants would like the Department to share information about the “good news” stories and programs that schools are using so that other schools can adopt these programs. While it is noted that the Department has some of these programs on YouTube, it may be more helpful for school leaders and teaching staff to be more formally informed of them. Most importantly, participants sought guidance from the Department as to *how* effective practice can be adopted in their own schools.

### Strong leadership

Consistently, participants talked about the advantages of having or being good leaders, from class leaders to school leaders. They described good leaders as those who bring about change in schools, to culture as well as to practice. Good leaders are those who ‘practice what they preach’ and are positive role models for educators, staff and children and young people in their schools.

Participants would like the Department to provide operational insight into what good leadership for inclusion entails, and they want to be involved and share their insights during this process. More specifically, participants want the Department to measure “world class” education on multiple levels, and acknowledge that an excellent leader is one that can help students achieve positive outcomes in terms of academic results, but also on broader domains, including children’s wellbeing, sense of belonging and connectedness to people, and learning environments at school, and opportunities to learn practical skills and build connections with community.

It is noted that the Department collects and reports on student Wellbeing and Engagement data annually, and participants discussed the key factors they saw as essential to positive results in this data collection.

### Focus on wellbeing and connectedness

Participants and speakers talked about the direct relationship between wellbeing and learning. The Mental Health Commissioner talked about the importance of looking after children’s mental health and wellbeing, and the research that reveals children learn the best when they feel safe and heard.

The Department for Education has recognised this in the *Wellbeing for Learning and Life Framework*. While this Framework was developed in 2013 and remains on its website, it is unclear how much it is currently being supported by the Department. The connection between learning and wellbeing was also a focus of the Department’s *Leading the Way*



*Year 7 to High School Pilot* where it was found that it was important to focus on students' wellbeing before focussing on the curriculum. This work provides a foundation on which to build further efforts to keep all children engaged with learning and schooling and reduce exclusionary practices.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Blame Game* Report noted that "any practice that has the potential for such a substantive impact on children and young people's wellbeing and future attainment must be subject to the most rigorous standards and oversight".

The Commissioner therefore recommended the following:

- Exclusion from school should not be an exclusion from education. Schools must provide offline and/or online learning instruction and resources for a child who spends a school day at home, along with a key teacher who is allocated to that child and who must maintain daily contact with them, just as though they were physically attending school.
- Procedural fairness must be improved by ensuring that if a school is considering excluding a child or young person, they, or a member of their family, must be provided with an opportunity for direct involvement in any decision being made about them.
- The child or young person must be included, informed and supported to participate in the discussions and decision-making about exclusions and alternative arrangements that are not exclusionary, in consultation with family and carers.
- Decisions should always consider what is in the child's best interests, while also allowing for repercussions in relation to child safety, family employment, and/or carer responsibilities.
- Public reporting of the numbers of suspensions and exclusions needs to be disaggregated into school, age, sex, gender, disability status, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD, health status, other relevant identity and background factors, and incorporate data from the Catholic and independent school sectors.
- Introduction of school level incentives for teachers and school leaders who reduce the number of formal and informal education exclusions at their school.

## Children feeling heard and valued

To get the best out of children, participants said that student voice needs to be amplified. This is consistent with what children and young people repeatedly tell the Commissioner: that they want a voice and agency in matters that affect their lives. Since school is a major part of their lives it is important that they feel like they belong in the school environment. Some participants said this includes having an advocate or independent arbiter for children (and at times their family) for issues that occur between the family and school.

For children to remain connected to school there needs to be more opportunities for students to have proactive input and to feel heard and respected in their schools. This means more than providing a select number of students the chance to become a student leader. It includes empowering all young people to become active citizens and members of their school's community.

Within schools, this might look like spaces for play and relaxation, lunchtime clubs, cultural clubs, and peer support models whereby students are each other's "buddies" in both





learning and play. Participants also discussed how links and partnerships between schools and local government or community organisations are keeping students positively engaged.

## Partnerships with community and government

Participants recognise that for a school to work well it needs to have strong connections with the community (local councils, sporting and recreational clubs), families, support services and governmental departments. For this to occur, the government and the Department need to work with all stakeholders to develop a road map for schools to connect to their local community.

Working in partnership requires collaboration with parents and carers, educators, school-based and external specialists, therapists and other support people, with children being at the centre. This approach could be led by a dedicated wellbeing officer in schools. Their role could include taking a proactive role, looking out for children who appear to be struggling and checking in with parents and teachers.

Some participants pointed out that the Information Sharing Guidelines (ISG) established in South Australia are not being used to help schools make decisions in the best interests of the child. The ISGs were established after the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission and were “designed to give providers of services to children, young people and adults, confidence in sharing information to prevent harm or respond to current threats to safety and wellbeing”.<sup>1</sup> The Department should work with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to review the ISGs to see when schools and school leaders to have more access to information about children for whom mandatory reports have been made.

As noted above, participants also wanted more access to information on what’s happening in other schools, what’s working well and the “hows” and “whys” of successful models, particularly when it comes to partnerships between schools and councils, government or community.

While most participants felt that building a strong sense of community was crucial, this was seen as more challenging in some schools compared to others. This challenge was more commonly reported in “super schools” where the large size of the school was described as a barrier to deep connection with students. Participants highlighted the need to have structures in place to make this manageable.

## Key issues and considerations moving forward

This section highlights the key questions and concerns that the participants would like addressed as the Department moves forward in response to the recent reports’ recommendations.

The main purpose of the Summit was to consider the substance of the Graham Report. General feedback to the report was that, whilst comprehensive, it was not accessible, and it was therefore difficult for educators and leaders to read the report in detail.

Participants made a request to the Department that they wanted to be briefed on the substance and recommendations of the report. Moving on, they emphasised that it was

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Premier and Cabinet website at [Information Sharing Guidelines | Department of the Premier and Cabinet \(dpc.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.dpc.sa.gov.au/information-sharing-guidelines) 1 June 2021.



important for the Department to remain transparent and open about its intentions in response to the Graham Report. Participants want to be engaged as key stakeholders in the planning and decision-making journey moving forward, rather than simply be notified of the Department's actions via an announcement by the Minister or the Chief Executive.

## **What will replace FLO?**

Participants expressed uncertainty and concern about the Graham Inquiry's recommendation to decommission Flexible Learning Options (FLO), particularly without any structure or program to ensure that students enrolled in FLO do not fall through the gaps.

There was a real sense among participants and speakers that "mainstream" schooling is not catering to all students. As such, we cannot simply "get rid of" FLO, nor can we simply "get rid of" exclusionary practices. There needs to be an alternative, or fundamental improvements to the support that is provided to all students, educators and school leaders.

Two of the reports released in 2020 – the Australian Council for Education Research's (ACER) Earning and Learning Report and the CCYP's Blame Game Report – both highlighted the positive experiences of FLO as described by students. Many young people who had struggled to fit into mainstream school described how the multi-disciplinary environments, case management and individualised support of the FLO structure had positive outcomes, particularly in terms of wellbeing but also in accommodating their learning needs.

At the same time, however, as highlighted in the Graham Inquiry there was recognition that FLO does not measure up so well in terms of SACE completions and post-school pathways.

One of the key messages from the summit was that there must be learnings and successes from the 15 years of FLO and from NGOs regarding trauma-informed pedagogy, relationships and case management that the system can already draw upon and benefit from.

Most importantly, if the Department is to act on the Graham Inquiry's recommendation to decommission FLO, participants would like to be consulted and kept informed about what would replace FLO.

## **How might we rethink KPIs to ensure both excellence and equity in education?**

The discussion about the future of FLO raises key questions about how we define inclusion, and the key policy indicators being used to measure the success of our education programs and system. The most important of these indicators are a) school completion rates; b) wellbeing enhancement; and c) longitudinal post-school pathways for all students.

There was a sense that the focus on quantitative measures (SACE completions, post-school pathways, and literacy and numeracy), is missing other qualitative measures related to wellbeing and inclusion. Participants expressed concern regarding the potential for students to become excluded where they were seen to negatively impact on KPIs set for individual schools.



Given the inextricable links between learning and wellbeing, many participants wanted to see a shift towards bolstering more qualitative and inclusive measures in a way that would complement the dominant focus on literacy and numeracy. Wellbeing-focused KPIs aimed at keeping children in school – no matter what their educational attainment – were seen as crucial to meeting Australia’s national goals set out in the Mparntwe Declaration and the Department’s own strategy for “world class education”.

Ultimately, participants highlighted the need to measure “world class” education on multiple levels, giving as much attention to “equity” as to “excellence” because you can’t have one without the other.

Whatever is decided, participants wanted to be included as stakeholders in this process, along with students. They need to be provided with opportunities to inform what they think the indicators could be and what they think excellence in education is.

Participants directly linked KPIs to the current funding structure. Participants were asking for a change to how schools receive funding that is tied to more holistic goals. Although we understand that there have been some changes to Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP) funding, participants reported that the current funding structure for extra supports is complex and can take a lot of administrative resources, without necessarily leading to a productive outcome for schools, families or students.

## **What does inclusion really mean and what does it look like in schools?**

Participants identified that keeping students engaged at school and promoting true inclusion of all children and young people requires a clear definition of inclusion. They sought practical guidance from the Department on what inclusion means and how they can promote it in their schools. They also had a preference for an internationally accepted and comprehensive definition of inclusion.

The Department’s definition of inclusive education in its 2021 Action Plan defines it as “supporting learning growth and outcomes for the 1 in 4 students with functional needs”. This was seen to be too narrow a definition. We understand this Plan is currently “under development”, and some of the Actions include introducing a user-friendly interim One Plan template, developing practice guidance and resources for schools and preschools to support the inclusion and learning of students with functional needs in mainstream settings and review the system around the IESP to streamline processes and to improve advice on the best use of funding.

However, national and international definitions are much broader in scope and extend beyond children living with disability. These wider definitions may more appropriately accommodate the needs of other student groups who are disproportionately excluded and negatively impacted by exclusionary practices in schools, including children in care, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It is also significant that male students are overrepresented in suspensions and exclusions data, and a growing proportion of younger students are being suspended and excluded.

Arguably, when the education system successfully meets the needs of these students and truly includes them, the needs of *all* students will be met.

Under the Convention for the Rights of the Child, the United Nations General Comment No. 4 on Article 24: Right to an Education provides guidance regarding government obligations on implementing inclusive education. This includes core principles that inclusive education:





- is a fundamental right of all learners;
- is underpinned by a valuing of student well-being and respect for their autonomy and dignity;
- operates as a means by which other human rights and an inclusive society can be realised; and
- is the consequence of an ongoing process of eliminating the barriers which would obstruct the right to an education.

Recent international guidance identified nine key features of an inclusive education, including:

- whole systems approach;
- whole educational environment;
- whole person approach;
- supported teachers;
- respect for and value of diversity;
- learning-friendly environment;
- effective transitions;
- recognition of partnerships; and
- monitoring.

The Guidelines are also reflected in the Mparntwe Declaration in Goal 1, that “*The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity, which includes to:*

- provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination;
- recognise the individual needs of all young Australians, identify barriers that can be addressed, and empower learners to overcome barriers;
- promote personalised learning and provide support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners;
- ensure that young Australians of all backgrounds are supported to achieve their full educational potential; and
- promote a culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual.”

