



## Are you a young South Australian passionate about making change in your community? The SA SRC wants you!

In South Australia, there are more than 370,000 children under 18 years. This total represents close to one quarter of the state's entire population of 1.771 million (Sep 2020).

We know you care about many issues and that you have very different life experiences from older Australians. We also know there are significant risks associated with structures and systems that treat young people as a homogenous group. Similarly, when assumptions are made about teenagers being the same as young adults, we unintentionally amplify your feelings of disenfranchisement and disempowerment across both age-groups, who you rightly see as distinct from each other.

South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, has met with many of you over the last few years and you have repeatedly told her that you are feeling frustrated and sidelined as you continue to be denied opportunities to 'participate' because of a perception that you lack knowledge and experience, and that your opinions are therefore not valid.

You want to make a difference to the world and to your communities, however, you do not feel listened to or that decision makers are willing to include or value your input. You have told the Commissioner that many adults around you really don't know much about your lives or understand what it is you care about.

This perceived lack of understanding and interest in your lives is producing feelings of powerlessness and creating mixed feelings about what the future really does hold for you and creating doubts about whether adults really do have your best interests at heart, now or for the future. This is particularly so when you see that those in leadership don't act on the issues you see as critical and urgent, such as inequality, jobs of the future, climate change and mental health.

It remains vital that the needs and voices of young people are positioned front and centre in relevant policy and decision-making and that your unique perspectives and ideas are heard and valued. As the experts in your own lives, you have knowledge you can share about your experiences and ideas on ways to create positive change within your local community led by young people themselves.

## Introducing a new youth participation model for SA Young People

In 2021, after deliberating on the optimum design for a youth participation model that would best suit the South Australian context, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly decided to establish a state-wide student representative council that would ensure young South Australians can act on the issues that matter to them most.

A partnership between the CCYP and the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) supported by the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC), the vision for the **South Australian Student Representative Council (SA SRC)** is a representative body of up to 100 students in Years 10, 11 and 12 drawn from across the state, working together to create genuine, student-led change within their own communities.

The SA SRC will bring together passionate young people from outback, rural, regional and metropolitan communities, who are unwilling to accept the status quo of just being 'good enough' to harness the energy, ideas, and desires you have, to create a better future, not only for yourselves, but for future generations.

As a member of the SA SRC you will be equipped with the trust, resources, skills, and confidence you'll need to enact the change you want to see. You'll be involved with other like-minded young people in setting priorities and actions for making change focused on issues you perceive as being critical and requiring urgent action, including inequality, future job opportunities, climate change and mental health.

## Message from Your Commissioner

In my role I have met with thousands of young people across South Australia and heard about their hopes, dreams, and concerns for the future. You have told me what you want to make your lives better now. You've outlined what isn't currently working for you, and you've described many ideas you have for how best to bring about change that you believe will make a difference to your lives and those of future young South Australians.

Young people care about many issues and have very different life experiences. Yet repeatedly you have told me that you do not feel heard, valued, or respected by the adults and the systems and processes with whom you are expected to engage and have expressed frustration with the institutions which do not include or represent your views.

Many of you have told me that you feel tired of being denied opportunities to participate because of a perception that you lack knowledge and experience, and that you are often being told that your opinions are not valid and don't therefore matter. You have expressed concern in relation to the key public policy issues that are not being prioritised, and which you believe need to be addressed urgently, including inequality, future job opportunities, climate change, and mental health. You have also told me that you often feel excluded from public consultations, either because you feel policy makers dismiss your views too readily or respond to your contributions in a tokenistic way.

Whilst some of you have sought to engage policy makers and influence change through your participation in important initiatives and actions such as Youth Parliament, UN Youth or Strike 4 Climate Change, others of you feel you cannot meaningfully influence government policy decisions via processes that have been organised by government authorities, your school, or via NGOs. In other words, you're looking for a student-led representative body that is not learning about existing processes, but which will enable you to devise your own agendas, prioritise and determine actions for change in your own communities.

It is clear to me that as young people you are required to live in an increasingly complex world. Unsurprisingly you are feeling more and more uncertain about your future. You're currently grappling with a technological revolution, information overload, a pandemic and a climate crisis whilst also trying to find your own identities and place in the world. You've told me that this is producing a feeling of powerlessness that has a direct bearing on how you feel about what the future holds for you and for future generations of young people that will follow.

