

Commissioner
for Children and
Young People

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Our approach to engaging with community organisations

A photograph of three young men sitting on a stone wall overlooking the ocean. The man on the left is wearing a blue denim jacket and dark pants. The man in the middle is wearing a red and black plaid hoodie and blue jeans. The man on the right is wearing a blue and white striped tank top and light blue shorts. They are all looking out towards the water. In the background, there is a large rock formation in the sea. The sky is overcast and the water is calm.

Our approach to engaging with community organisations

Commissioner for Children and Young People

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an **independent statutory position**, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* ‘the Act’.

Our approach to engaging with community organisations

The Act sets out the Commissioner's role including her responsibility to promote and advocate for the rights and interests of all children and young people in South Australia (SA), and to promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives. The Act specifically requires the Commissioner to engage with those groups of children and young people whose opportunity to make their views known is limited for any reason.

This direct engagement with children and young people in seeking their views on policy, process and practice is at the core of a child rights approach. When their voices and views are amplified and supported by adults who value their participation, then we have the foundation to ensure that the development and wellbeing of SA children is a community priority.

In meeting her obligations, the Commissioner has made the following commitment to:

- **Engage** with children and young people.
- **Liase** with parents, family members, carers, professionals, policy makers and the broader community as partners, collaborators and stakeholders.
- **Work** with services and advocates.

The Commissioner listens to the views of children and young people, collaborates with them and represents their diverse voices. She represents them in the public arena, to government, and to other decision makers with a special focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard.

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CCYP's advocacy is directed by the experiences and issues that children and young people talk about and have asked us to focus on.

A key objective of our work is to partner and collaborate with organisations and systems to include children and young people as stakeholders, and to incorporate their perspectives and views in policy and system reforms. A lot of the work undertaken by CCYP has involved working with community organisations as hosts for consultations and conversations.

Community organisations provide invaluable assistance and insight, in helping to facilitate sessions. Decisions about where to hold sessions are made by organisations, based on their understanding of where children and young people feel most comfortable. In most instances, this is part of an existing group, program or class, although some sessions are specifically for meeting the Commissioner.

It is often important to meet in community settings as well as meeting children and young people in school. By utilising both, the Commissioner ensures a diversity of children and also opens up a variety of thoughts and opinions as different environments can support different conversations.

The Commissioner believes that the contribution of children and young people to the creation, design, implementation and evaluation of policies, systems and services that impact on them is essential. The Commissioner is committed to including children and young people from economically, socially, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in her work.

In order to include children and young people, the Commissioner works collaboratively with groups who are committed to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) principles and to exploring the supporting mechanisms to practically embed them in their work.

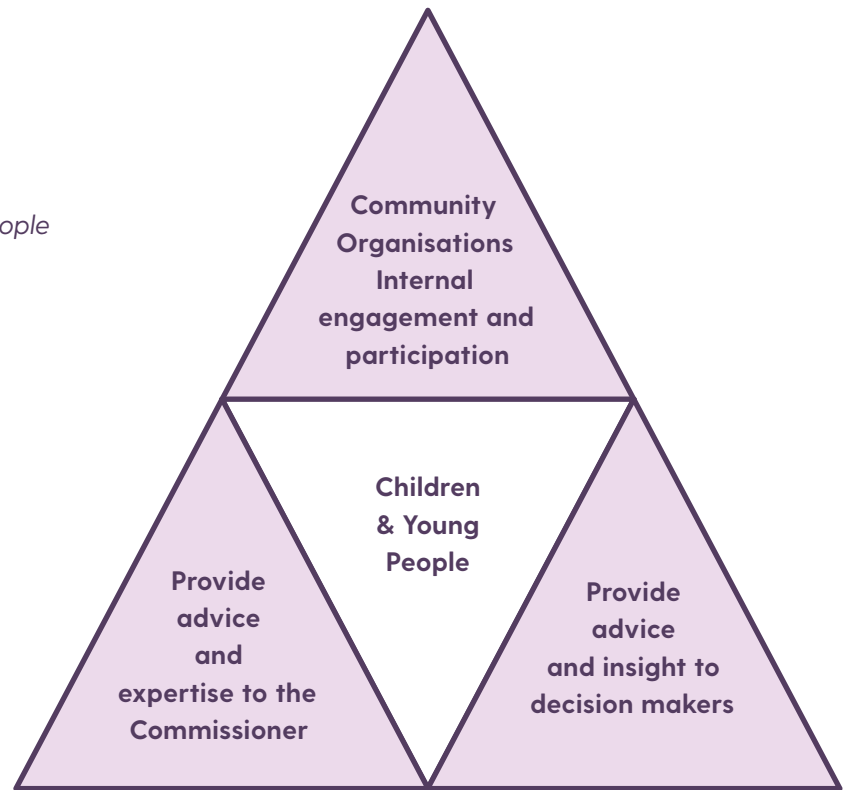
This contribution from community organisations requires investment in time and resources. To do this in a meaningful way we have identified a three-tiered approach to engagement and participation with community organisations.

1. Support community organisations to develop ways for children and young people to **meaningfully inform** them about their own practices and directions.
2. Support community organisations to develop the capacity of children and young people they are in contact with to **advise decision makers**.
3. Support community organisations to develop the capacity of children and young people to **advise the Commissioner**.

Engaging community organisations

Enabling conditions for productive engagement

- *Enabling leadership*
- *Positive Partnerships*
- *Children & Young People*



The relationship between the Commissioner and community organisations is critical, it is built on:

- A genuine understanding of the organisation's capacity to connect with issues currently impacting on children and young people.
- Providing an avenue for children and young people and their advocates to inform systemic advocacy.
- Jointly working towards practical application of Article 12 of the UNCRC.

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Through this approach the Commissioner:

1. **Engages** more children and young people than would be able through a traditional advisory structure.
2. **Builds** capacity of community organisations to embed Article 12 into their own operations.
3. **Provides** an avenue for children and young people to influence decision makers.
4. **Creates** mechanisms for children and young people who are difficult to reach to have a voice and influence.

Through relationships with community organisations we hope to hear directly from the following groups of children and young people in relation to specific areas of work:

- young offenders
- young carers
- children in care
- young leaders
- gender diverse kids
- regional kids
- primary school aged
- young riders and gamers
- young creatives
- children of prisoners
- refugee and migrant children.

We provide practical support to community organisations that have:

- existing relationships with children and young people
- appropriate legal structures
- child safe policies and practices
- an interest in engaging with the Commissioner.

Community organisations partnering with the Commissioner include Australian Red Cross, Carers SA, Create Foundation, UN Youth SA, Parents of Gender Diverse Children, Goyder Youth Advisory Council, Northern Sound System, Carclew, OARS, and Australian Migrant Resource Centre.

**We'd love to hear from you.
Get in touch by emailing
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