



What SA Kids Have Told Us About Wellbeing

Commissioner for
Children & Young People
March 2021

Young people have unique perspectives on what makes a place tick. They provide lived insight into how to attract and retain young talent, how to be resilient, how to be clean and green, and how to ensure our actions are inclusive and visionary.

They know what they want and would like decision makers and community leaders to invite them to participate in meaningful opportunities to share their ideas and opinions on topics and subjects relevant to their lives.

Young people know what they need to be able to relax, play and engage in leisure activities, and they know that participation in these things is crucial to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Many young people define themselves and their idea of what it means to be a success by what they 'do' in volunteering roles, sports, work, extracurricular activities and social and cultural events. They told us that what they want is to be more connected, confident and creative.

For many South Australian young people wellbeing is linked to the following:

- being able to get to school, work and leisure venues on affordable, accessible and safe transport
- having opportunities to gather in youth-friendly places that are comfortable and welcoming
- being supported to connect, build relationships, participate in community, have positive experiences, speak their mind, and stand up for what they believe in
- having opportunities to 'hang out' in their local communities without fear of being 'hassled, judged or moved on'
- having purpose and meaning in their lives
- having opportunities for connection and engagement in something bigger than oneself or one's family,
- being understood, valued and known; and
- having opportunities to have a voice, influence outcomes relevant to their lives and act with agency.



Without exception, in every South Australian community where young people have been consulted, they have raised the importance of being given the opportunity to create dedicated spaces over which they have a sense of ownership and belonging.

They report that they often feel marginalised in public spaces, and that they believe groups of young people 'hanging out' is generally viewed by adults as being disruptive or troublesome. This, combined with the culture of 'moving young people on' whenever they get together, means they are often made to feel unwelcome or excluded in their own communities; thereby missing out on the connection they are actually seeking.

When asked what would make their lives better, young people spoke about their desire for local communities to provide more recreational activities and wellbeing infrastructure aimed directly at them. For example, they seek more places where young people can gather, exhibit, perform and share their art, hobbies, interests and skills.

In regional centres in particular, young people are looking for a greater variety of movies to be screened at their local cinema. They want more local music festivals featuring local artists, and more youth orientated events held in their home towns. They want more recreation clubs and leisure classes to be made available to young people, and at convenient locations and affordable prices that recognise their limited time and incomes.

Young people have reported that sports clubs, schools and universities are the places they consider to be the safest physical environments for them. These are the places in which they feel connected and supported and where they experience a real sense of belonging and purpose. Feeling welcomed in these spaces allows young people to form valuable relationships,

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collaborate with peers, and communicate with people they trust. Diminished access to these physical spaces, to face-to-face appointments, and with the introduction of more 'offline' learning options, has signified a loss of physical connection with and support from trusted adults.

Young people said they would particularly like to see resources prioritised to create spaces that support gaming and esports at the community level. They spoke about the value gaming offers them as a 'connector' to their social community, as a confidence building activity, and as a way of expressing their creativity.

Given the emphasis young people place on gaming and esports a grants program that supports establishment of formal gaming and esports clubs introduced by schools and communities would be very welcome. It would enable these clubs to be organised and operated in the same way other recreational clubs are for more traditional sports aimed at young people. Supporting establishment of gaming and esports clubs would also provide new opportunities for local communities to deliver other engaging cultural and recreational activities for its young citizens.

Gaming for fun, or in competition, and as a vehicle to showcase esports jobs of the future – such as competition organisation and commentator roles – are likely to be quickly taken up by young people. There are some South Australian councils and leagues whose staff and young volunteers are eagerly waiting for this important part of youth culture to be amplified, so that they can lend their expertise.

“ ‘No one understands, particularly the adults in our community.’

‘Stop linking all of our teenage emotions back to social media – it’s not helpful. We want support not a lecture.’

‘A safe environment is a place that makes you feel respected, able to grow and develop, relaxed and free – when you live in poverty often that is missing.’

‘I learn how to manage time and work with my team, to get stuff done before and during the event. Gaming events are important to me because they help me with social anxiety while also helping [me to] understand how an event is run.’