

South Australian  
Commissioner  
for Children and  
Young People  
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2030

# SDG Action Plan by South Australian Young People

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the young people from who attended the Poverty Summit and shared their thoughts and ideas, insights and suggestions with me.

Thank you too to Kareem El-Ansary, Australia's Youth Representative to the United Nations for delivering the keynote address and to the panel of young people who shared their views on poverty and how it could be addressed. The panellists were Ibrahim Ali (Sonder); Danielle Seymour (SouthStart); Kynesha Temple, (University of Adelaide); Ellen Barbour-Fraser (Flinders University); Caleb Sweeting (SA Mental Health Coalition); and Doha Khan (Schools Strike for Climate Coordinator SA). Special thanks to UN Youth South Australia who devised and delivered the summit program including facilitating engagement among groups of young people throughout the day. Thanks also to Reuben Gore who documented the summit and presented a video summary capturing many of the ideas and recommendations made by young people participating (this 2 minute video summary can be viewed at CCYP\_SA YouTube).

The level of participation and engagement was significant and the feedback received from teachers and students alike was very positive.

Thanks to the following schools who supported their students' right to have a say in matters that affect them:

- |   |                                  |
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Throughout the report, unedited quotes and responses from young people who participated have been used to ensure their ideas and suggestions are faithfully communicated to those who have the capacity to consider them and implement positive change.

All young people appearing in photographs throughout this report have given their permission for their image to be published.

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## Commissioner's Foreword

As South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People my mandate is to promote the rights, best interests and wellbeing of all children and young people living in our State.

I advocate for the views, aspirations and rights of children and young people to be affirmed, promoted and protected, working to give children and young people a 'voice' across society. I seek to influence and identify the responsibilities and roles that public, civic and commercial sectors of our communities have in relation to children and young people's needs, advocating for them to be positioned 'front and centre' in policy, practice and service delivery. This includes advocating for the involvement of children and young people in co-designing services relevant to them, wherever this is feasible.

Children and young people are the experts in their own lives and they have told me that they want to have their opinions heard, taken seriously and acted upon; in fact it is their right.

Since commencing as Commissioner, I have heard firsthand how many children and young people in South Australia lead happy, active lives, and feel respected by adults. They value their family relationships, including those they have with family pets.

They also value their friendships, school education and learning, and their culture, including their ethnicity. And they value the opportunities they have to participate in their communities in a variety of ways.

I have also heard that children and young people in South Australia are very concerned for those they see as being less included, less mentally well, less financially secure and less well-prepared for their future. They have told me the areas in which they would like to see changes made to make life better for all children and young people in South Australia, particularly those they see who are 'doing it tough'.

In 2017, when I asked South Australian children and young people to tell me the 'one thing' they wanted their Commissioner to do for them right now, I received over 1,000 written responses and countless verbal ones. While 'being listened to' was the leading issue named, tackling poverty was the second most repeated area of concern, identifying it as something that clearly sits at the forefront of children and young peoples' minds.

*‘The pledges made in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first, as well as its affirmation to be people-centred, ensure that youth are included in all aspects of the Agenda.’*

*(United Nations, General Assembly, 2017e, para. 6)*

This concern with how to tackle poverty has been reinforced through my one-on-one conversations with children and young people through which they have told me that poverty and a lack of resources touches many people across their communities; either themselves, their close and extended family, or their friends.

This report captures responses made by young people to questions they were asked about what they think poverty means, and what they suggest could or should be done to address it, joining in the worldwide effort to bring about its eradication by 2030.

The responses come from a group of young people aged 14 - 18 who attended a Poverty Summit, which I co-hosted with UN Youth South Australia. Participants had a strong sense of justice around the ways in which society groups certain people; children, people living with a disability, people from a refugee and migrant background, and young adults. They also saw that many individuals in these groups are already in disadvantaged positions, making them especially vulnerable to poverty.

Young people made it very clear to me that they want to be a part of decision-making that impacts positively on children and young people. They want the voices of children and young people who live in poverty to be heard, and they want to see an approach applied ‘across the community’ that allows ‘big decisions’ to be made to support those who are the most vulnerable. They also want the needs of children and young people to be positioned at the core of the solutions devised. They firmly believe it is possible to eradicate poverty in South Australia, and they want to be involved in helping this be achieved by 2030 in line with the United Nations Agenda.