It is vital that the needs and voices of young people are positioned front and centre in policy and decision making. It is equally vital that your unique perspectives and ideas relating to prioritising and creating solutions to issues you have identified as critical to you, are both heard and valued.

For many teenagers' I've heard how local issues and systems are always front of mind. Whether it's the quality of your school curriculum content and delivery, a lack of local facilities, difficult relationships with adults, poor transport routes, or unaffordable recreation activities, you have a great deal of knowledge you wish to share about your experiences, including the many ideas for innovative and progressive change that can be applied across your communities.

Most teenagers don't have access to formal or well-resourced opportunities that enable you to achieve the change you want to see and that's where the SA SRC will make the difference. Most school based and local government run student councils are heavily influenced by well-meaning adults who want to show young people how they can connect with the systems and processes that already exist, however, these are often limited by organisational structures and rules. This can leave you feeling ignored and frustrated with those in leadership.

You have repeatedly told me that there is a lack of action-focused participation opportunities designed specifically for you, either within school or more broadly across your communities.

Neither does South Australia currently have a peak high school body that coordinates and centralises issues raised by school SRCs, and which can then meaningfully advocate for change amongst policy and decision makers on behalf of all SA young people.

I asked you what I could do to support you to make a difference in your community and satisfy your growing appetite for mechanisms that are representative of young people, and which can deliver on your agendas. You told me that a state-wide body that brought many of you together would provide the visibility, scale and support you need to be taken seriously.

The SA SRC is my response to this request and comes with a commitment to supporting young South Australian school students like you who are eager to engage meaningfully in active citizenship, in ways that will ensure you can be heard and seen, and which work for you.

The vision for the SA SRC is for it to be an inclusive action-orientated body for high school students working together on issues young South Australians raise and prioritise, in ways you believe will make a difference.

I encourage you to become a member, either as an individual or as part of a small team of friends who will be able to support each other to participate over a twelve-month timeframe.

In the words of one young South Australian:

*"If we are able to empower the youth of SA then they will believe in them themselves and create a snowball effect that will make the world a better place."*

**Helen Connolly**

*Commissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia*

## What will the SA SRC be?

The SA SRC will be a body of up to 100 South Australian students from Years 10, 11 and 12 working together to create genuine, student-led change across their communities. It will be representative and democratic, with a focus on providing support to young people who care deeply about bringing about positive change into areas of their lives that they feel matter most. SRC members will have an opportunity to have a say and to determine which issues are prioritised as well as what actions will be taken at the community, state and national levels.

You can expect a very different SRC to the one you might know from school. This state-wide SRC is about having the opportunity to join with other like-minded young people from across the state to make real change in your community on issues decided upon and actioned by you. You'll meet other passionate young people like yourself and be given the opportunity to build the skills and knowledge you'll need around the issues and areas you care most about.

### SA SRC Membership will consist of:

- Up to 100 high school students in Years 10, 11 and 12 drawn annually from across South Australia. The aim is to have as many rural and regional members as possible.
- Applications can be made by individuals or small teams of between 2-3 young people
- Members will be appointed by the Commissioner in consultation with a representative from the Foundation for Young Australians and a Selection Panel of Young People determined by the Commissioner.
- Members will represent their community for a 12-month term.

### What will the SA SRC do?

Based on what thousands of South Australian young people have reported to the Commissioner are key areas they would like to see change, the SA SRC will initially focus on the following:

1. Youth Voice
2. Equality and Inclusion
3. Environment and Transport; and
4. Wellbeing

### Commitment from young people who are selected to become SA SRC members includes:

- Attendance at two Face-to-Face Summits (held at the beginning and end of the school year)\*
- Monthly meetings held mostly via Zoom/Google Hangouts/Teams chaired by the Commissioner
- In-person meetings held on Saturdays or in the school holidays at a venue TBA within the Adelaide CBD. There will also be an online catch-up meeting for those who are unable to attend in person.\*
- Work on local campaigns decided and agreed to at the Summits.
- Involvement in local area action teams.

\*Attendance costs will be covered for regional/rural and remote members.

### **Application opening and closing dates are:**

- Applications for membership of the SA SRC open on Monday 7 February 2022
- Applications close on Monday 21 March 2022
- Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application from Tuesday 22 March 2022.