Much of the above is already embedded in the Objects of South Australia’s *Education and Children Services Act 2019* (SA), which includes:

- ensuring that education provided to children and students in South Australia is of a high quality;
- ensuring that children’s services provided at children’s services centres in South Australia are of a high quality;
- ensuring the development of an accessible range of education and children’s services that meet the needs of all groups in the community; and
- promoting the involvement of parents, persons other than parents who are responsible for children and other members of the community in the provision of education and children’s services to children and students in South Australia
- continuously improve the wellbeing and safety of children in South Australia.



## How can schools get the right support at the right time?

There was a lot of discussion about schools, students and families not getting the right support at the right time, which resulted in a disconnection between schools and children and their families and an increased chance of children being excluded.

Participants, especially school principals, want the Department to support them so they have the resources and time needed to make more connections with outside services, including those in the community. Working in partnership with students, families, teachers and other support people – SSOs, year level coordinators and FLO coordinators – was seen as essential in this regard.

Some examples include having health support and services located in schools, from general practitioners and psychologists to lawyers. A few school principals gave examples of services being in their schools or closely connected to their schools. However, it appears that many of these ‘success stories’ are not widely known by other schools. As previously discussed, the Department must look at how these success stories can be made more widely known for other schools to adopt and know how to implement. While participants identified examples of good practice, a significant challenge was how to expand and scale up models of practice where this was effective.

Participants also recognised the link between student wellbeing and teacher wellbeing, and between teacher wellbeing and teacher capacity. There appeared to be some dissatisfaction on the level of support the Department currently provides schools. Participants, for example, described the time-consuming process associated with accessing IESP funding. They told us about a significant amount of paperwork that needs to be filled out and the hurdles that must be jumped, to then not consistently receive the necessary support and funding. It is acknowledged that since the Summit, there have been changes to IESP funding with reviews being suspended for two years. This is a good example of the Department listening to schools.

Participants were also asking for more support for new teachers so that they are ready to teach. Induction programs are particularly important for new teachers as they learn how to manage student behaviour effectively. New teachers need to develop a broad range of strategies to prevent student behaviour problems. New teachers need to learn how intervene effectively to deescalate issues when they arise. Much of this learning is based on developing relationships with students and the implementation of long-term classroom management strategies. Yet most new teachers are employed casually or on contracts. This means most new teachers miss out on the school-based induction programs. This leaves new teachers often relying on punitive behaviour management strategies that enable them to cope instead of developing effective classroom management skills and strategies that set them in good stead for their careers.

## How can we make schools more child-centred?

Another issue that participants flagged as important was how to make school and education more child centred. Participants discussed how schools can improve the relationships between educators and teachers as well as how to amplify student voice to deliver a better “service” to students.

Although ‘child-centred pedagogy’ was not necessarily explicitly referred to in the Graham report, it was acknowledged that the implementation of a ‘multi-tier support system’ (MTSS) could be helpful. Graham recognised that the human rights approach to



inclusion is what the Department should consider through the MTSS framework “that unifies academic, social and behavioural interventions and supports”.

The MTSS has been implemented in a number of state jurisdictions, including Queensland and Victoria. However, participants suggested that the implementation of any new system by the Department should be reviewed by relevant stakeholders, including principals, teachers and other education staff, families and students, before any implementation so that it can best respond to specific needs in the South Australian context.

### **How do we ensure students transition successfully from primary school to high school?**

Participants also raised concerns about exclusionary practices in the context of the transition of Year 7s into high school. The Graham Inquiry report highlighted that historically, transitioning from year 7 to year 8 has resulted in an increase in suspensions and expressed concern that the movement of Year 7 to high school may also increase the rate of the suspensions. The Graham report attributed this increase to the different culture and ethos of high schools compared to primary schools.

Participants were also concerned that the transition to high school at a younger age may exacerbate suspensions, without adequate support structures for teachers and students in place. While it is acknowledged that the pilot transition in 2020 was largely successful for the three pilot schools, participants still expressed reservations as to how the Department could properly support all high schools as the transition becomes state-wide in 2022.





## What additional support is needed at a school level and a system level?

Participants identified where they needed more support at a school level and system level to keep children connected to learning and schooling. In particular, they wanted to ensure that educators and students are given direct support by people with expertise, including trauma-related expertise.

Some suggestions that were thought to benefit schools and the broader education system included providing:

- More support for teachers, through personal development and training. This includes training that addresses trauma-informed practices, how to work with vulnerable children and the use of restorative practices.
- Programs in schools that promote students' sense of belonging and support them to feel connected.
- Working in tandem with professionals and better (more balanced, respectful and transparent) partnerships between the Department and non-government organisations.



# School Exclusions: The Graham Report

Associate Professor Anna Sullivan



# Inquiry into Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian Government Schools

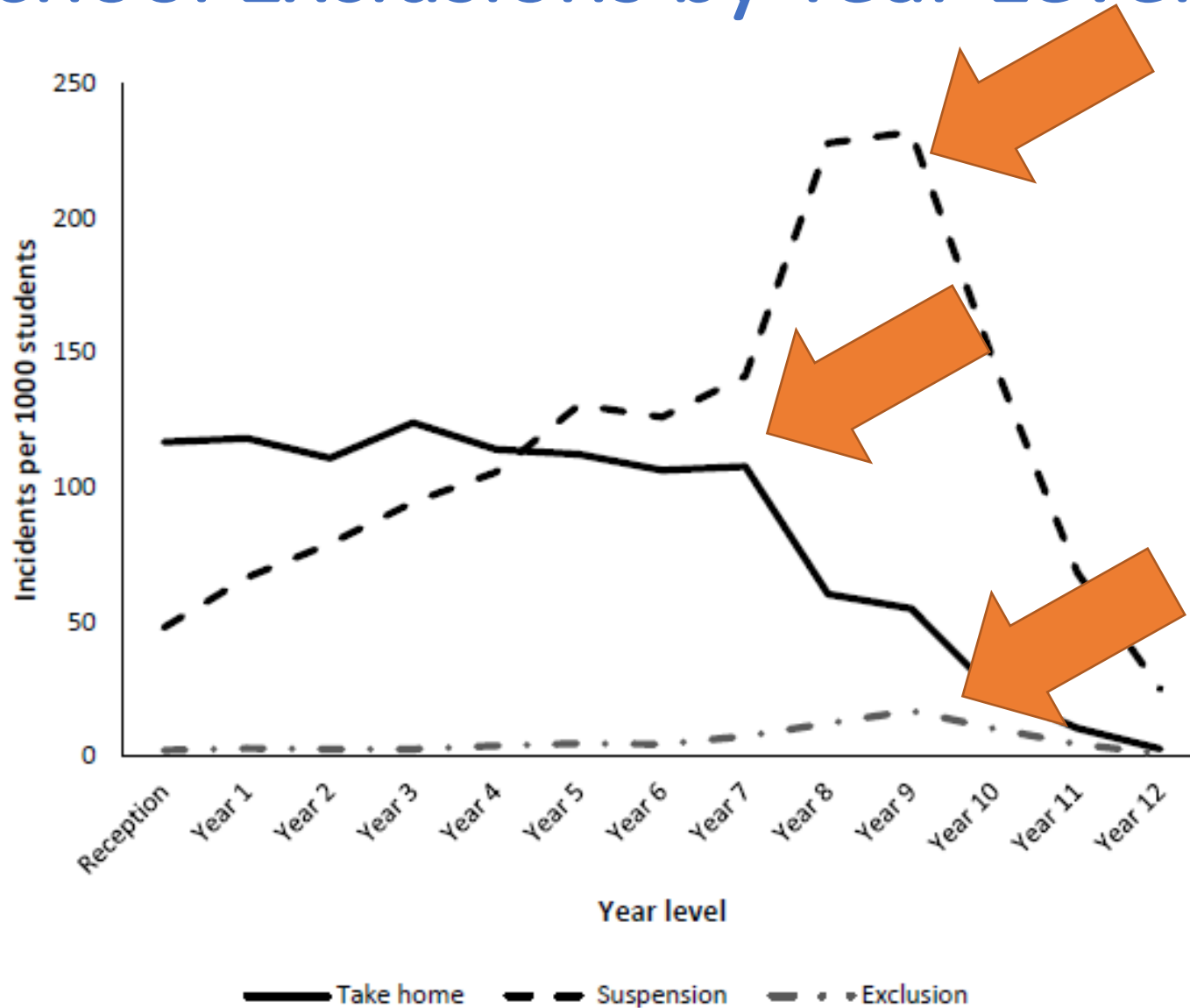
Tasked by the Minister for Education to investigate how exclusionary 'measures are being used and whether they affect some student groups more than others.'

'Found that :

- SA government schools are, for the most part, safe and orderly.
- The vast majority of students each year are not sent home, suspended or excluded.
- Of the 177,246 students enrolled in 2019,
  - only 3.3% of students were sent home,
  - 5.8% were suspended, and
  - 0.5% were excluded.'



# School Exclusions by Year Level



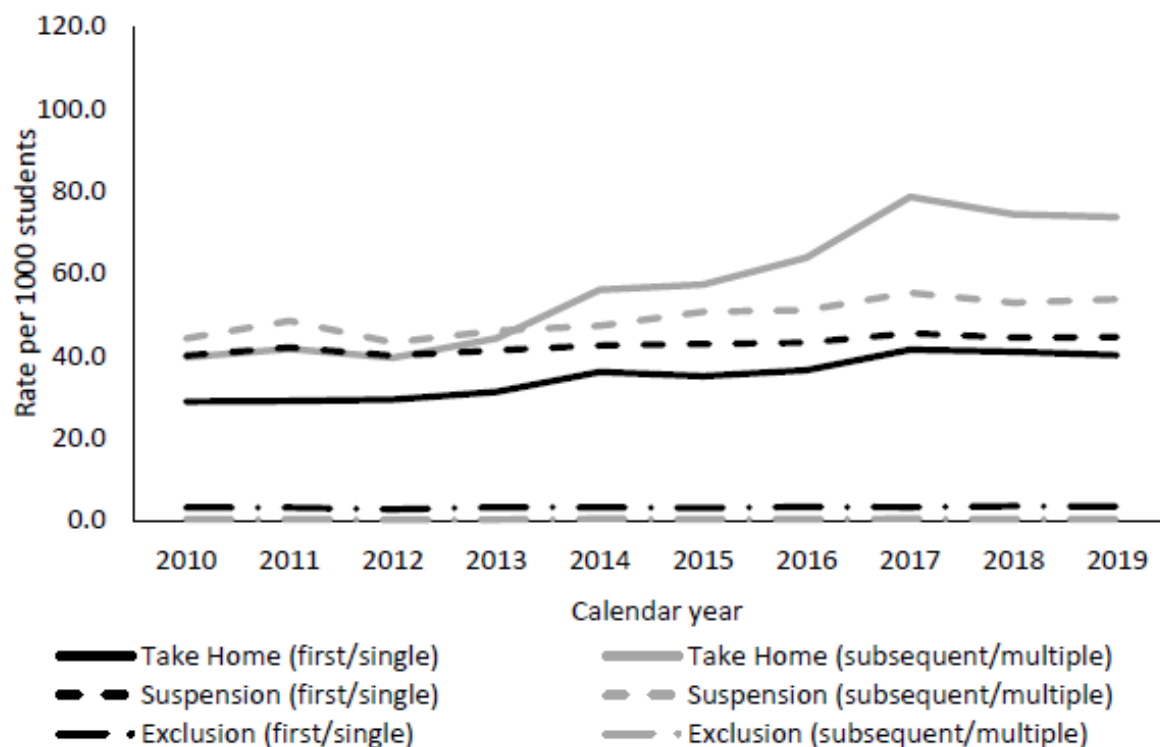
Source: Graham Report (2020)