**Helen Connolly**  
Commissioner for Children  
and Young People



## Introduction

Children and young people believe 'if you help people contribute positively – no one loses and everyone wins'. They believe that South Australians care deeply about people who are doing it tough, but they also don't know what to do to help.

The unprecedented civic, social, technological, environmental and political change that has already occurred just in this century, means children and young people have different relationships with government, business and the broader community.

For young people values matter; human relationships matter; diversity and inclusion matter; trust matters; personalised experiences matter; and increasingly, emotions matter.

Young people have said they want kind, empathetic and respectful interpersonal relationships with adults and service providers. They are driving a demand for different ways of being, and for the actions we take to make a fairer world to foster deeper connections between all ages and each other.

This sentiment brings a sense of optimism for the future, and the hope that young people will demand policies and programs that will help those missing out, because it is the right and just thing to do.





Young people said that to solve an issue like poverty, society needs to work together to ensure that 'no one is left behind'. In their ideas, young people emphasised:

- taking a bottom up approach and involving those affected by poverty in devising the solutions;
- offering support services for children and young people that ensure they avoid causing additional stress for themselves and their families;
- ensuring programs and policies aimed at reducing child poverty are child centred;
- using social media to raise awareness of the impact of poverty;
- changing the public discourse around poverty in South Australia and helping to reduce stigma;
- addressing the impact on self-image and self-confidence;
- identifying poverty as an issue and encouraging the community to speak more openly about it;
- including young people in the design of solutions to poverty across our community.

Children and young people understand how achieving real change must include a large scale increase in empathy across the country. The ability to relate to people who live in poverty across our communities, will make it easier for us to prioritise it as an issue for children and young people in particular.

*'Young people believe in change and that they can make a difference.'*  
(Female, 18)



## Background

The conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 provided the international community with an opportunity to reflect on progress over the previous fifteen years and make plans for the next iteration.

In response, Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This international Agenda documents a global vision for tackling global poverty, protecting human rights and strengthening peace by 2030.

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda is a set of universal objectives embodied in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), all of which are 'indivisible, inalienable and indiscriminate'. These global goals aim to protect the planet, safeguard equality, promote prosperity and peace, and eradicate poverty everywhere, in all its forms.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last two decades there has been measurable progress made in reducing poverty, helping to improve outcomes for many of the most vulnerable across our societies. However, this progress has not been even. **Inequality has not only persisted, but in many instances has widened**, with substantial

numbers of people, including children and young people, now excluded from full participation in economic, political and social life.

The situation for young people from groups who are considered vulnerable or marginalised, such as indigenous peoples, people living with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and those already living in poverty, including many girls and young women around the world – underlines the fact that the 2030 Agenda will not be successful unless the ideals of inclusiveness and shared prosperity are upheld.

The central principle for the 2030 Agenda is the declaration that 'no one will be left behind'. This makes it imperative that 'all people' be included in the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

The universal nature of the Agenda means that youth, defined by the United Nations as persons aged 15 to 24 years, need to be considered separately across each of the goals and that





their consideration both in developed and developing countries alike, is central to achieving sustainable development throughout the world.<sup>2</sup>

We know that poverty is a global issue affecting millions of people of all ages and nationalities. Often viewed as a problem that is only relevant to the 'developing' world, it is also prevalent in many well 'developed' countries, including Australia and within it South Australia.

Most international researchers and organisations use an income based definition of poverty. In this way poverty is defined by those whose income is below half the median household income of the total population.<sup>3</sup> Based on this definition, also used by global entities such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), more than one in eight people in Australia are currently living in poverty. Of this figure more than one child in every six lives in poverty.<sup>4</sup> The latest figures for South Australia reflect these national numbers.<sup>5</sup>

Poverty's roots in inequality gives rise to a concerning trend that sees a divide growing between the wealthiest and poorest Australians. Current household wealth is a clear indicator of the scale of this divide with the top 20% of households owning 62% of private wealth, and the lowest 20% owning just 1%.<sup>6</sup>

Since the late 1980s inequality has been on the rise in Australia, and around the world.<sup>7</sup> Despite significant worldwide economic growth, young people today face greater levels of inequality than the generation before them.

