

# 2023 Keeping Our Promises

South Australia's progress on promises made by government to ensure that children in this State are healthy, safe and thriving.



Education



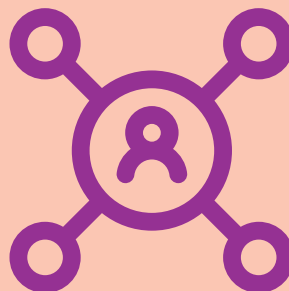
Health



Safety



Wellbeing



Citizenship



Strong evidence



Some evidence



Little evidence

## About the CCYP

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent position, established under the [Children and Young People \(Oversight and Advocacy Bodies\) Act 2016](#) (OAB Act). This legislation was introduced to the South Australian Parliament in response to the [Child Protection Systems Royal Commission 2014](#).

The Commissioner promotes and advocates for the rights, development and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia and seeks to change laws, policies, systems and practice to uphold children's rights.

The work of the Commissioner for Children and Young People is guided by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC); the core international treaty established in 1989 to which Australia is a signatory. This important agreement sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children around the world.

The Commissioner aims to ensure that as a part of the Australian Commonwealth, South Australia enacts its international obligations under this Convention.

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# Introduction

As South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People my role is to ensure that all levels of government in South Australia meet their international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of South Australian children and young people. I advocate for systemic changes to legislation, policy, and processes that define and deliver quality and best practice services to South Australian children and young people.

An essential part of the mandate of South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People is to hear directly from children and young people about their lives, and the changes they would like to see made. They have repeatedly reported that they want to be trusted, listened to and respected as valued members of our community. Children and young people want adults, institutions, leaders and decision makers to take action to prioritise their wellbeing and interests. This includes taking immediate action to address climate change, remove inequality and create future job opportunities.

In the language of children and young people, the commitments that governments make to them through laws, policies, strategies and plans are treated as promises. They are promises made to ensure resources of government are channelled into meaningful improvement to their lives. This report focuses on the promises made across five domains of children's and young people's lives: Education, Health, Safety, Wellbeing, and Citizenship.

These five dimensions are consistent with the legislated Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in South

Australia.<sup>1</sup> They also align with the focus areas of my Advocacy Agenda over the next three years, which builds on work completed in my first term as Commissioner, specifically in relation to sexual health and safety, youth suicide, mental health, harassment and bullying prevention, road and transport safety, and school exclusions.

This inaugural annual report monitors, maps and grades the "promises" made by the South Australian Government to ensure that children in this State are healthy, safe and thriving. This report sets the benchmarks against which progress in subsequent years will be assessed. The report also makes recommendations for improvements across a range of government departments. These have been developed in consultation with children, young people and other stakeholders. Monitoring of and reporting on activities of government is important for accountability and tracking the achievements and failures across government in relation to children and young people's rights, lives and futures.

Independent monitoring and reporting on the actions of government in regard to the promises that have been made is a crucial element of system accountability and rights protection.

# Context

This report should be read alongside all other child monitoring reports that have been produced by the bodies created under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* (OAB). These bodies include the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, the Guardian for Children and Young People, the Child Development Council and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee.

Notable reports include:




- Commissioner for Children and Young People’s *Child Rights Progress Reports*<sup>2</sup>;
- The Guardian for Children and Young People’s *Reports on Government Services*<sup>3</sup>;
- The Child Development Council’s annual report monitoring the State’s Outcomes Framework and the *How are they faring? South Australia’s 2022 Report Card for children and young people*.<sup>4</sup>

Building on these reports, this monitoring report assesses the extent to which the State government has kept its promises made to South Australian children, either through laws, policies, or strategies. The promises reported on in the Keeping Our Promises report are currently not included in the monitoring reports of the OAB bodies.

Data sets utilised in the report were required to be reliable and accessible produced on an annual basis from Australian and State government sources for children aged up to 18 years and statewide coverage. Data that was unable to meet all these criteria was not included.