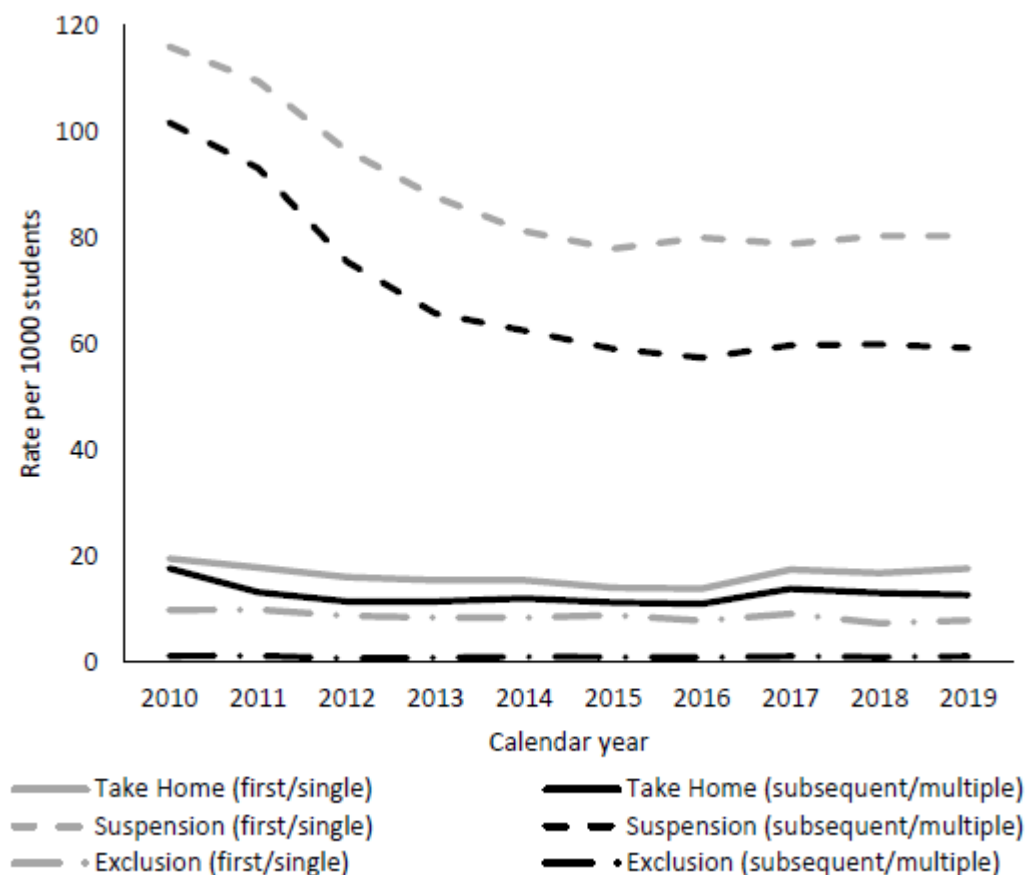
# Exclusionary Practices by School Phase



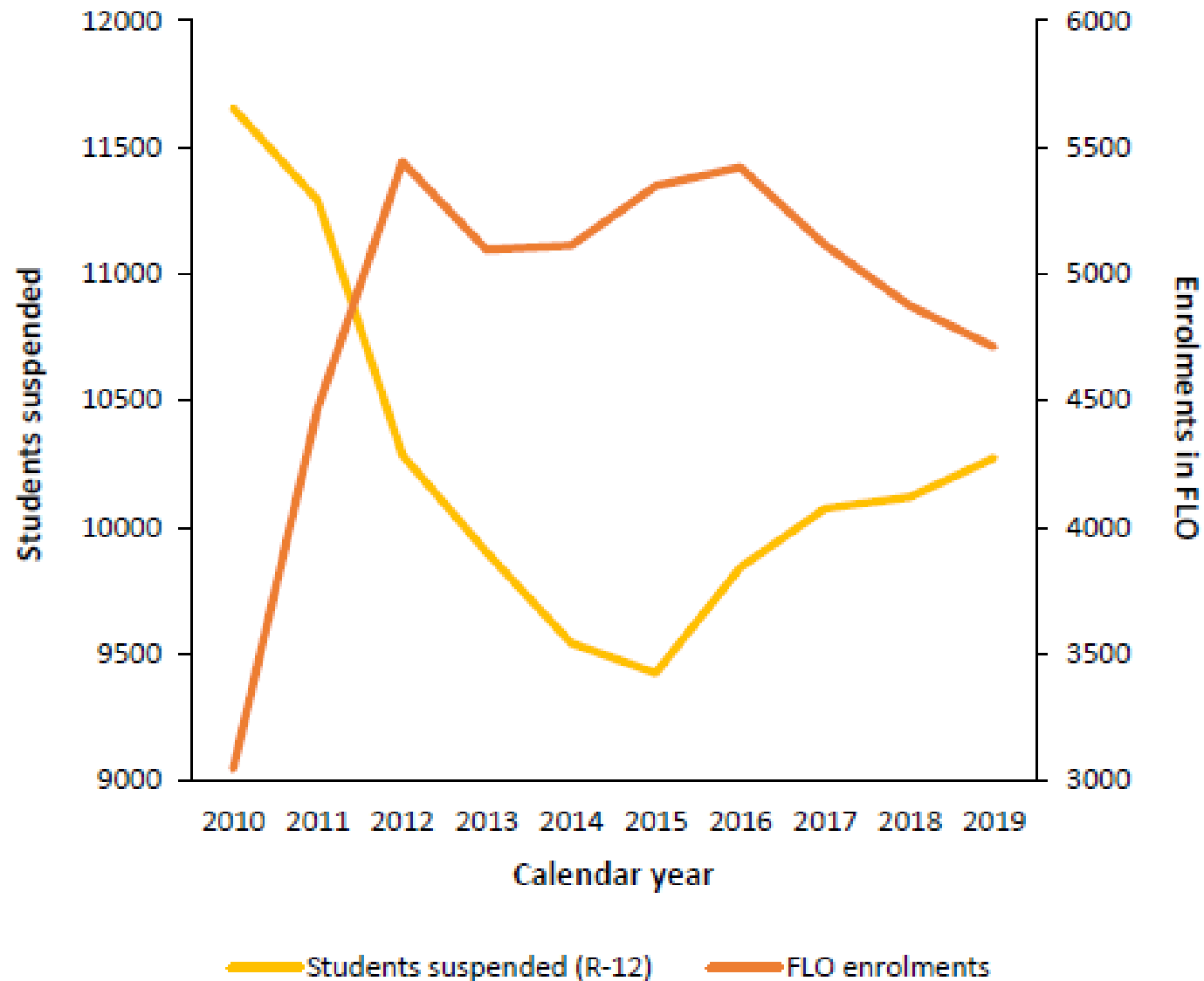
## Primary



## Secondary



# School Exclusions – Flexible Learning Option



Source: Graham Report (2020)



# The extent of the exclusionary problem: Case Study 1

In 2019, 278 students suspended for more than 15 days

- 80% Receiving adjustments for reasons of disability
  - 20% Indigenous
  - 9% Students in care
  - 67% Disadvantaged schools (Cat 1-3)
- 
- Received 1,969 suspensions between them, an average of 7 per student
  - Total number of suspensions ranged from 4 to 14, with an average of 2.8 days in length
  - Equates to a period of 3-4 weeks of missed schooling
  - Two thirds of all suspensions were given for minor physical acts or rules violations



# The extent of the exclusionary problem: Case Study 2

In 2019, 92 Students who received more than one exclusion

- 74% Receiving adjustments for reasons of disability
- 21% Indigenous
- 52% Disadvantaged schools (Cat 1-3)
- Accounted for 0.05% of total enrolments but received 19.8% of all exclusions
- Received 194 exclusions between them, an average of 2 per student
- Also received an average of 2 take homes and 3.7 suspensions in same year
- Equates to 72.9 days of missed schooling, a third of the school year
- Three quarters of all exclusions were given for rules violations and written and verbal threats



# The extent of the exclusionary problem: Over-representation



	% Enrolments	% Take Homes	% Suspensions	% Exclusions
Boys	51.5%	82%	79%	78%
Disability	22.4%	69.3%	43%	67%
Indigenous	6.6%	21%	17.6%	20.3%
In Care	1.3%	6.8%	5%	7.9%

# Questions

- What system improvements could enable schools and preschools to be more inclusive and supportive of students?
- How might current inclusion research shape public education in the future?
- Are there any risks associated with any of the recommendations of the Professor Graham's report?

# Leads to:

- Who can do what?
- Can system wide approaches work?
- How can our understandings about inclusion guide us?

## Cautions:

- Types of unproductive student behaviours
- Influences on student behaviour
- Importance of context
- Deeper understanding of what is going on





# Types of behaviours



“Unproductive behaviours” - kinds of student classroom behaviours that impede a student’s academic progress (Angus et al, 2009)

Terminology



Naughty	Defiant	Unproductive	Disruptive
Difficult	Inappropriate	Disengaged	Aggressive
Misbehaviour	Unacceptable	Uncooperative	Antisocial

# Take Homes



Table 7.1. Reasons for Take Homes recoded into 11 categories, in order of prevalence for 2019

Reasons for Take Homes (in order of prevalence)		
1.	School Rules Violations	39.0%
2.	Physical Acts that Harm Others (Minor)	29.0%
3.	Disengaged Behaviours	11.5%
4.	Disruptive Behaviour	6.7%
5.	Written and Verbal Threats	5.5%
6.	Bullying and Harassment (inc. cyber)	4.2%
7.	Physical Acts that Harm Others (Major and/or with a weapon)	2.1%
8.	Property Destruction (exc. Arson)	1.2%
9.	Sexual Acts and Behaviours	0.3%
10.	Drugs	0.2%
11.	Other Criminal Acts (Theft and Arson)	0.2%

# Suspensions



Reasons for Suspension (in order of prevalence)		
1.	Physical Acts that Harm Others (Minor)	36.6%
2.	School Rules Violations	29.5%
3.	Bullying and Harassment (inc. cyber)	9.1%
4.	Written and Verbal Threats	7.0%
5.	Disengaged Behaviours	5.6%
6.	Disruptive Behaviour	4.2%
7.	Property Destruction (exc. Arson)	2.3%
8.	Physical Acts that Harm Others (Major and/or with a weapon)	2.2%
9.	Drugs	1.8%
10.	Other Criminal Acts (Theft and Arson)	1.2%
11.	Sexual Acts and Behaviours	0.6%

*Source: SA Department for Education data collections, unpublished, September 2020.*

# Exclusions



*Table 7.5. Reasons for exclusions recoded into 11 subcategories, in order of prevalence for 2019*