Research on poverty highlights the difficulties governments and societies face in tackling inequality. Much of the research overlooks

children and young people, or where it concerns them, is often centred on causation and affect – not solutions.<sup>8</sup>

Children and young people are rarely considered to have any agency over their situation. Because of this, there is little research that directly asks them how they see poverty, what it means to them, or how they would suggest it be addressed. Their views are clearly important if we are to create solutions that work.

Research indicates children who grow up in poverty often experience developmental delays, reduced academic success, and impaired lifelong physical and mental health outcomes. In 2018, the South Australian government commenced a review of the State's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, passing a motion in the Legislative Council to establish a 'Select Committee on Poverty in South Australia.' This select committee is reviewing the extent and nature of poverty across the State, including what poverty means in relation to accessing services and opportunities. These state-based efforts have coincided with a national push to raise the level of some social welfare payments in Australia, particularly Newstart allowance; one of the nation's main income support safety nets.

Poverty is often considered too sensitive a topic to discuss with children and young people. When it is discussed it is usually in the context of what is being experienced in developing countries – not what is being experienced in our own backyards, or amongst our own local neighbourhoods within regional and metropolitan communities.



## 2030 Sustainable Development Goals



### One

End poverty  
in all its forms  
everywhere



### Two

End hunger, achieve food  
security and improved  
nutrition and promote  
sustainable agriculture



### Three

Ensure healthy  
lives and promote  
well-being for all  
at all ages



### Four

Ensure inclusive and  
equitable quality  
education and promote  
lifelong learning  
opportunities for all



### Five

Achieve gender equality  
and empower all  
women and girls



### Six

Ensure availability  
and sustainable  
management of water  
and sanitation for all



### Seven

Ensure access  
to affordable, reliable,  
sustainable and modern  
energy for all



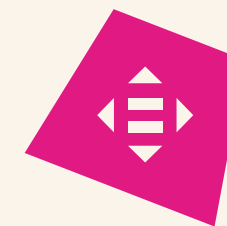
### Eight

Promote sustained,  
inclusive and sustainable  
economic growth, full and  
productive employment and  
decent work for all



### Nine

Build resilient  
infrastructure, promote  
inclusive and sustainable  
industrialization and  
foster innovation



### Ten

Reduce inequality within  
and among countries



### Eleven

Make cities and  
human settlements  
inclusive, safe, resilient  
and sustainable



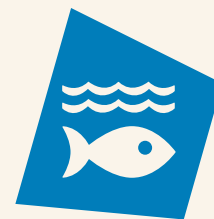
### Twelve

Ensure sustainable  
consumption and  
production patterns



### Thirteen

Take urgent action  
to combat climate  
change and its impacts



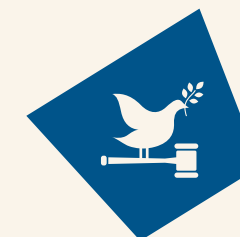
### Fourteen

Conserve and  
sustainably use the  
oceans, seas and marine  
resources for sustainable  
development



### Fifteen

Protect, restore and promote  
sustainable use of terrestrial  
ecosystems, sustainably  
manage forests, combat  
desertification, and halt and  
reverse land degradation  
and halt biodiversity loss



### Sixteen

Promote peaceful  
and inclusive societies for  
sustainable development,  
provide access to justice  
for all and build effective,  
accountable and inclusive  
institutions at all levels



### Seventeen

Strengthen the means  
of implementation and  
revitalize the Global  
Partnership for Sustainable  
Development

## The Poverty Summit

As part of a global youth generation, young South Australians know more than previous generations did about what the most pressing issues are and the urgent need there is for them to be addressed. They also know more about what they can achieve, what they want from leaders in the community, and how they want to be treated.

The Commissioner wanted to capture this thinking by providing an opportunity for South Australia's young people to come together and consider what our community might look like if we achieved zero poverty across our State.

Open to students in years 10-12 (ages 14-18 years) the Poverty Summit positioned young South Australians as global leaders who are capable of developing and delivering real-world solutions to the eradication of poverty for all time.