Whilst most of the data used in this report is available publicly, some data has been produced for our specific purpose. This includes data on suspensions and exclusions in schools, sexually transmitted infections, and South Australian Certificate of Education completion rates for children with disability and Aboriginal children.

A rating system similar to that used in the annual Child Rights Progress Reports has been applied to each promise being assessed with the rating indicated as follows:

-  **Strong evidence** the promise has been kept.
-  **Some evidence** the promise has been kept.
-  **Little evidence** the promise has been kept.

It is my hope that this work will complement existing reports and provide a more complete picture of South Australian children’s lives.

Although this is not a child voice report, many of the suggested areas for improvement come from consultation with children and young people and reflect actions they have identified would improve their lives.<sup>5</sup>



# Education Promises

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has promised the United Nations that it will ensure every child:

- can access their right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children will be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools will respect children's rights and never use violence (Article 28); and
- can access an education that fully develops their personalities, talents and abilities. It will teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It will help them to live peacefully and protect the environment (Article 29).

## The Law

The South Australian *Education and Children Services Act 2019* puts children's and young people's right to an education into law. One of the principles that must be taken in the operation, administration and enforcement of this Act is that the best interests of children and young people be considered paramount.

### Promise #1: Reduce Exclusionary Discipline

The South Australian Government promises to reduce the incidences of school exclusion and suspension in public schools, especially in target populations.<sup>6</sup> This includes in-principle support to not use exclusionary discipline for young children or for minor incidents.<sup>7</sup>

### Government Plan

The recommendations in relation to exclusions and behaviour management made in the Commissioner's *Blame Game* report and the *Inquiry into Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions in South Australian Government Schools* (otherwise known as the Graham Report) have resulted in the Department for Education undertaking a number of reforms including:

- Reducing exclusionary responses in Reception to Year 2, by investing in services to support younger children with behaviours of concern to stay at school.
- Reviewing the Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion of Students procedure and provide training for staff and advice to families.
- Reviewing the suite of programs that support student attendance.
- Improving social-emotional learning classroom practices that are trauma aware.

The reforms include making changes to improve student engagement. These reforms not only aim to increase levels of engagement and wellbeing overall, but also to reduce use of exclusionary discipline.<sup>8</sup>

### Promise kept?



### Why this Assessment?

It is too early to see any improvements in these areas.

In terms of data available to this office<sup>9</sup>, there has been an increase in the number of exclusions, suspensions and take homes in government primary schools from 2021 to 2022. The numbers in 2021 may have been lower as a result of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some children under 10 years have been excluded from public schools for 'illegal behaviour' which is not consistent with South Australian law which states that a child under 10 years is deemed incapable of committing a crime.

### **Exclusions**

Exclusions are when children cannot attend school for a period not less than 4 consecutive weeks and not more than 10 consecutive weeks.<sup>10</sup>

According to data supplied by the Department for Education there was an increase in the numbers of exclusions in primary school from 2021 to 2022. In 2021 there were 143 exclusionary incidences involving 137 students compared to 2022 where there were 182 exclusionary incidences involving 170 students. Exclusions include young children, with one boy in Reception being excluded in 2021 and 18 boys in Year 1 excluded in 2022.

The vast majority of excluded children were boys, hovering around 86% of all exclusions for both years. Although there are smaller numbers of girls being excluded, they appear to be excluded for single incidents. In 2021, 18 girls were excluded for 18 incidences and 23 girls for 24 incidences in 2022.

### **Suspensions**

Suspensions are when children cannot attend school for a period not exceeding 5 days at a time, up to 15 school days in a calendar year.<sup>11</sup>

Data supplied by the Department for Education shows there has been a significant increase in numbers of children suspended. In 2021 there were 4,802 suspension incidences involving 3,025 students compared to 6,152 incidences involving 3,881 students in 2022. Although, suspensions increase in higher grades there are still children in Reception and Year 1 being suspended.