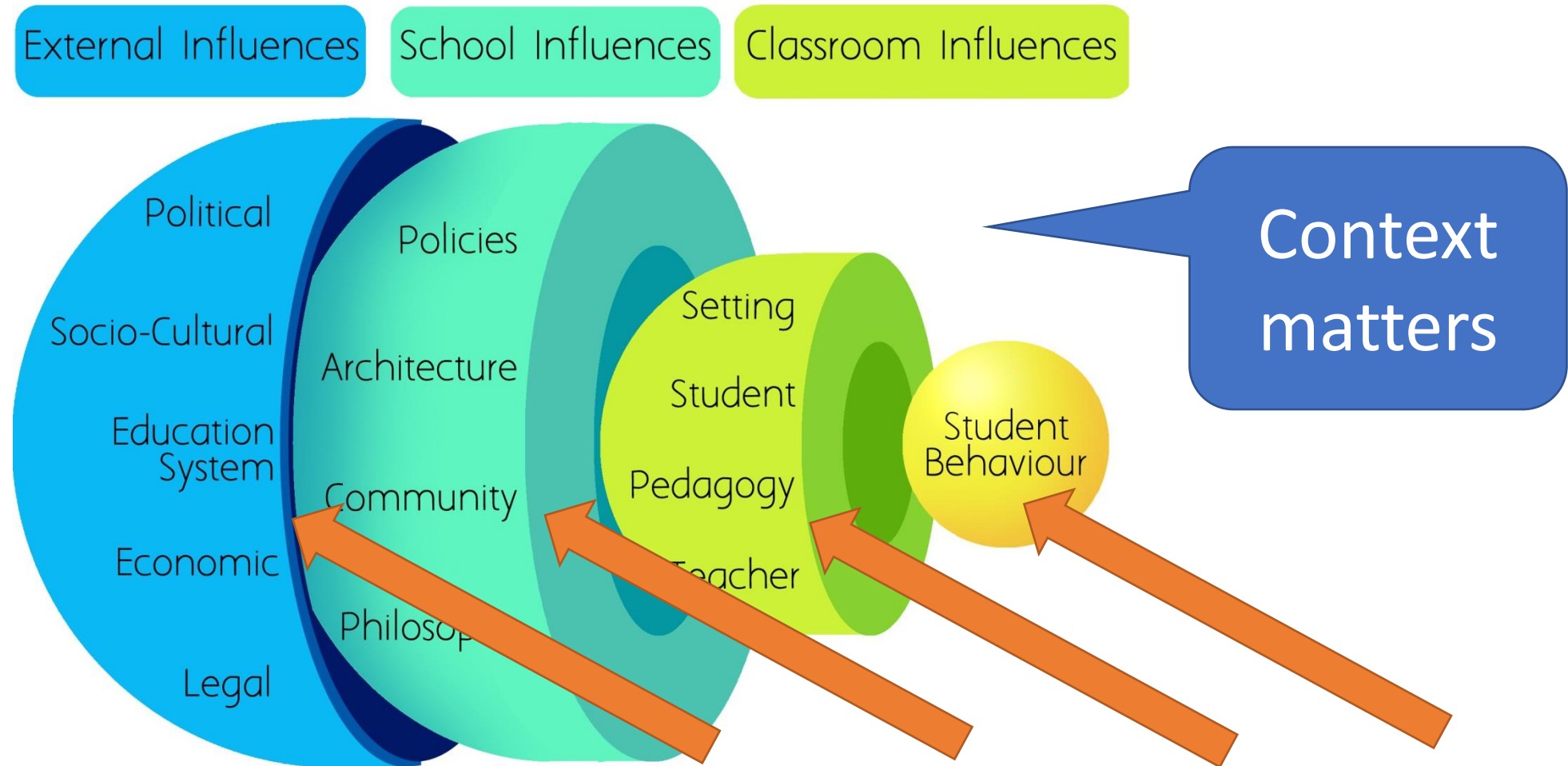
Reasons for Exclusion (in order of prevalence)	
1. Physical Acts that Harm Others (Minor)	33.4%
2. School Rules Violations	22.0%
3. Written and Verbal Threats	15.5%
4. Drugs	9.0%
5. Physical Acts that Harm Others (Major and/or with a weapon)	6.9%
6. Bullying and Harassment (inc. cyber)	4.5%
7. Property Destruction (exc. Arson)	2.9%
8. Disengaged Behaviours	2.9%
9. Disruptive Behaviour	1.5%
10. Sexual Acts and Behaviours	1.0%
11. Other Criminal Acts (Theft and Arson)	-

*Note.* There were less than six incidents in 'Other Criminal Acts (Theft and Arson)' in 2019.

*Source:* SA Department for Education data collections, unpublished, September 2020.



# Influences on Student Behaviour in Schools





# A framework for developing and enacting humane behaviour policies and practices in schools



## Philosophy for enacting humane behaviour policies

- Reject deficit views of students and their families
- Ensure students are central to all decision making and action
- Promote a school culture with guiding principles based on core values
- Utilise key ideas from a variety of sources to inform policies and practices
- Demonstrate a genuine ethic of care for students and families
- Foster and maintain social and emotional wellbeing
- Establish and sustain educative relationships
- Involve students in relevant and rigorous learning through engaging pedagogies
- Commit to working through and resolving issues and challenges

### Staffing to enact a collective philosophy

- Adopt strong and visible leadership approaches that promote learner engagement
- Build a profile of staff which embraces a humane behaviour philosophy
- Establish a collaborative leadership team to take collective responsibility for students and staff
- Challenge staff through professional learning to place students at the centre of humane behaviour policies
- Implement performance management processes to ensure all staff embrace a humane behaviour philosophy

### Prioritising place and space

- Allocate resources to ensure spaces support the enactment of the school philosophy
- Design and arrange the physical environment to promote collaboration through engaging pedagogies
- Promote a sense of autonomy by creating more flexible and relaxed learning spaces
- Ensure the physical environment is appealing to promote a sense of belonging and connection
- Provide a communal space for community gatherings
- Utilise technologies to promote collaborative learning and teaching

### Fostering an engaged and supportive school community

- Engage all members of the community to develop a sense of belonging
- Build and sustain relationships within the community
- Value diversity and promote a sense of connectedness and belonging
- Use a variety of positive and respectful communication strategies
- Use a common language to communicate policies and practices
- Enlist members of the school community to promote a positive profile of the school

## Enacting humane behaviour policies and practices

- Challenge and educate staff to enact humane behaviour policies and practices
- Focus on engaging pedagogies rather than managing behaviours
- Ensure behaviour management practices are aligned with the school philosophy
- Collect and use data to inform and justify policies and practices
- Enact preventative and respectful behaviour policies
- Implement educative rather than punitive approaches to managing behaviour
- Use equitable rather than equal practices with students
- Adopt a range of problem solving and conflict resolution strategies



# Philosophy for enacting humane behaviour policies

## Philosophy for enacting humane behaviour policies

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reject deficit views of students and their families</li><li>• Ensure students are central to all decision making and action</li><li>• Promote a school culture with guiding principles based on core values</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilise key ideas from a variety of sources to inform policies and practices</li><li>• Demonstrate a genuine ethic of care for students and families</li><li>• Foster and maintain social and emotional wellbeing</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish and sustain educative relationships</li><li>• Involve students in relevant and rigorous learning through engaging pedagogies</li><li>• Commit to working through and resolving issues and challenges</li></ul> |
|---|---|--|

# Philosophy for enacting humane behaviour policies

- Reject deficit views of students and their families

“We changed the conversation from the deficit view of the child and their family, and the community, all that blame factor, and the EAL, and the northern suburbs”

(Primary principal)

“Every child is worthwhile there is no such thing as a bad child; unfortunately sometimes they’ll just do a wrong action.”

(Secondary teacher)



## Philosophy for enacting humane behaviour policies cont.

- Promote a school culture with guiding principles based on core values

“we don’t often get those extreme behaviours because of the work that we’ve done in **developing this school culture**”  
(Primary teacher)

“the **school values** define our school as opposed to behaviour management”  
(Secondary principal)

“One of the most important parts of my job is **culture development**”  
(Secondary principal)

## Philosophy for enacting humane behaviour policies cont.

- Demonstrate a strong and genuine ethic of care for students and their families

“Underlying all of that is generally an educator’s strong sense of philosophy around children, and a strong sense of belief of our children’s rights as learners in the education system to have the best outcome both socially and emotionally and cognitively. ”

(Primary principal)

# Enacting Humane Behaviour Policies and Practices

## Enacting humane behaviour policies and practices

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Challenge and educate staff to enact humane behaviour policies and practices</li><li>• Focus on engaging pedagogies rather than managing behaviours</li><li>• Ensure behaviour management practices are aligned with the school philosophy</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collect and use data to inform and justify policies and practices</li><li>• Enact preventative and respectful behaviour policies</li><li>• Implement educative rather than punitive approaches to managing behaviour</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use equitable rather than equal practices with students</li><li>• Adopt a range of problem solving and conflict resolution strategies</li></ul> |
|--|--|---|

## Focus on engaging pedagogies rather than managing behaviours

“We used to have a **time out room that was the duty from hell**. You’d have 30 naughty boys all facing the wall, all laughing and jeering and doing all sorts of things. We don’t have a time out room haven’t needed one for a long time now...what I hated was having so many naughty kids in the room that you couldn’t speak to all of them and try and sort through what had happened. We still kept on with the time out room for a while but there became less and less children in there. And as **teachers became more aware of restorative practice they said, ‘Well there’s no point to having that room’**. So we went away from that and we just had the sorting out duty.” (Primary teacher)

## Focus on engaging pedagogies rather than managing behaviours

“Sometimes children can be off task because they don’t actually know what they’re doing. So if you can pinpoint where they need to work on so that they **feel successful and they can actually work**, then there is no need – that they’re engaged – that they’re not disengaged.  
(Teacher)

“The other things that helps behaviour here is that we try and **meet the children’s learning needs**”  
(Principal)

## Focus on engaging pedagogies rather than managing behaviours

“We didn’t set out on this aim of improving behaviour, we aimed to do it to improve education for the kids and as a result of what we have done, we’ve seen the behaviour improve markedly.”

“All that low level stuff, get back in your seat, can you be quiet ... doesn’t exist here anymore because the kids will be doing what they want to be doing at that time, so (a) they’re more engaged but (b) they’re not confined to a time and a space.”

“The simple data around behaviour management is there’s been a 97% reduction in kids being sent out of class. We were having a dozen a day. Last year, the entire year, in Year 8, 9 and 10 ... we had 12 students for the entire year sent out of class.”

