

Over 13,868 ‘Tweens’ told their Commissioner what matters most

The Things That Matter 3 is the latest report to be released by SA Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly. It is the third in the series and examines the findings from the Commissioner’s ‘Tell Helen’ Student Voice Postcard initiative, which surveys South Australian children aged 8 to 12 years on an annual basis.

Every year Commissioner Connolly asks SA ‘tweens’ a series of open-ended questions about what matters to them most at this time in their lives. Questions include what they would like grownups to know about their lives, what they’re good at, what they care about, and what they think would make the world a better place.

In 2021, a total of 13,868 (representing approximately 33% of all SA children in this age-group) completed a Student Voice postcard. The responses came from 289 Catholic, Independent, Government, Special Education Units, and Aboriginal schools across the Greater Adelaide Region, as well as from regional, rural, and remote communities throughout South Australia.

Children told their Commissioner about the importance of family and friends, as well as how much pride they take in being kind and caring and in looking after people, the environment, and animals. They also told her they enjoy making people laugh, and that they wanted adults to know they ‘have their back’, and that whilst it may not always be obvious, they love and appreciate all that adults do for them.

Most of the postcards received in 2021 came from children born since 2010. This new generation, sometimes referred to as Generation Alpha, are distinguished by the fact they have grown up with access to WiFi and the Internet their whole lives. Consequently, they are very socially connected and consume much more visual information than previous generations.

Their world – just like that of the adults around them – has become increasingly complex with much less down time. They consider themselves to be smarter than adults think they are and want to be given more credit for what they know. Although they acknowledge they still have much to learn, they don’t want to be overlooked or not listened to. They also want to be involved in decision-making at the family, school, and community levels, and to have their ideas heard and acted upon.

They’re particularly concerned about the environment and extremely tired of the pandemic. They would like to change a lot about their schools and to do education differently, with more opportunities to learn life skills such as cooking and financial literacy.

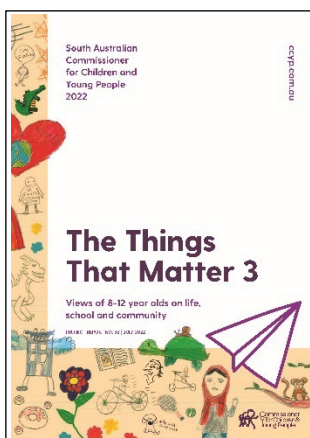
They also want adults to realise that being a child today is vastly different from when they were children. They want adults to value equality, inclusiveness, and kindness in the same way they do, and to celebrate diverse abilities, learning styles, languages, cultures, and gender identities.

The 2022 Student Voice Postcard packs are being distributed to all Government, Catholic and Independent primary and combined South Australia schools from today.

Quotes attributable to Commissioner for Children & Young People, Helen Connolly
I devised my annual Student Voice Postcard initiative because I was concerned that the voices of South Australia's 8 to 12 year olds were not being heard. I need to hear about their lives and what matters most to them, so that I can advocate on their behalf. Being asked what matters to children at this age sends a clear message that their point of view is valued and important for them to express.

Regardless of where they live, South Australian children in this age group were clear that when adults listen to their unique imaginations, creative perspectives, and big ideas, this improves their own wellbeing, self-confidence and trust in adults.

These are the years in which we have a rare opportunity to really connect with children on those things that matter to them most. By establishing lines of communication and trust at this time, adults can understand the world from their point of view and then adjust the services and supports in ways that are more likely to bring about positive change. This means sitting down and really listening to the concerns and aspirations of children in this age-group and then addressing the specific challenges they face, whilst also acknowledging and validating their hopes and dreams, whatever these might be at this time in their lives.



To download your copy of *The Things That Matter 3* go to:
www.ccyp.com.au/ccyp-reports

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the work of the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People go to:
www.ccyp.com.au

Media Contact:

Sharon Cleary

Senior External Relations and Communications Advisor

M: 0407 990 983 | E: sharon.cleary@sa.gov.au