### **Important meeting dates for Terms 1 & 2 are:**

- Wednesday 30 March – SA SRC Member Meeting (online, after school)
- Monday 11 April – SA SRC Member Meeting (face-to-face and/or online after school)
- Friday 13 May – SA SRC Summit 1 (face-to-face in Adelaide)
- Monday 27 June – SA SRC Member Meeting (online, after school)

**NB: Important dates for Terms 3 and 4 will be determined throughout Terms 1 & 2.**

## **Your questions answered...**

### **What is the time commitment for the SA SRC likely to be?**

We are looking for students that can dedicate their time to working on creating change in their communities. Realistically the 'campaigns' you will work on might take up 1-2 hours of volunteer work per week. We will have monthly meetings that will be conducted online, with the option of meeting more regularly with your 'campaign teams'. Throughout the School Year FYA will run upskilling sessions that will run for a couple of hours each after school.

### **When and where will meetings take place?**

Mostly meetings will be held online. If face-to-face meetings are held, they will take place in the Adelaide CBD. Transport and food costs of those attending will be covered. The SA SRC 'catch-up meetings' will be held monthly over zoom.

The SA SRC Summit 2022 will bring all members together at the Adelaide Festival Centre on Friday 13 May (unless there are COVID-19 restrictions, in which case the Summit will be moved online).

### **Can I apply with my friend?**

Absolutely! You can apply with a friend or as an individual. We encourage 'small teams' of between 2 and 3 young people to apply, so that you can participate together and support each other with your involvement.

### **How much does the SA SRC cost?**

There may be some small out-of-pocket expenses, but we will endeavour to ensure most of these costs are covered. Travel costs will be covered for regional and rural students.

### **Who can apply?**

Anyone currently enrolled in Year 10, 11 or 12 in a South Australian public, catholic or independent school.

### **Does my school have to agree to my membership?**

No. The SA SRC is not school based, so applications are not made through your school. However, as the SA SRC provides opportunities for empowerment and leadership, we are confident SA schools will promote, encourage, and engage with the SA SRC program, and the Commissioner will be advocating for them to do so.

### **Is this a 'leadership' program?**

Yes and no. Leadership will be developed and supported but it is not a formal leadership program as such. We want SA SRC members to represent the breadth and depth of difference in our South Australian student population. We know that young South Aussies care about lots of different issues and come to the table with different experiences and perspectives. We think it's really important that we reflect diversity and take an inclusive approach to young South Australians who become members of the SRC.

### **What will I get out of being on the SA SRC?**

We want to provide you with the trust, resources, skills, and connections that will support you to create the change you want to see in your community. CCYP and Foundation for Young Australians in collaboration with the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC), will do this by connecting you to other young people and decision makers. Once you've been able to identify issues and actions, we will also be providing you with the money you will need to invest in projects you think will make a difference, while also upskilling you through sessions with experts in media, campaigning and advocacy. In doing so, you'll leave the SRC with new friends, professional contacts, the experience of working in professional contexts, and a bunch of 21st century leadership skills.

### **Do I have to be on my School's SRC to apply?**

No. No previous experience is necessary for your application. We are looking for young people who want to work collaboratively with their state-wide peers on campaigns and projects they care about because they want to create a future they will be excited about.

## Who are we?

The **South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP)** is an independent statutory position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*. The Commissioner promotes and advocates for the rights, development and well-being of all children and young people in South Australia. The Commissioner is committed to advocating for children and young people's involvement in decision-making that affects them, with particular consideration given to the needs of vulnerable and at-risk children and young people. The Commissioner's Strategic Agenda has an objective to create opportunities for young people that will enable them to engage policy and decision makers to enact and influence change.

The **Foundation for Young Australians (FYA)** is an Australian non-profit organisation whose purpose is to back young people with the trust, resources, skills, and connections to make change. The organisation's vision is that young people have the power to beat injustice and transform the future.

## Any other questions?

Please forward any inquiries to [CommissionerCYP@sa.gov.au](mailto:CommissionerCYP@sa.gov.au) with "SA SRC" in the subject field.

**Are you up for the SA SRC challenge?**

**Apply TODAY at [ccyp.com.au/sa-src](https://ccyp.com.au/sa-src)**