‘[I was away], I got back and the staff said, “Oh yeah by the way, we’ve closed the time out room”. ... The teachers voting to close the time out room when it was such a crutch before, there’s no way known that would have happened twelve months ago.” Blue Cliff HS (Principal)



# Enact preventative and respectful behaviour policies

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Tactics</u>
<b>Building and maintaining relationships with students is central to preventing behaviour issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on building relationships with students early in the year.</li><li>• Follow-up with students the day after if there has been an issue with behaviour to maintain relationship.</li><li>• Utilise behaviour management approaches that engage the student (i.e. restorative practices and respectful, empowering approaches that focus on restoring the relationship) rather than punitive approaches.</li></ul>

# Adopt a range of problem solving and conflict resolution strategies

“That’s the benefits of the **restorative approach** and teachers talking through everything with their children”  
(Primary principal)

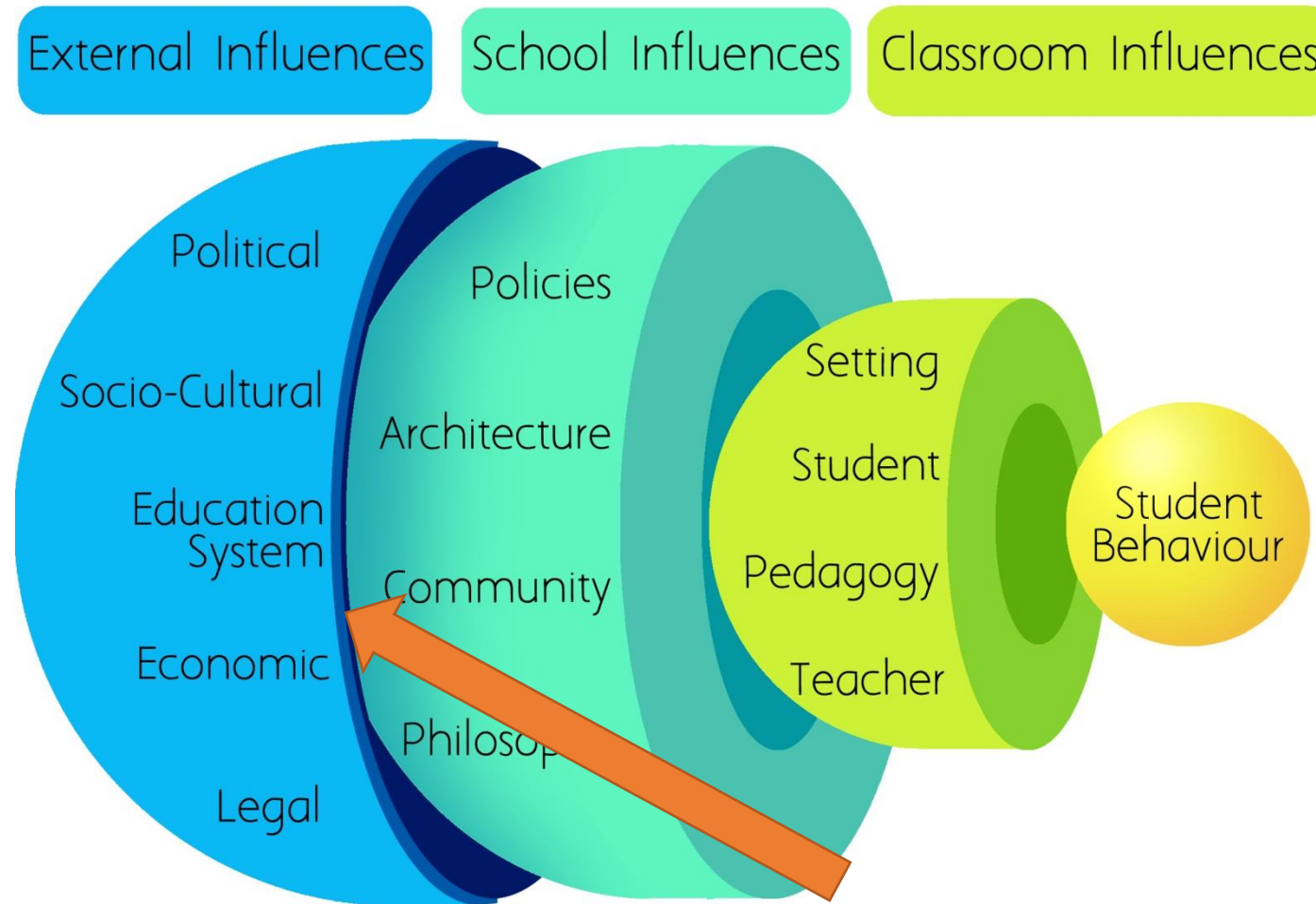
“If there's a **problem we will sort through it**”  
(Primary principal)

“Depending on the age of the children our first step is to sit as a group and **work through what the issues are**”  
(Primary teacher)

“We look at why a child is misbehaving. Is there a reason? Is the work too easy? Is the work too hard? What are the problems at home? **What is happening?**”  
(Primary teacher)

“Lots of talk...Sometimes I feel like that’s all I’m doing, but if the issues aren’t resolved then it doesn’t matter what I’m doing for the rest of the day, their students’ head is still back there and they’re hurting or they’re angry, and the **issues need to be resolved**”  
(Primary teacher)

# Influences on Student Behaviour in Schools



# Internationally



‘Portugal, Finland and Italy, a system of exclusion doesn’t exist. All young people are educated in mainstream, state-run secondary schools.

In Portugal, the nation has moved to an inclusive model called ‘each and every child’. Their national legislation asks schools to recognise the ‘added-value of student diversity’ and find ‘ways to deal with difference’.

Teaching and learning processes are adapted to suit the students’ individual characteristics, mobilising resources so that all students can learn and participate in school life.

As a result of this policy, 99% of Portuguese children are educated in mainstream schools.

Schools often have five or more special education teachers, who access 360 hours of training on top of standard teacher training.’ (Bagley, 2021)

# Internationally



‘In Italy, the Government passed a law in 1977 that closed all special schools.

Subsequent amendments have further strengthened the inclusive nature of the education system.

There are no segregated educational facilities and the possibility of exclusion from school as a corrective sanction has disappeared from the statute book.

While practice varies from place to place, research demonstrates that the principle of inclusion is widely accepted.’ (Bagley, 2021)

# Recommendations



The Graham report makes 28 recommendations, which include:

- Actions for the SA Government
  - Amend the Education Act re ongoing education for students, grounds for & length of exclusionary practices; abolish exclusions
  - Establish an independent body eg Ombudsman
  - Commission research
- Actions for the SA Department for Education
  - Notification and communication of exclusionary practices
  - Consultation with students
  - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support framework
  - New positions – monitor exclusions, specialists support, aboriginal staff
  - Provide an education program to students
  - Provide behaviour support policies & procedures
  - Teach pro-social skills and use trauma-informed practice
  - Promote & protect the students' rights
  - Schools to provide alternative responses
  - Provide training
  - Decommission Flexible Learning Options & Alternative Learning Programs





# Complex issue



- Schools and classrooms are complex and demanding contexts which require sophisticated and sensitive leadership.
- Managing groups of students who have individual needs and desires is challenging.
- It's important not to diminish the complexity of this challenging work, but rather challenge the ways we “do behaviour work” in schools and offer alternatives.
- Placing the rights of all children in the foreground to help us reconsider and answer back to the dominant views and practices related to behaviour in schools.
- All levels of influence on student behaviour are important.



**University of  
South Australia**



# The FLO and School Policy Learning Challenge

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Tracing FLO through three reports  
(and some research)

Bills and Howard March 29, 2021

Embracing the change

# EDUCATION 4.0

Learning ecosystem

Pedagogy

## Some context re a Changing SA Education Ecosystem

DfE FLO has served 50,000 students at a cost of 500 million over 15 years...about \$10,000 FTE per student

- Since 2013 Gonski 2.0 and changes to the Education Act in 2015, offering Special Assistance Funding for Special Assistance Schools (SAS), SA has seen five SAS enter the FLO entity realm.
- The education ecosystem re support for student disadvantage, student mental health and mainstream schooling disenfranchisement is changing. SAS schools access between \$25000 to \$35000 federal public funding per student.
- Therefore, all FLOs (DfE or Non-Government) are public in terms of government funding and largely serving similar student cohorts.

DfE FLO is seen as a  
positive by students  
engaged in the program



*The most optimistic stories told were about a very small number of children and young people who were accessing Flexible Learning Options (FLO). These multi-disciplinary environments, which incorporate a case management support focus on the context and learning needs of each child were working. Many young people who had struggled to fit into a mainstream school described positive learning outcomes through FLO programs.*

**The Blame Game, 2020, p.39**





One respondent was particularly descriptive and complimentary towards the FLO program structure, stating,

*“The part of the school that I attend, FLO, has individualised counselling for each student and it was open at any time. Teachers were available to educate students from home, and it was convenient from home. I have a learning disability and they were accommodating for my learning disability ... they helped me get out of the loop that my disability put me in and how to react to everything around me. The teachers were open and comforting, and supportive.”*

**Learning and Earning Research Project,  
2020, p.119**



Research into “what works”  
backs up the design of  
effective FLO programs



## Pedagogical re-engagement fundamentals

...we can identify at least four pedagogical conditions that are likely to re-engage young people in learning, among them:

- (a) Schools are small enough for each student to be known well;
- (b) Students' passions and interests are embedded in the curriculum;
- (c) Students have control and ownership over their learning; and
- (d) Student experience, culture and knowledge are valued and respected.

**Down, B., & Choules, K. (2017). Towards a pedagogy of personalisation: what can we learn from students?. *Curriculum perspectives*, 37(2), 135-145.**

# Good practice in Learning Alternatives

- (a) Size does matter – these alternatives are small units;
- (b) Caring and challenging relationships are extremely important;
- (c) Holistic approaches must be adopted in which we pay attention to educating the 'whole student';
- (d) Hands-on and applied learning is crucial;
- (e) Listening to young people is vital;
- (f) Hope and future pathways must be built in;
- (g) Links to community services, both in terms of the 'authentic tasks' and also to enable continuity of holistic care;
- (h) Approaches must make direct and overt connections with students' culture and context.

**Holdsworth, Roger. "Good practice in learning alternatives." *Learning Choices Expo, Sydney 23 (2004).***



Back to two of the three Reports

Some FLO programs are not engaging students who need it most in a supportive timely education that leads to accreditation and pathways, leaving them vulnerable...

“FLO students (in DfE) were less likely than other students to be undertaking or have completed the four mandatory SACE subjects, to be planning to stay at school until the end of the year, or to be planning to complete SACE this year.

Among leavers, former FLO students were more likely than other students to not be in employment, education or training, were less happy with what they had achieved since leaving school, and were less likely to strongly agree that they had successfully made the transition from school”.

**Learning and Earning Research Project, 2020, p.120**





...of the 735 Year 10 students enrolled in FLO in 2017, only one in ten returned to government schools in Year 11, while three quarters remained in FLO and the other 13.2% were no longer actively enrolled. In Year 12, only 6.8% of the 734 students were in government schools, 47.3% were still in FLO, and 45.9% were no longer actively enrolled. Further, of the 734 students, only 25 (3.4%) undertook the SACE.

**Inquiry into Suspension Exclusion and Expulsion processes in South Australian Government Schools, 2020, p.393**



The Centre for Inclusive Education

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## **Inquiry into Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian Government Schools**

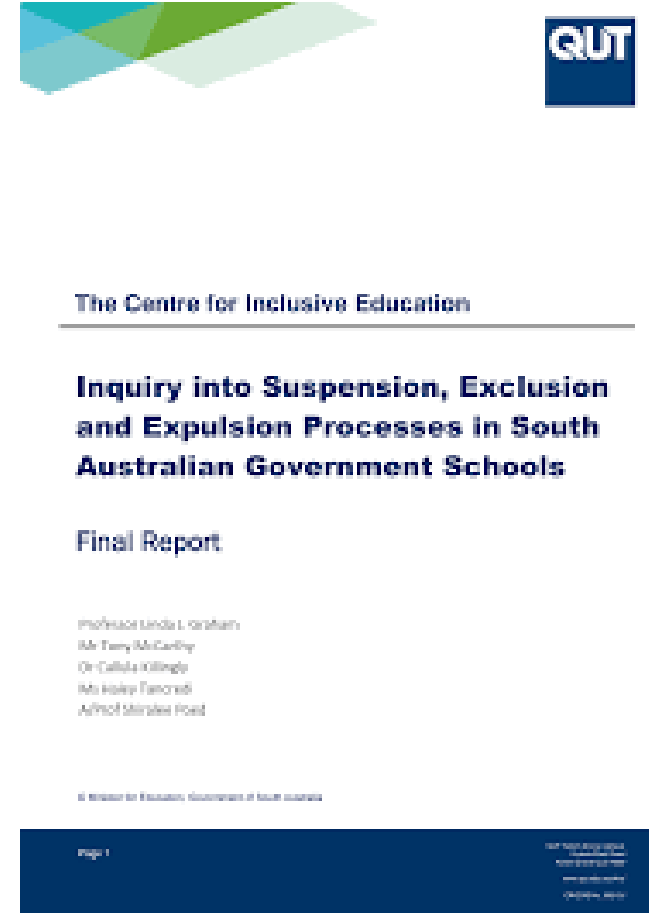
### **Final Report**

Professor Linda L. Graham  
Mr Terry McCarthy  
Dr Cathie Kingley  
Ms Helen Foxwell  
A/Prof Miriam Ford

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Further, we identified patterns in the incidence of suspension and exclusion over time that strongly suggest students in FLO are not actually “in FLO”; as in, they do not attend frequently enough to be suspended or excluded, although these patterns were correlational and further investigation was not possible due to lack of attendance data.