The Poverty Summit attracted more than 200 young people on one day to one place (the Adelaide Festival Centre Banquet Room). The event was designed to harness their collective thinking and give them a united voice with an open invitation to propose solutions on how South Australia can eradicate poverty, utilising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the summit framework.

The Commissioner sought to educate, empower and consult with young people around this Agenda, use global issues that affect South Australians as the over-arching theme.

The Poverty Summit was undertaken in partnership with UN Youth SA - a youth-led organisation known for its 'global/local' approach. UN Youth's motto is 'young Australians leading global change'.

As one of the Commissioner's ongoing goals is to position young South Australians as global leaders, working with UN Youth on delivery of the Summit was central to successful delivery of the event.

UN Youth Australia is one of the largest not-for-profit, youth-led organisations in Australia. Entirely run and governed by young people under the age of 25 its members work with hundreds of young people each year delivering innovative, peer-to-peer education programs that include conferences, competitions, regional tours and school visits – all of which are led and organised by young South Australians. UN Youth also run national and international activities, and together with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade appoints the Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations each year.

*'The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful, and its gains irreversible.'*

*(United Nations, General Assembly, 2015b, para. 53)*



*'UN Youth Australia is a non-for-profit organisation entirely led by young people under the age of 25. We believe that young people have the vision and passion to create meaningful change within their communities and throughout the world, and aim to equip them with the skills and inspiration to do so. Our activities are run for youth and by youth, and everything we do is aimed at empowering young people to be leaders on the world stage.'*

*All of the work that we do at UN Youth is rooted in the belief that young people can and do make a difference in their communities. We foster ideas and innovation, and we give young people the inspiration and support they need to create change. Our partnership with the Commissioner for Children and Young People on the Poverty Summit provided us with a greater platform to place young South Australians as global leaders.'*

*Ned Feary, President, UN Youth, South Australia*





## Positioning Young South Australians as Global Leaders

Young people from across South Australia travelled to the Adelaide Festival Centre to participate in the series of UN Youth led workshops presented at the Poverty Summit.

Australia's Youth Representative to the United Nations, Kareem El-Ansary, gave the keynote address, sharing his insights on poverty in relation to the United Nations 17 SDGs, the first of which is 'the elimination of poverty for all children everywhere by 2030'.

They listened to a panel of young experts who spoke about their views on poverty and how it could be addressed and they presented their recommendations on issues they identified as being of greatest concern to South Australian children and young people experiencing poverty.

Following Kareem El-Ansary's address on the Sustainable Development Goals, young people discussed what the sustainable development goals are, why they exist, and how they relate to poverty.





Students representing more than 29 South Australian public, private and independent schools discussed how to create a world where no child lives in poverty. Of the 29 schools represented, 65% were public schools, with 42% of young people in attendance representing schools located in some of the most disadvantaged regions of South Australia. This ensured a distinct diversity of voices were in the room.

The Poverty Summit utilised a peer-to-peer educational model alongside consultations and conversations that were designed to enable young people to come up with their own recommendations on solutions to poverty. Training and content creation sessions were also used to upskill young facilitators. Participants were able to engage in the way they were most comfortable with, either individually or as part of the group.

*If people already have  
opinions on poverty  
in South Australia  
and don't receive any  
information challenging  
their opinions, how can  
anything change?  
(Male, 16)*



## Summit Summary



196

Young  
people



1

Commissioner  
for Children and  
Young People



6

Guest speakers  
(under age of 26)



1

Australian Youth  
Representative to  
the UN



4

Workshops



10-12

Year levels of  
participating  
students



25

UN Youth  
South Australia  
Facilitators



6

Independent  
schools



29

Schools  
participated



15

Public  
schools



8

Catholic  
schools



6

Western  
Suburb schools



8

Northern  
Suburb schools



6

Eastern  
Suburb schools



9

Southern  
Suburb schools

## How Young South Australians Interpreted the 2030 Agenda



Young people attending the Poverty Summit considered the current responses to climate change and suggested what they think could be done, by whom, to eradicate poverty in South Australia by 2030.

