



What SA Kids Have Told us About Inclusion and Diversity

Commissioner for
Children & Young People
October 2019

Inclusion and diversity are two of the main issues of interest to SA children and young people with whom the Commissioner speaks. Every young person defines inclusion in different ways, but a common thread is that they want the same opportunities as their peers, regardless of their economic or cultural background, their abilities, geographical location, gender, or ethnicity.

Children and young people want access to education, health care, and youth-centred spaces that are appropriate to them. In SA's regional centres, children and young people feel excluded from educational and job opportunities as a result of their isolation and a lack of well-connected transport options. In metro areas, LGBTQI and culturally-diverse young people want more accessible community places and spaces that are designed with their interests in mind. All over South Australia, young people want to feel welcomed in public spaces.

Young people from poorer families tell the Commissioner that higher education and work experience feels inaccessible to them. They are asking for more scholarship opportunities and for the establishment of local universities.

Regional young people would like more wheelchair accessible buildings and facilities. One child told the Commissioner that they experience isolation because events are usually held at inaccessible locations. Another mentioned that in a town with no wheelchair friendly buses, they must rely entirely on their carer to transport them to and from social events. A young queer person in Adelaide said that they felt LGBTQI centred spaces were inaccessible to children and young people under the age of 18, because they are usually built around a drinking culture. Ultimately, young people want community spaces made available to them that have the diversity of young people in mind, with accessibility at the forefront of the design.



Young people oppose any intolerance or racism they see around them. They are deeply committed to equality, and they're proud of Australia's reputation as a multicultural and inclusive society. Young people, particularly those of migrant and culturally-diverse backgrounds, told the Commissioner that respect and inclusion is very important to them. They want to be acknowledged for their unique experiences. For young Indigenous Australians, racism is a primary concern. They ask for more education and understanding from Australia's non-Indigenous population, and far more action on race-based bullying.

- “ ‘Coming from regional SA, we don't have very much exposure to bigger, better opportunities and we have to travel at least seven hours to get to the next major city (Adelaide), which costs a lot of money. So I think we should have more government help to fund learning opportunities... or just in general.’
- “ ‘What would I change? The views of other cultures and religions. Racism should be stopped! Stop bullying – spread kindness. Teach [everyone] to be kind.’

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Diversity

More than perhaps any other generation, today's young people are acutely aware of the diversity of their peers, both in South Australia and around the world. The first truly global generation, children and young people value diversity and place a huge importance on personal identity.

They understand that there is no true 'normal Australian'; but that instead there are thousands of ways to be a unique and valued member of their community. Kids from migrant and indigenous backgrounds told the Commissioner that keeping their traditions, languages, and cultures alive was very important to them.

Children and young people called for an Australia that truly reflects the diversity they see around them. They want more multicultural and queer friendly youth spaces, and they want more diverse representation of society in politics and other leadership roles.

Children want an education system which places a greater emphasis on nurturing their individuality. One that allows them to pursue their own passions, including delivery of courses that meaningfully tackle identity-based bullying.

“ ‘Diversity!!! As an indigenous, non-binary, pansexual person; I feel utterly disconnected from the community. There is a lack of education in schools on our own country's history!!! LGBT[QI] people are so under-represented in the Barossa as well. Generation Z is literally the gayest generation and as the population grows, so does the need for representation. We all need education and representation for indigenous people and LGBT[QI] people.’

“ ‘Culture – make me feel like I belong – tradition is important.’

“ ‘Involve all opinions regardless of origin/ethnicity/religion. Make an effort to involve people of greater diversity. Greater emphasis on equality, fair opportunity, inclusivity & acceptance.’

“ ‘Favourite thing about being in an Aboriginal community is meeting different people, great experience, work at local store, get to meet lots of people, really nice.’

“ ‘I would like Aboriginal language to be taught in schools from a young age.’

*‘Culture and heritage
- the government and the people
should start respecting our land
and recognising our backgrounds
and culture.’*