**Inquiry into Suspension Exclusion and Expulsion Processes in South Australian Government Schools, 2020, p.324**



Ensuring all students are able to be engaged in meaningful educational choices that offer the support, skills and knowledge to be able to make a successful transition from school is easier said than done.

# Wicked Problems

“Wicked problems can be seen as a positive because they can represent an opportunity for positive change and for organisational innovation...FLO policy settings must be attuned to changing educational, social, health and economic fundamentals to account for the unforeseen and multifarious forces that have compromised the policy intent. This will involve careful attention to key policy indicators to measure program intervention success, the most important of which are

- (1) school completion rates,
- (2) wellbeing enhancement and
- (3) data on longitudinal post-school pathways for all students”.

Bills, Armstrong and Howard (2020) *Scaled-up ‘safety-net’ schooling and the ‘wicked problem’ of educational exclusion in South Australia: problem or solution?*



# The FLO and School Policy Learning Challenge

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What can mainstream schooling learn from FLO (DfE and SAS)?

---

What can teachers learn from NGOs in the realm of trauma-informed pedagogy, case management and relational attunement?

---

Have we forgotten ***to take a breath*** and think about what can be learned across the system from 15 years of FLO about mainstream school inclusion?

---

How can we best capture this learning?

---

How can we put this captured learning into practice?

# Possible ways ahead in research and practice

Best practice FLO case studies are undertaken

FLO policy learning for greater mainstream school inclusion is pursued

NGOs wrapped around mainstream secondary schools (particularly the most disadvantaged)

Cross sector agreements reached on working together to address youth mental health and disadvantage

Continue meeting and discussing- “we are all in this together” Ben Lee



# Productive Tension:

The ideal tension that allows us to advance our “mission-critical” activities.

# Mission Critical

1. “Thrive”  
is a learner  
entitlement



Lifelong learning  
zest for life



Deep understanding  
and skilful action



Ability to  
transfer learning



Agency



Human  
connectedness



Belonging

# Mission Critical

## 2. The “publicness” of public education



### Universal

Universality is a distinctive core strength of public education. Making public schools available to all in every local community means that they are places of diversity and inclusion, accepting and educating students regardless of their economic circumstances, family backgrounds, abilities, geographic location, culture or beliefs.

“Social inequalities arise in education because the demands made by the curriculum outstrip the cultural resources of the schools their children attend...

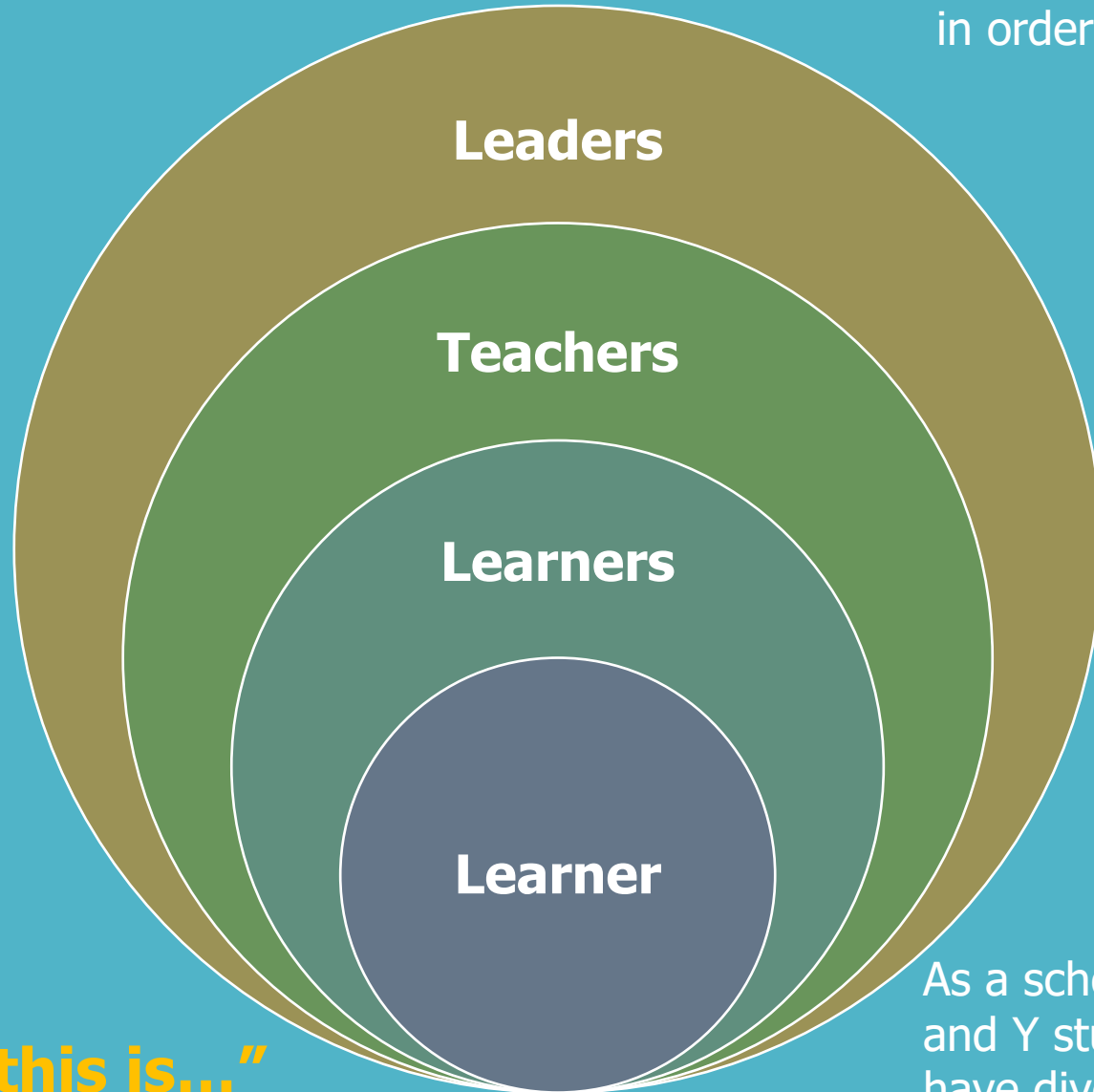
The aim of the public high school is to provide every child with opportunity to acquire the higher forms of knowledge on which our economic and social organization is based.”

Professor Richard Teese, *For the Common Weal*, 2014

# Mission Critical

## 3. Getting the Challenge and Support Balance Right

**“Never forget how hard this is...”**



What are the conditions I need in order to thrive?

As an individual learner?

As a learner in a classroom where there are multiple and diverse needs and abilities?

As a teacher of a class of X students with multiple and diverse needs?

As a school leader of X staff and Y students, all of whom have diverse needs and abilities?

# So, is this a Productive Tension?

Only if we get some changes to system settings that allow us to advance our “mission-critical” activities.





# Young People, Mental Health & Wellbeing: the relationship between schools and community



Government of  
South Australia



## The Context

- Increasing levels of diversity and complexity of needs and behaviours.
- The impact of trauma & poor mental health
- COVID – uncertainty and anxiety
- Poverty and social exclusion - school disengagement perpetuates disadvantage
- School and education are key protective factors

Young Australians  
living in poverty

16%

Young Australians  
reporting high  
psychological  
distress

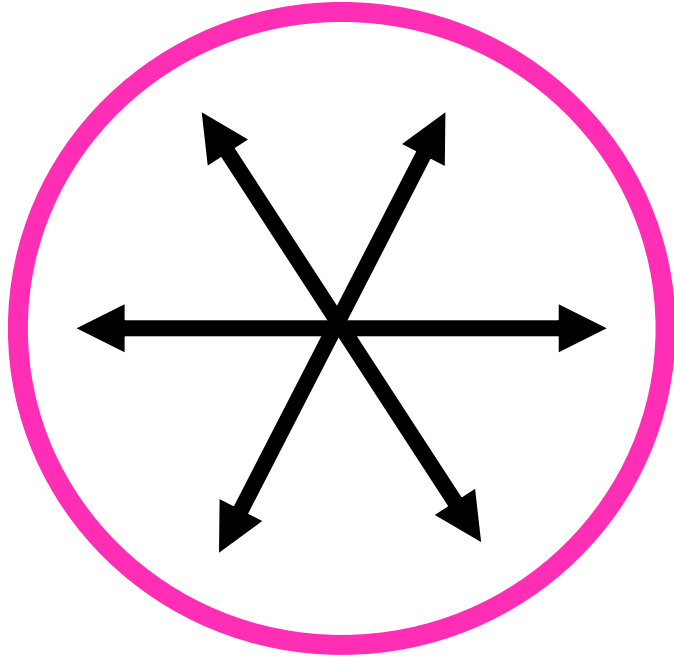
34%

Young Australians  
with a mental health  
disorder

25%

Young Australians  
who do not complete  
Year 12

20%



**“student engagement,  
learning & behaviour  
are inextricably linked”**

- Multiple levels of mental health promotion and prevention
- Staff are equipped with skills and knowledge to support young people
- Social and emotional competence is fostered
- The learning community is safe and supportive for all
- Whole of community approach
- The community is connected internally and externally

Hoare E. Mentally Healthy Communities in Early Learning and School Settings: an Evidence Check rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute ([www.saxinstitute.org.au](http://www.saxinstitute.org.au)) for Be You, 2019

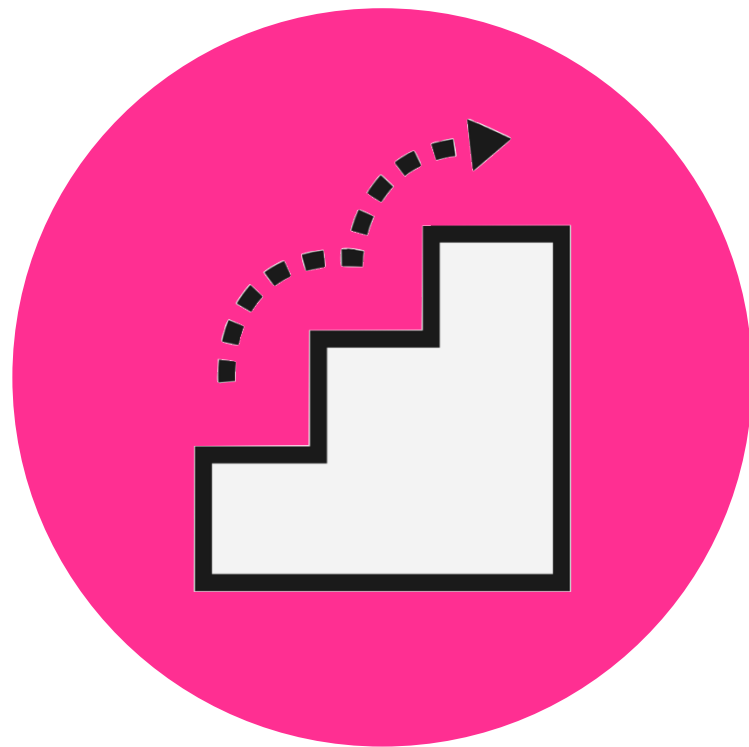
# Staff have Skills & Knowledge To Support Young People