In 2021, 95% of suspended children were boys compared to 85% of suspended children being boys in 2022.

### **Take Homes**

A 'take home' is when a student is removed from the school for the rest of the day as a result of a breach in the school's behaviour code.

The Department for Education data shows there has been an increase in take homes with 7,578 incidences involving 4,121 students in 2021, compared to 8,282 incidences involving 4,587 students in 2022. Again, the percentage of take homes for boys is greater than those for girls, increasing from 80% in 2021 to 85% in 2022.

### **Future Improvements**

The goal of Department for Education reforms on behavioural policy and practice should be to reduce all exclusionary practices. The Department has indicated that it is making changes and I will continue to monitor whether these have had any impact.

I recommend that the Department for Education:

- Ensure no child in primary school is excluded or suspended.
- Review all policies, procedures and supports in relation to behaviour management to ensure active efforts are made to reduce exclusion.
- Ensure all exclusions of a primary school child are reported to the Chief Executive prior to execution.
- Establish an independent body to appeal exclusions.

While we only have figures relating to public education, I have heard many reports of suspensions and exclusions from schools within other sectors. I urge other sectors to report on their suspensions and exclusions, and to put in place policies and practices to reduce them.

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## Promise #2: Reduce School Disengagement

The Department for Education's Student Engagement Reforms contain a commitment to reduce student disengagement and improve attendance rates.<sup>12</sup>

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### Promise kept?



#### Government Plan

Key objectives include:

- Improving the Department's service model for behaviour support.
- Improving the learning support options available for students at risk of disengagement.
- Improving the alignment of attendance supports available to school.
- Increasing the availability, accuracy and usefulness of data to inform site and system level decision making to support engagement and positive behaviour.
- Increasing services for mental health.
- Providing schools with access to the tools, resources, training and services needed to support increased engagement and positive behaviour.
- Providing schools with access to the resources, training and services needed to support educator practice.

#### Why this Assessment?

The school attendance rate and level<sup>13</sup> for Years 1–10 students in government schools has steadily fallen since 2016 with a larger fall after the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup> According to the ACARA data within Time Series (Attendance Levels) the average attendance rates have fallen from 91.8% in 2016 to 85.6% in 2022, meaning that on average students are missing three more days of school each semester in 2022 compared to 2016.

The ACARA data also shows there has been a decrease in the number of students who are reaching 90% attendance levels. In 2016, 75.1% of students attended school more than 90% of the time, this has reduced to 46.5% in 2022, meaning 53.5% of students miss more than 4 weeks of school in a year.

The ACARA data attendance rates are lower for students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, from 80.3% of attendance levels in 2016 to 71.4% in 2022. The attendance level has also reduced, from 42.3% in 2016 to 22.2% in 2022. This means that 77.8% of this group miss more than 4 weeks of school each year.

#### Future Improvements

The intersectionality of disengagement, disadvantage and exclusion needs to be addressed through integrated and holistic policy changes that place the child at the centre and look at the cumulative impact of the individual actions taken by multiple players in the system.

I recommend that the Department for Education:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of disengagement, disadvantage and exclusion and the factors affecting engagement including poverty, housing, health and hunger in South Australia to inform changes to services and programs that could be implemented to address issues for at risk groups in local communities.
- Explore the links between systemic discrimination faced by particular groups of young people and disengagement from education, employment and training pathways.
- Prevent detachment by early identification and proactive support to address the child's challenges and the school responses that are leading to nonattendance and disengagement.