The majority of young people expressed a belief that poverty happens because of structural inequality. They recognised the correlation between poverty and education and they know that social and economic disadvantage can occur as a result of living with a disability, having a mental illness, or being discriminated against on the basis of race or gender. They also know that these are significant factors that make individuals and families vulnerable to poverty.

Participants also recognised that zero hunger and clean water, clean energy, work, health and wellbeing, all have a relationship with poverty. Participants were less able to make the connection between life on land, life below water, partnerships for the goals, or gender equality, in relation to poverty.

Many children and young people spoke about 'the poverty trap', 'the cycle of poverty' and 'generational poverty' empathising with how difficult it can be for people who are born into poverty to escape it.

Overwhelmingly, young people do not see poverty as a simple matter of choice. They believe family and child poverty is mainly due to factors outside an individual's control.

Many participants at the Summit were surprised by the number of children and young people who live in poverty in South Australia. Some participants spoke about the need for South Australia to stop looking at poverty in the context of developing nations, and see poverty as a local issue.

Participants expressed a range of different views and definitions of what it means to be living in poverty. For many, they saw absolute poverty as being deprived of necessities, of experiencing 'disease', and of having 'no access to shelter and clean water'.

Other young people viewed poverty as a more relative concept. They felt poverty was more about what a person didn't have in relation to their own needs. This group considered poverty to be a growing issue amongst children and young people across South Australia.

## What Young South Australians Think Should be Done to Eradicate Poverty by 2030

The following pages document some of the issues and concerns raised by young people at the Poverty Summit and the recommendations they made to address them according to five key themes: **planet**, **people**, **prosperity**, **peace** and **partnerships**.



*'We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.'*

Of the many poverty related issues raised at the Summit, the impact of climate change was consistently identified as a significant challenge, with 'an urgent need for it to be addressed now'.

Participants said they felt climate change escalated poverty, partly because the world is likely to see more displaced people as the impact is felt, and partly because it will inevitably affect the world's economic, social and political conditions.

Many young people raised concerns about 'higher living costs' and 'food shortages' that will likely become more prevalent due to climate change. This 'scarcity' will make prices rise, and place more strain on those families, children and young people who are already doing it tough.

Young people connected climate change with the spread of disease and illness, representing a significant challenge for health care systems around the world.

Many young people were concerned about the decisions or lack thereof that governments are making now, which will negatively impact on future generations.

Young people are particularly interested in seeing governments, companies and farmers work more closely together now to ensure sustainable agricultural practices are used. They felt this cooperative approach would enable enough healthy food to be produced, and that it could be made more affordable and accessible to all.

“ ‘Poverty is, in some ways, the invisible ink in our society. We may not always see it, but that doesn't mean that it isn't there. (Female, 15)’



Young people at the Summit identified poverty as one of the most pressing human rights concerns there is, with the need to address 'inequality' at the core of the discussion on how to eradicate it. They spoke about the impact poverty has on families, suggesting poverty may lead to children and young people being caught up in 'a bad home environment'. This definition included an understanding that some children and young people face a 'chronic lack of support'.

Others highlighted the negative impact poverty has on the whole of society. They identified 'bullying', 'stigma', 'homelessness', 'discrimination', 'lack of social change' and 'unsafe communities,' as part of the broader impact poverty has at the community level.

Young people believe poverty and a lack of resources, reduces a child's and young person's ability to participate and contribute to their community. It also limits their ability to have fun

with peers, and to make connections in their communities in the same way those who are 'not poor' can.

Other young people identified poverty as a form of social isolation that can affect a child or young person's mental health and wellbeing. This can maintain 'a poverty trap' which 'when it combines with not being able to support yourself, produces a lack of confidence'. Over time this can affect an individual's self-worth and their motivation to seek help and participate in activities that may better support and connect them with their family, friends and community.

Young people said that those who are living with a disability, or who come from a refugee or migrant background, are especially vulnerable to poverty. Many felt they were more likely to 'have higher living costs' and 'might not have access to proper facilities' creating a significant disadvantage.

*‘We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential and equality and in a healthy environment.’*

Participants thought the impact of poverty included things like ‘not being able to support yourself’, ‘a lack of confidence’, ‘feelings of low self-worth and lack of motivation’ as well as ‘not being able to get the help, support or education you need’.