- Staff have access to learning around mental health and wellbeing knowledge and skills
- Support from leadership to embed learning into professional practice
- Consistent and aligned approach

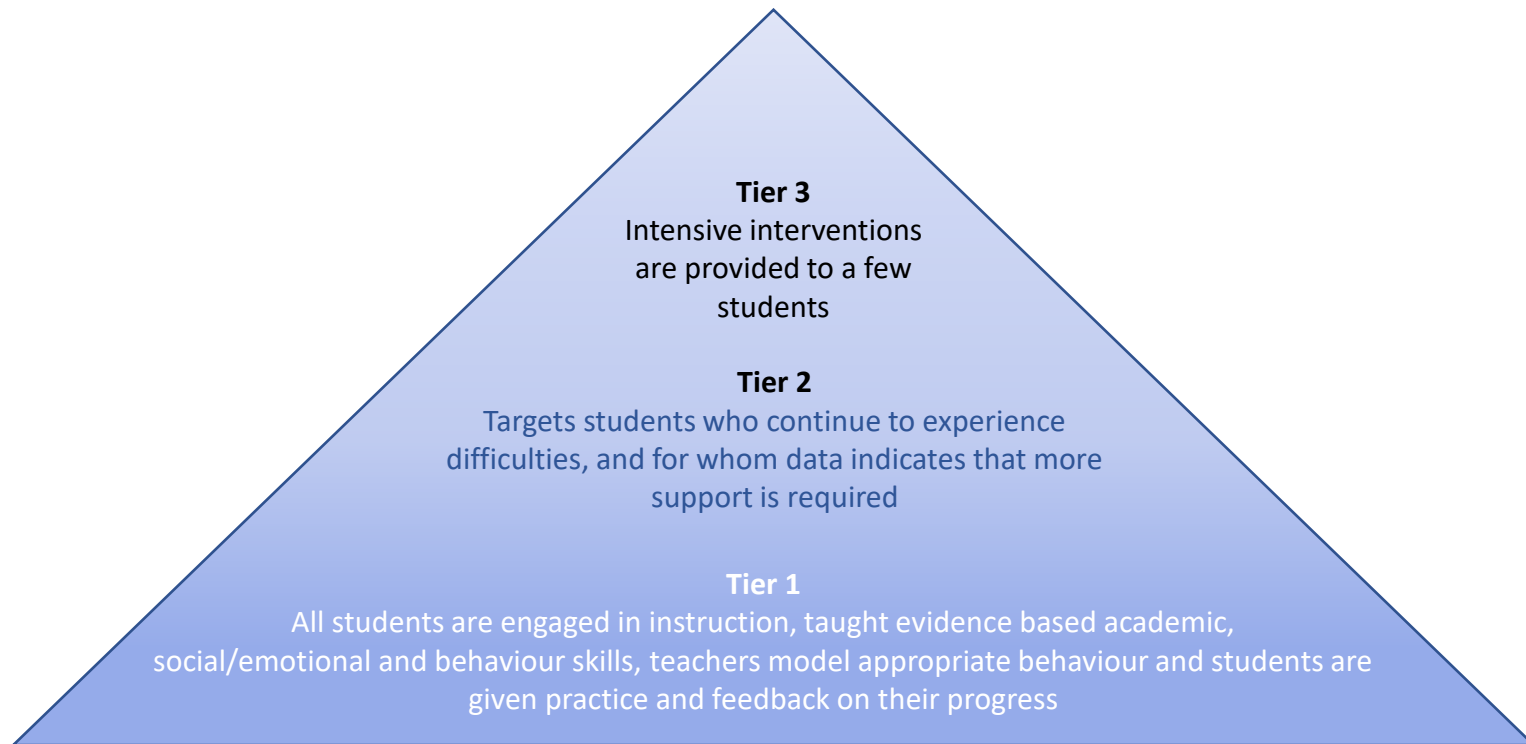


# Multiple levels of mental health promotion and prevention

- Promote, Prevent, Recover
- All children and young people receive opportunities to develop skills that strengthen promote wellbeing & positive mental health.
- Identifying students at risk
- The culture of the school normalises mental health activities, reduces stigma for students who are struggling & facilitates support and treatment



# Multi-tiered System of Support





# Social and emotional competence is fostered

- Explicit and implicit teaching of with individual-level social, emotional and other psychological competencies
- Increases resilience
- Increases the likelihood of positive peer, school and family relationships and support networks



# The Community is safe and supportive for all

- All members of the community experience are safe, secure and respected
- Diversity is valued
- Commitment to inclusion – especially for marginalised groups



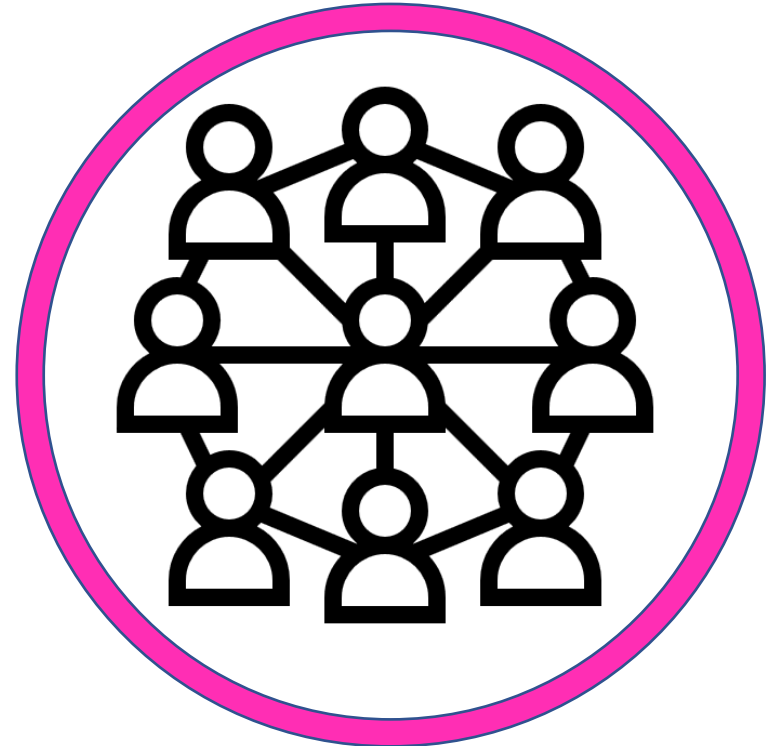
# Whole of Community Approach

- All members within the learning community and all levels of the system recognise and act to support mental health & wellbeing of young people
- The pre-existing structures, values and learning processes can be leveraged to support mental health.
- Top down and bottom up
- A universal language and shared intent that brings together the 'system' to the 'moment' - policy to practice

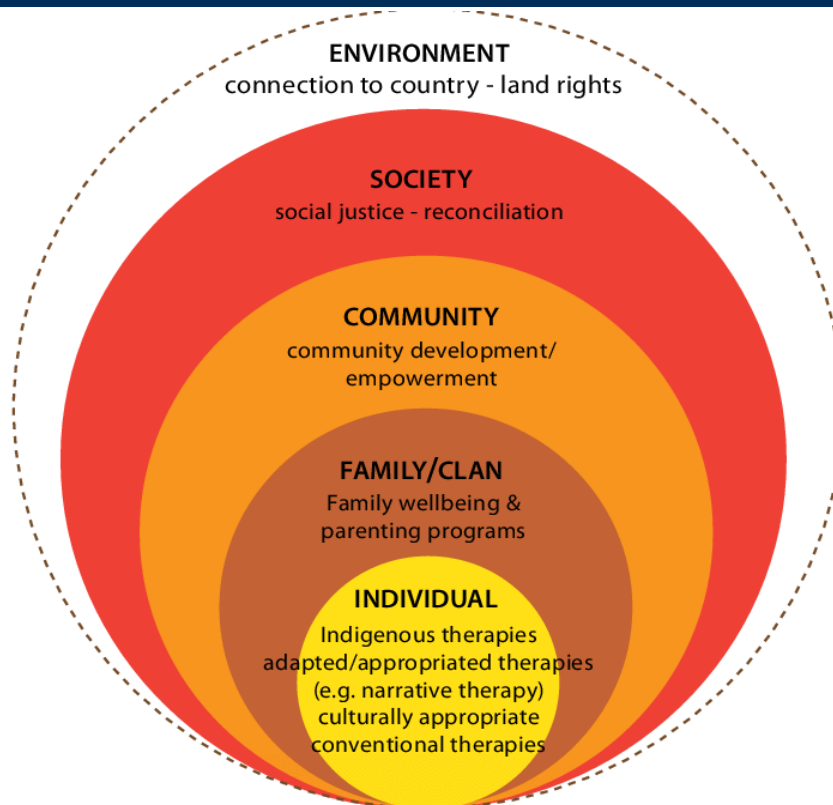


# The Community is Connected

- Children, young people, educators, families and other community members contribute to supporting the mental health of the whole community.
- The voices and experiences of students influences decisions re mental health & wellbeing
- Partnerships with community partners and local mental health services provide support and diversity of perspectives



# Working with Aboriginal Families



Promoting the mental health & wellbeing of Indigenous children in Australian primary schools.  
Dobia et al 2019

**SIMPLE NOT EASY**



# RESILIENT FUTURES

1424  
disadvantaged  
young people

6 Partners,  
100 staff trained

Outcomes across  
individual & system levels

Multiple model  
variations  
Modular, project-based, 1on1,  
small group & large group, accredited  
& non-accredited

Diverse contexts  
FLO, mental health, GoM, youth  
justice



# TRANSLATIONAL ISSUES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

## Resilient Futures: An individual and system-level approach to improve the wellbeing and resilience of disadvantaged young Australians

Raymond, I., Iasiello, M., Jarden, A., & Kelly D. (2018). Resilient Futures: An individual and system-level approach to improve the wellbeing and resilience of disadvantaged young Australians. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*.

Corresponding author: Aaron Jarden, [aaron.jarden@sahmri.com](mailto:aaron.jarden@sahmri.com)

Acknowledgements: This project was supported by philanthropic donations from the Wyatt Trust and James and Diana Ramsey Foundation. We would like to sincerely thank these funding bodies, and acknowledge the significant effort and commitment that the Resilient Futures partner agency staff have contributed to the project.

