



**South  
Australian  
Student  
Representative  
Council**

November 2022



# Are you a young South Australian passionate about making change in your community? 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 150 students in Years 10, 11 and 12 drawn from across the state, working together to create genuine, student-led change within their own communities.

In 2022, the inaugural SA SRC came together to enable high school students across South Australia to create a vision for change that they would like to see. In 2023, the SA SRC will be working on turning their student led ideas into reality within schools and throughout the community.

The SA SRC brings together passionate young people from outback, rural, regional and metropolitan communities, who are unwilling to accept the status quo of just being 'good enough'. Instead they wish to harness the energy, ideas, and desires of other likeminded young people to create a better future, not only for themselves, but for future generations of all South Australians.

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 and need 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 adults or have confidence in the systems and processes with whom you are expected to engage. You have also expressed your 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 therefore don't 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 because they 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 via processes that have been organised by either 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 and prioritise and determine actions for change that you believe will work within 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 is having a direct bearing on how you feel about what the future holds for you, as well as for future generations of young people who will follow you.

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, valued and acted upon wherever possible.

For many teenagers I have 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 is the SA SRC?

The SA SRC will be a body of up to 150 South Australian students from Years 10, 11 and 12 working together to create genuine, student-led change across their communities.

It is 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 about most.

## SA SRC Membership consists of:

- Up to 150 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 does the SA SRC do?

In 2022, the inaugural SA SRC, supported by CCYP, FYA and NIYEC set about creating a vision for South Australia based on the insights and experiences of high school student.

## The vision created is to ensure that all young South Australians:

- have a stronger voice in their school and communities
- have more support in addressing challenges to their mental health and wellbeing
- have more accessible public transport
- feel included and celebrated regardless of race, gender or ability; and
- are taught an inclusive curriculum that better reflects the diversity of our society.

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

- Attendance at one Face-to-Face Summits held in March 2023.\*
- Monthly meetings held via Zoom chaired by the Commissioner.
- Work on local campaigns decided and agreed to at the Summits.
- Involvement in local area action teams.
- Contribute to Slack channels and online work.

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

## Application opening and closing dates:

- Applications for membership of the 2023 SA SRC open on Thursday 24 November 2022.
- Applications close on Friday 20 January 2023.
- Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application by Friday 3 February 2023.

## Important meeting dates for Terms 1 and 2 are:

- Introduction to SA SRC: Sessions begin Tuesday 7th February and run throughout February (online)
- SA SRC Summit 2023: Late March 2023 (Exact date TBC shortly) (face-to-face)
- April 2023: Month of Action (online)

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



# Your questions answered...

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

We are looking for students who 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 time per week. We will have monthly meetings that will be conducted online via Zoom, with the option of meeting more regularly with your 'campaign team'.

Throughout the school year FYA will offer 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 2023 will be held in late March.

## **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.



# Your questions answered...

Once the issues of most importance have been identified, along with the proposed actions to bring about change, funds will be provided to enable projects that will make a difference to be actioned.

We will also be upskilling you through sessions with experts in media, campaigning and advocacy. By 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.

## Any other questions?

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

## Who is behind the SA-SRC?

The SA SRC is an initiative of **South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP)**; an independent statutory authority, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*. The Commissioner promotes and advocates for the rights, development and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia and is committed to advocating for their involvement in decision making that affects them, with particular consideration given to those children and young people who are vulnerable and at-risk.

The Commissioner's Advocacy Agenda has set a key objective to create opportunities for young people that will enable them to engage with 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.

The **National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC)** is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisation that brings together a diverse coalition of young mob from different Indigenous Nations, experiences and passions, who all share a commitment for good, quality education. NIYEC is driven by an intergenerational vision; to build on the work of our Old People, and to plant the seed of an equitable and quality education ecosystem for future generations.

Are you up for the  
SA SRC challenge?  
Apply today at  
[ccyp.com.au/sa-src](http://ccyp.com.au/sa-src)