The Commissioner heard that poverty can result in young people having a ‘lack of trust’ and a ‘lack of connection’ with their peers and community, leading to a lower quality of life. Young people want to see more opportunities created for participation in local communities. They believe that a sense of belonging and feeling connected is crucial to nurturing a person’s fulfilment and wellbeing, and that living in poverty reduces a person’s ability to connect.

Young people believe that initiatives that connect people to their communities are crucial if we are to address and eradicate poverty. They believe that connection with

community will help to de-stigmatise poverty, instead enhancing a sense of belonging through reaching out and offering support; not marginalising people simply because of their circumstances.

Young people also recommend that we ‘reduce the cost of non-essential health services’, provide ‘free/affordable mental health services to vulnerable members of our community’ and ‘reduce waiting times’.

“ ‘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’ (Male, 16)





*'We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.'*

Underlying the contributions made by young people at the Poverty Summit was the idea that living in poverty impedes an individual's social and economic progress.

Participants called for more equal education.

They felt strongly that creating better educational opportunities for children and young people is key to addressing poverty.

The 'current education system' was identified by many participants as 'promoting exclusivity' and incapable of providing young people with the skills they need to provide for themselves.

Some participants wanted to see schools include practical lessons on 'how to manage life outside school' so that you don't end up in a 'poverty trap and/or on Centrelink' simply because you don't know how to navigate 'the system'.

Another group felt the Department for Education should be 'adjusting the curriculum to include 'life skills'; this could include lessons on investment, taxation, home loans, and long term planning, as well as on practical skills like cooking, cleaning and how to meet basic needs – 'make us learn what we have ahead of us.'

Participants urged for better distribution of resources, especially to schools in regional and remote South Australia. One participant added that 'schools located in socio-economically disadvantaged regions should have access to better quality secondary education'.

The Commissioner heard there should be a 'decrease in the cost of uniforms, laptops, excursions', and in relation to tertiary education, many students said 'you shouldn't be in debt for receiving an education'.

Participants spoke about the need for small businesses and larger companies to think about sustainability and the future now. They want to ensure businesses place human rights front and centre, and consider the 2030 Agenda when making decisions.

They want businesses to invest in young people and to ensure they have a say in their own futures. One participant suggested 'advocating for large corporations to put young people on their boards'. This would 'ensure the strategy and core business decisions they are making now, are being influenced by those they will impact most in the future'.

They emphasised the need for business culture to be grounded in equality and inclusion. Young people were adamant that 'if we want to live in a world where all people live fulfilled and prosperous lives, we must acknowledge and address the systemic inequalities that exist'.

“ ‘I think poverty can be solved through equality. One main solution is to pay all middle class earners on an equal 'base wage' so all people can afford to rent a house and pay the bills.’ (Gender unknown, 13.)



*‘We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and peace without sustainable development.’*

Throughout the Summit the dual issues of social exclusion and the divisions that poverty causes across society were often raised by participants. The Commissioner heard that poverty and a lack of resources ‘cuts off people’s ability to participate in and be full members of society’.

Participants defined the types of social exclusion that poverty causes as being ‘unable to have fun with peers’, being ‘unable to contribute’ and having ‘no connection to the rest of the world’.

Participants also spoke about the stigma that exists toward people living in poverty and how this isolates them from their communities, impacting on their mental health and wellbeing – especially amongst young people. Participants said the way in which society can challenge the stigma and exclusion of poverty is through promotion of community, and the responsibility we all have to providing support for and to each other.

Participants spoke about the impact poverty has on safety within societies and how it leaves individuals and groups feeling ‘jealous’, ‘scared’ and ‘angry’ because they are faced with ‘circumstances outside their control’.

They said that wealth inequality leads to countries, communities and individuals fighting over resources and power and that to address entrenched inequalities, institutions, systems and societies more broadly needed to be ‘kinder’ and to ‘share their resources’ more.

Young people said that ‘fear is often the primary cause of conflict’. They want societies to be kinder and more inclusive. They want to encourage communities to work collaboratively, recognising the people around them who are doing it tough and then work together to provide support and opportunities that meet needs they themselves have identified.