### Abstract

Young people living with disadvantage are at elevated risk of a range of negative life outcomes, including social exclusion, impaired health and wellbeing, and low educational or vocational participation. In this context, the Resilient Futures program was conceptualised and developed as a strength-focused and positive psychology intervention whose design was underpinned by a broad interdisciplinary range of scientific evidence. The program utilises an ecological framework that sought to target key proximal and distal factors associated with youth social exclusion, disengagement and disadvantage. The target participant group was 850 disadvantaged young South Australians (aged 16 to 21) drawn from a number of

## RESILIENT FUTURES

ion Report, 9

Community Matters Pty Ltd

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

## Program Logic Modelling and Complex Positive Psychology Intervention Design and Implementation: The 'Resilient Futures' Case Example

Raymond, I.<sup>1</sup>, Iasiello, M.<sup>2,3</sup>, Kelly, D.<sup>2</sup>, Jarden, A.<sup>2,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Life Buoyancy Institute, South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

<sup>2</sup> South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, Adelaide, Australia

<sup>3</sup> Flinders University, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Wellbeing and Resilience Centre, Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Flinders University, College of Medicine and Public Health, South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.

Corresponding Author: Dr Ivan Raymond, [ivan.raymond@lifebuoyancy.org](mailto:ivan.raymond@lifebuoyancy.org)

### Acknowledgements

The Resilient Futures project was supported by substantial philanthropic funding from the Wyatt Trust and the James and Diana Ramsey Foundation. We would like to sincerely thank these funding bodies, and acknowledge the significant effort and commitment of partner agencies within this project. We also thank Joseph Van Agteren for invaluable feedback provided in an earlier draft of this paper.



# iMPACT

- Intentionally responds to learning, developmental and growth needs rather than reacting to behaviour through intentional relationships, coaching and growth action planning.
- Brings focus to diversity and complexity across learning communities in order to integrate the science of wellbeing, resilience, trauma-responsive practice with local knowledge and wisdom



# iMPACT



# Northern Sound System



- Community music centre with music and creative industries performance, recording and training
- Partnership between Council, NGO's and NASC,
- Site for FLO and VET programs

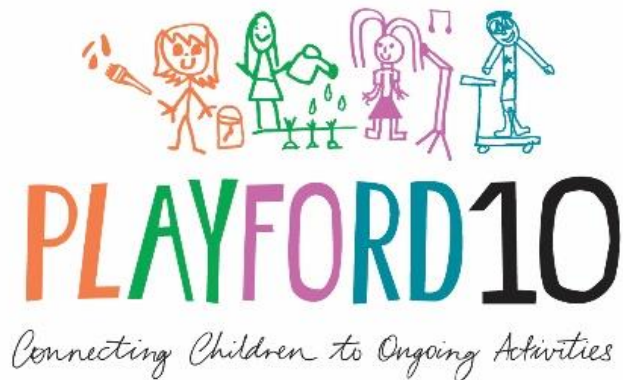
# Onkaparinga Community Connections Program



- Partnership between HWCC and the Hackham cluster in response to high levels of exclusions and suspensions and poor transitions to high school
- Aim: increased positive engagement with disconnected families with both schools & centre
- Community Action Groups: training for parents, community garden & cookbook, anti-poverty work
- Connection with Community Centre – community café, training & volunteering, onsite family therapy,
- Improved relationships and trust with schools and improved parental agency



# Playford 10



- Connects 10 year old children from Category 1 primary schools in Elizabeth to weekly extra-curricular activities with community partners
- Removes the structural barriers of transport and cost to ensure high levels of engagement with the children
- Intentional development of core life skill capabilities problem solving, social skills, creativity, confidence and team building.
- Foster relationships with trusted role models and mentor

# FLO: A Wicked Policy Problem



# Mental Health Commissioners

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



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[mentalhealthcommissionersSA.com.au](https://mentalhealthcommissionersSA.com.au)



Government of  
South Australia

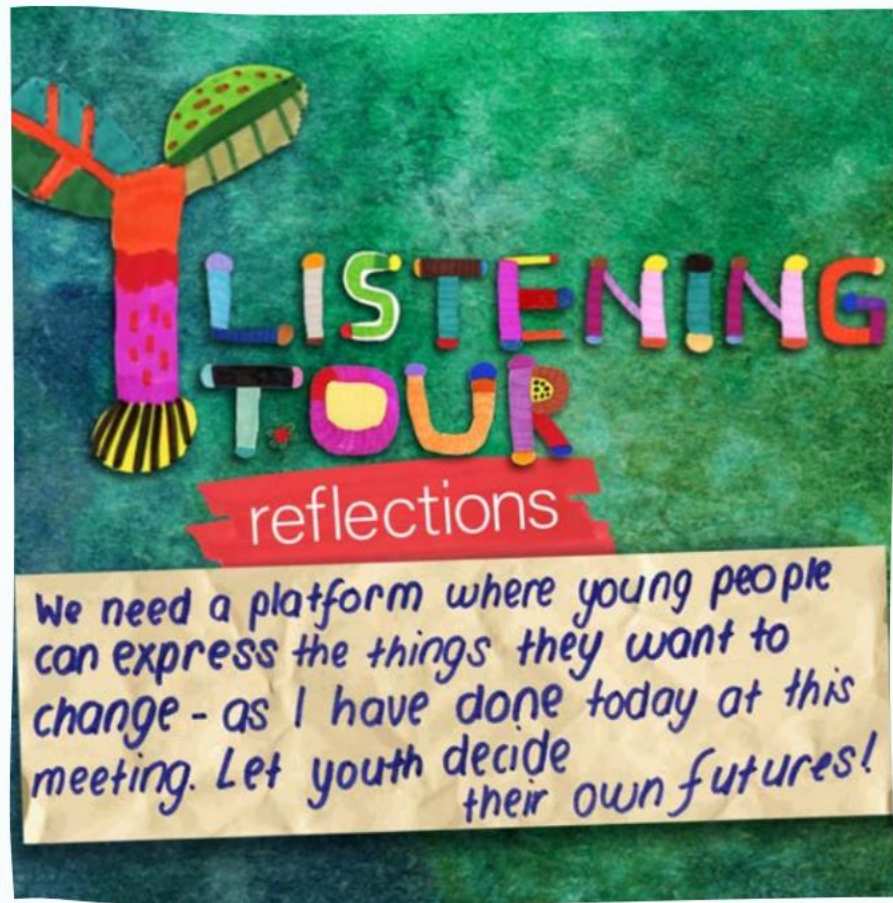


# Commissioner for Children and Young People

[ccyp.com.au](http://ccyp.com.au)

 @ccypsa

 ccyp\_sa



What would I change?

If I could change something at in South Australia is Mental Health Awareness. Unfortunately, in recent years depression and suicide rates have been high due to people often neglect their Mental Health because we do not speak about it enough at schools, and students are being placed under immense stress to be the best and continuous be on top of work. This causes their mental health to be forgotten as they are told they are being 'dramatic' or being 'silly' and this leads to students becoming depressed and beginning thinking no one else cares about them or understands, causing them to believe there's no point in living anymore. Through speaking at schools and workplaces about mental health and the signs of depression to prevent suicide, as well as learn to take a break when we become overwhelmed.

# Causes of Exclusion as Identified by Children and Young People

The young people who participated in focus groups identified four main issues that led to the behaviours, experiences, and/or events that resulted in their exclusion from school:

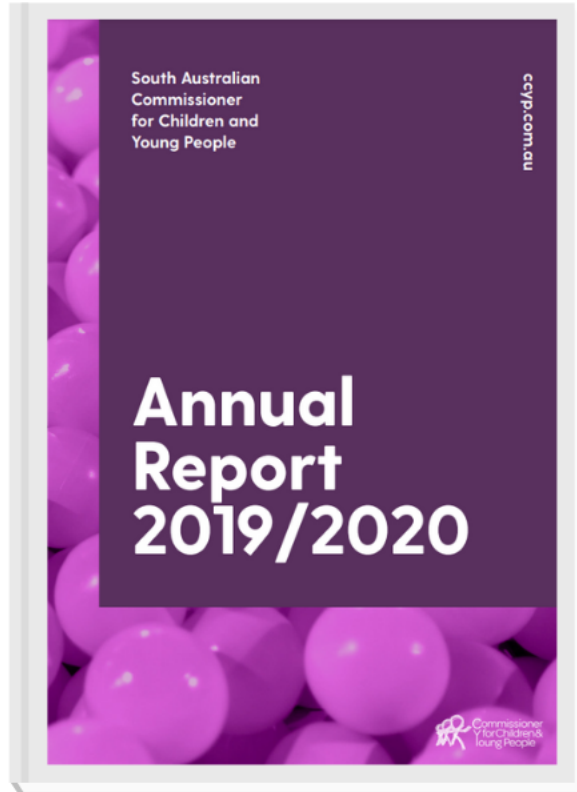
- Physical and mental health, disability and learning difficulties
- Poor relationship with teachers and a lack of support
- Financial insecurity
- Family dynamics



# 2018-19

# Annual Report

## SYSTEM FAILURE



Increased use of suspension, part-time schooling and exclusion as a behaviour management strategy for children and young people.

# Engagement and Participation Model

Engagement Method	Participants	Activity and Outputs
22 interviews	Parents/ Carers and Service Providers	Case Studies of the direct experience of families impacted by exclusion
Youth Inc. Survey and Focus Group	60 Young people	Peer-based research project on school exclusion using online surveys and focus group
Consultation with FLO students	35 Young people in 4 metropolitan FLO programs	Participatory consultation on understanding the process of exclusion and its impacts
Exclusions Survey July - November 2019	319 SA children and young people	Participants completed 18 questions relating to the causes, impacts and responses to poverty

# The Blame Game Report

November 2020



# Key Insights from Young People

1

Poor relationships with teachers, problems at home, a learning difficulty, living with disability, a lack of support, being sick and not understanding instructions, can all lead to being excluded.

2

Repeating tried and failed exclusionary approaches to behaviour management is unlikely to achieve a different outcome.

3

Adults, particularly teachers, should look for signs and be trained to notice when something is going wrong, proactively helping rather than waiting for young people to tell them they're not coping.

4

If school is not a place where you feel supported, it is unlikely that you will disclose when there is trouble at home.

5

Actions that single out young people in front of their peers are humiliating and create more isolation and disconnection for that student.

6

Schools must be better prepared to deliver the kind of mental health support young people need and develop more tailored support for general student learning and wellbeing.

# Key Messages

- 1 Every child, no matter their circumstances, have a right to receive their education.
- 2 One of the most serious sanctions a State can place on a child is to deny them an education.
- 3 Managing behaviour through exclusion fails to reduce problem behaviour, and may create further behavioural issues.
- 4 Suspension and exclusion are punitive actions that can have long-term negative effects on all areas of a child's or young person's life.
- 5 Education exclusion can have a sustained impact on a child or young person's attitude toward, and future engagement with their education.
- 6 Children and young people say health and learning difficulties, financial insecurity, family dynamics, and lack of teacher support, are all causes of exclusion.
- 7 Groups of children most likely to be excluded are those experiencing disconnection with family and in child protection, illness and disability, poverty, experiencing homelessness and cultural disconnection.
- 8 School culture and environments significantly influence exclusionary practices.



# The ideas included the following:

1

Create greater awareness and understanding among teachers and other school staff about the issues children and young people face.

2

Improve support for learning and wellbeing that is tailored to individual needs.

3

Offer relevant and flexible education options that reflect the lives and needs of young people, which provide equal access to academic and vocational training opportunities.

4

Offer more inclusive and comfortable learning environments.

5

Provide financial support to help the families of disadvantaged children and young people cover the costs of school expenses.



**Thank you.**