



What SA Kids Have Told Us About Living in Regional SA

Commissioner for
Children & Young People
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As part of a global youth generation, regional young people in South Australia know more than prior generations about what they can achieve and about what they can expect from leaders in their community, including how they want to be treated.



Photo by Michael Vrba

Regional children and young people said the best thing about living in a regional area is:

- freedom of movement and easy access to outdoor pursuits in their communities;
- feeling proud of where they live and;
- feeling good about what's around them, as well as how visitors perceive their town.

They also describe a level of tension between not necessarily wanting to leave their regional community but also feeling they would have access to more opportunities if they did. The decision to leave also brought with it concerns about the pressure of living independently and away from family and friends.

Young people in regional communities want adults to support them to feel they belong and are valued members of their community. In particular they want to be regarded as capable citizens who can contribute meaningfully to decisions that will impact on their lives. Improving opportunities to participate will also build their self-confidence, self-esteem and leadership skills leading to more effective decision-making over time.

There are a number of ways young people have identified communities can help facilitate their participation. They include engaging with them directly and finding ways to amplify their voices. For example, many regional libraries are already

looking at how they can allocate part of their library space to becoming more youth centric by seeking input from young people themselves. This could extend to other community orientated public spaces and facilities young people might access, thereby designing the spaces in ways that ensure young people feel welcomed.

Allocating more youth centric spaces will mean regional councils and other organisations will be able to deliver youth oriented services more easily too, building trust and connectedness between adults and young people as they do.

Young people want adults in regional communities to find ways to seek their feedback and views directly from them. This could be achieved by formal establishment of a Youth Advisory Committee but is not the only way this can be done. Equally important are informal meetings convened to discuss a specific issue that may arise. Other inclusive ideas young people had were establishing youth message boards in prominent places and asking groups who currently work with young people to help facilitate conversations about local community issues of relevance to them.

Young people also suggested youth agencies and service clubs could offer arts/creative based prizes. Youth arts could be supported through exhibitions presented in government buildings, with young artists supported by a regional newspaper and winning entries exhibited in Council Chambers.

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Common issues South Australian regional children and young people identified included:

- finishing their schooling and going on to university, TAFE and other training centres that are located in their own regions
- obtaining a driver's licence and buying a car to get around inadequate local transport options that impact on their ability to get and maintain a job, or attend recreational or social engagements
- offering a greater range of subject choices at school along with better access to work experience opportunities, so that regional young people are as competitive as their city counterparts in relation to finding jobs and being accepted into courses
- expanding job choices with less of the 'who you know' factor determining whether you are able to access work experience or not, and including options to work in different industries and roles so that regional young people can build their range of skills and thereby increase self-confidence
- offering reliable and more affordable access to the Internet, including free Wi-Fi at locations that enable young people to access education portals, pursue online training courses, undertake job seeking activities as well as maintain social connections
- protecting the privacy and confidentiality of young people's health, particularly their sexual health
- offering more activities designed specifically for young people in places that have been designed to appeal to them, particularly places that don't require travel to major cities
- offering more recreational options for older children who have completed primary school
- providing greater access to teachers and classes in art, music and drama to help develop talents in areas other than sport; and
- creating more leadership opportunities for young people, including involvement in local decision-making from a younger age.