Participants outlined the importance of leading by example and how breaking down misconceptions and listening to each other’s experiences and opinions makes a big difference to how we interact. They also spoke about the lack of trust they have in institutions and systems to make decisions on their behalf.

It was clear to young people, that the only way stronger institutions would be built is if citizens trusted the decisions being made by those institutions.. For young people to trust those who are in power within our democratic institutions they want to be included in decision-making, and for all people, from different backgrounds and socio economic situations, to be invited to sit at the negotiating table.

“ ‘Poverty is often stigmatised in our society so it is imperative that it is humanised to tell stories behind the statistics. (Female, 15)



Young people emphasised the need for active collaboration and communication to achieve better outcomes for all, especially those who are most disadvantaged. They believe we all have a responsibility to ensure our world is fairer, and our institutions safe.

They see capacity for governments and the international community to bring about top down change, creating kinder institutions, practices and policies which consider everyone equally.

Participants spoke about the need for individuals to take responsibility and become active members of their communities, supporting those around them. They said it is their friends who they are closest to, and that 'often young people are embarrassed to be poor'. If young people can 'break down those barriers' they will reduce the stigma of poverty and make it less isolating for those being impacted by it.

Participants were particularly forthright in communicating the role government can play in addressing poverty. They proposed that 'governments consult more closely with citizens, especially young people and people living in poverty' and 'that when the government proposes changes, they consult with people from all backgrounds, particularly those most affected. 'If those who are most affected are represented they will be able to contribute/pass an opinion on solutions that will best meet their needs' – not have solutions imposed upon them by governments who have assumed they know best.

Additionally, participants identified the government as having the greatest capacity to address issues relating to unemployment and homelessness. They said that 'governments should make housing cheaper and use more sustainable materials'. They should 'put a cap

*‘We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit for strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.’*

on rented prices’, ‘turn old houses into share houses’ and ‘provide communal housing for people who cannot afford their own property’ – thereby ensuring every citizen’s right to shelter is met.

Participants spoke about the role ‘the media’ can play in raising awareness around issues and situations by accurately reporting on initiatives, situations and campaigns. They spoke about ‘more representation to lessen discrimination’ and how the media could take ‘a much more active role in changing the public discourse around poverty and what can be done about it’.

Young people want communities to take an active role in supporting those who are most vulnerable. One participant suggested that communities should be ‘supporting people to work towards gaining employment, rather than providing financial support while they look for employment. Participants proposed

that the government provide public facilities such as laundromats, showers, toilets, and feminine sanitary products to those who can not afford them. Another group added that community members can volunteer to help and support people living in poverty with everyday tasks, enabling them to feel more connected and less socially isolated. Young people emphasised the need for governments, institutions, businesses and individuals to work together to provide more practical support to those who are living in poverty.

“ ‘We all have the capacity to care but we don’t know how to help’ and there’s a lack of education on how this issue can be addressed.’ (Male, 18)

## Conclusion

Child poverty is real, and in a country of relative abundance and enduring economic growth, should not, and must not be tolerated. We must work together to eliminate poverty in our own backyards once and for all.

We can do this while also contributing to the national effort to end extreme poverty around the world; a key target among the 17 ambitious global sustainable development goals the world's nations agreed (at the United Nations assembly held in 2015) to work together to achieve by 2030 (within eleven years).

It is clear that poverty exists in Australia and that South Australia is not immune. The kind of poverty that exists here is a product of the community we have created. It is therefore our responsibility to make the changes needed to eradicate it.

The Poverty Summit and the comments made by young people as contained in this report, are designed to contribute to the State's conversation and subsequent set of actions needed for South Australia to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

It is not good enough to say that we will try to do this. The expectation is that we will achieve it, and in so doing, shift our individual and collective thinking around poverty, what forms it takes, and how it can be addressed to benefit those it impacts most, particularly South Australian children and young people.

It is our responsibility to work together to bring about the changes needed to lift those in our community who are living in poverty, out of it. This is the only way we can hope to ensure future generations do not feel its impact.

If we commit to achieving this in the same way the international community has set the eradication of poverty as the #1 Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030, we will have made a significant contribution to improving the lives of future South Australian children and young people in ways we had previously thought impossible.







