

Let us be the voice of our state's future



Student council hopefuls Tabitha Stephenson-Jones, 17, Tom Webster Arbizu, 16, Mia Konopka, 16, and Qezia Baiq, 17, in Victoria Square. Picture: Mark Brake

MILES KEMP

THE state government will fund a groundbreaking statewide “super student representative council” for young people in years 10, 11 and 12.

The new council will have 100 members – selected to represent areas that mirror SA’s 47 electorates – and will travel around the state to make policy recommendations to the government.

It will come under the wing of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP), Helen Connolly.

“It will be a kind of super SRC that aims to empower young people who are passionate about making real change within their communities,” Ms Connolly said.

“Councillors will be conversing with mayors and members of parliament, and other community leaders to discuss issues of concern to young people, and work with their communities on ways to address them.

“The SA SRC will be student-led, with practical and financial support to cover

travelling and the costs associated with running the two annual summits provided by the CCYP.”

The statewide SRC continues the state’s response to the child protection scandal that first emerged 10 years ago, leading to two royal commissions and the appointment of the commissioner.

The new SRC has been welcomed by eager students.

“I want to be part of the SA SRC because students across the state have been consistently left out of discussions when it comes to developing new curriculums, and what we want to see in our education and schools,” said Qezia Baiq, 17.

Tom Webster, 16, said school affordability issues had been highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“We are seeing families not being able to afford the technology needed for online schools, and where schools cannot provide support, students are falling behind their classmates,” he said.

“I see the SA SRC having the potential to tell policymakers and school leadership what school students actually want. Also history has shown us that there is power in numbers – whether that’s standing up for workers’ rights or women’s rights or, in our instance, student rights.”

Tabitha Stephenson-Jones, 17, said young people wanted to tackle issues such as climate change, and the affordability of housing and tertiary education.

Mia Konopka, 16, said the issue of respectful and safe relationships needed to be addressed.

“Consent education is a key issue for many young people,” she said. “Proper consent education means that young people have the skills and the knowledge that they need to ensure that they stay safe and respect others.”