## Testimonials



*'The poverty summit was an amazing opportunity and I'm thankful that I was given the chance to participate. The part of the summit that I gained the most from would have to be the panel. I really connected with all of the speakers and what they had to say. I felt that this gave me an opportunity to have my voice heard. As a rural student we often miss out on things like these, so it was great to get the chance to go.'*

*(Student)*



*'I thought the poverty summit was a great opportunity for kids to come together to express their opinions and thoughts in a place [where] this was welcomed and encouraged. It was really rewarding to be involved in something that had the potential to move towards changing our world for the better. For me I gained a deeper insight into what can be done to improve our societies and what we can do to seek change.'*

*(Student)*



*'The poverty summit was a gratifying experience that allowed me to expand on my teamwork and problem solving skills. By working closely with different people, I had the opportunity to explore other people's opinions and ways of thinking along with my own ideas. The feeling of making change in the community by coming up with solutions to help others gave me a sense of fulfilment.'*

*(Student)*



*'Our students had a truly wonderful day and left totally inspired. A couple of them have approached me today about creating a campaign that they developed on Friday as a part of the schools special inquiry project!!! The students wanted me to thank [CCYP] for the wonderful opportunity.'*

*(Teacher)*



'The Poverty Summit was an opportunity for our students to learn about issues and people who they may not have been aware are struggling. We live in an isolated community and sometimes we do not get to know what is happening further afield. The students all felt that they had their voices heard and that they are going to be a part of a solution. This was incredibly important, as they saw it as purposeful and an opportunity to meet other new people to combine to make a difference. We were most appreciative of the opportunity and of all the organisation that went into making it happen.'

(Teacher)



'On Friday, 28 June 2019, we travelled to Adelaide Festival Centre to attend the Poverty Summit. We were seated in tables with facilitators in groups of 8. It was a great opportunity to meet other students my age [and hear their] ideas and really increased my self-confidence and my speech, which is something I need to improve on. The Poverty Summit helped me connect and interact with other kids my age. It allowed me to engage and share my ideas [and] made me feel appreciated. Usually I lack confidence, leading to lack of attendance to activities.'

(Student)



'[At the Poverty Summit] I felt good sharing my ideas and opinions with the group of people at my table. We came up with amazing ideas that could help people in poverty.'

(Student)



'I can apply this skill to my life – every time I give an idea I should be confident so that my idea is taken seriously and not made fun of.'

(Student)



## Who are we?

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* ('the Act').

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, giving particular consideration to the needs of vulnerable and at-risk children and young people.

A key objective of The Commissioner for Children and Young People is to position children and young people's interests, development and wellbeing front and centre in public policy and community life and to advocate to decision makers to change laws, policy, systems and practice in favour of children and young people.

In the Commissioner's work she listens to the views of children and young people, collaborates with them and represents their diverse voices in the public arena with a special focus on those who struggle to have their voices heard. Much of her advocacy is directed by the experiences and issues that children and young people talk about and have asked her to focus on.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says children and young people have a right to have a say on all issues that affect them and for their views to be taken seriously. By improving our children and young people's participation in decisions that impact on them, we strengthen our democratic institutions and structures, and build a strong State for the future of all South Australian children and young people.



## Endnotes

- 1 United Nations, 2015. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New York: UN Publishing.
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- 5 South Australian Council of Social Service. (2018), 'Poverty rate twice as high in regional SA', Available: <https://www.sacoss.org.au/poverty-rate-twice-high-regional-sa>
- 6 McCrindle Research. (2019), 'Australia's household income and wealth distribution'. Available: <https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blog/australias-household-income-wealth-distribution/>
- 7 Productivity Commission. (2018), 'Rising inequality? A stocktake of the evidence'. Available: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/rising-inequality/rising-inequality-highlights.pdf>
- 8 Boyden, J., Dawes, A., Dornan, P., & Tredoux, C. (2019). Tracing the Consequences of Child Poverty: Evidence from the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. Bristol, UK; Chicago, IL, USA: Bristol University Press. Engle, P., & Black. (2008) The effect of poverty on child and child development and educational outcomes, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences. Vol: 1136 (1), pp. 243-256



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