### Promise #3:

## Increase SACE Completion

The South Australian Government through its endorsement of the Alice Springs Mparntwe Education Declaration and the SACE Board Strategic Plan 2020–2023, has made a promise to ‘every student that they will finish their school experience with evidence of their own unique ability to thrive.’<sup>15</sup>

### Promise kept?



#### Government Plan

There are a number of plans with outcomes to improve SACE completion rates for South Australian students. These include:

- The Department for Education’s School Improvement Model to make every school ‘world class’. It supports teachers and leaders by providing evidence-based tools and resources to help embed literacy and numeracy skills into the curriculum. Part of the criteria to measure success is the rate of SACE achievement in schools.<sup>16</sup>
- The Aboriginal Education Strategy, which has a 10 year goal for ‘all Aboriginal students to achieve their SACE at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students’.<sup>17</sup>
- The Joint Plan of Action between the Department for Child Protection and the Department for Education, which includes steps to increase the number of young people in care completing SACE.<sup>18</sup>
- The Department for Education’s Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, which contains actions to develop and provide programs to support learning by children and young people living with disability, has a target to increase the percentage and number of students with disability who achieve their SACE.<sup>19</sup>

#### Why this Assessment?

Although there are strategies and actions to show that the Department is trying to reduce school disengagement, to date there are no significant changes to SACE completion rate outcomes. There has been a steady decrease in SACE completion rates and student retention rates across public education in SA with other sectors showing similar trends, pointing to issues in relation to SACE and the outcomes in its strategic plan.

The Year 8 to SACE completion has reduced from 6,723 in 2021 and 6,403 in 2020 to 6,288 in 2022 (a reduction from 57% to 54% over two years). If the rate had remained at 57% this extrapolates to 350 fewer students completing SACE in 2022 than in 2021.<sup>20</sup>

For Aboriginal students SACE completion has fluctuated over time, increasing from 177 in 2014, 270 in 2018, and 348 in 2021, but with a significant reduction to 268 in 2022.

Students with disability who completed SACE varied throughout this same period with 433 completing SACE in 2014, 684 in 2020, and 463 in 2022.<sup>21</sup>

#### Future Improvements

All children in this State should have the opportunity to achieve their SACE and the government should be increasing efforts to ensure SACE completion.

I recommend that the Department for Education:

- Co-design an individual SACE equity vision and support plan to be implemented in Year 10 as part of the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) to assist young people with the transitions from Year 10 to Year 11 and from Year 11 to Year 12 across all education sectors.
- Collect and publicly report on disaggregated data in relation to vulnerable groups so that culturally responsive spaces and learning experiences can be developed to improve outcomes.

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## Promise #4:

### Increase Student Wellbeing

The South Australian Government, through endorsement of the Mparntwe Declaration promises that all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community, which includes addressing wellbeing in schools.

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## Promise kept?



### Government Plan

The Department for Education's Student Engagement Reforms focus on providing supports to improve students' wellbeing. There is also a commitment by the State that includes roll out of a mental health service to 65 government schools.<sup>22</sup>

In its 2022–23 Budget, the federal government committed to providing \$203.7 million over 2 years from 2022–23 'to boost every Australian public school to help address the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on student wellbeing'. This means that on average, a school will receive \$20,000 in additional funding that can be used for:

- Extra school mental health professionals such as psychologists and school counsellors.
- Camps and excursions, sporting, recreation and social activities that improve students' wellbeing.
- Proven student wellbeing and mental health initiatives.<sup>23</sup>

The measure also includes \$10.8 million for the development of a voluntary mental health check tool to help schools identify declining mental health in their students.

### Why this Assessment?

The Wellbeing and Engagement Census is used by the Department to measure student belonging and wellbeing in school. Some of the measures include:

- Students feeling as though they belong at school.
- Having at least one person at school that the student can go to for support.
- Having a school culture where people care about each other.
- Students feeling as though they have a group of friends around them and that they fit in.

In respect to students' views on feelings of belonging while at school, there has not been much change. In 2018, 61% of students felt connected to school with 60% of students feeling connected in 2022 with more children feeling connected to an adult at school than not. At the same time, there appears to be a deterioration in school belonging with 47% of students feeling like they belong most of the time in 2018 down to 42% feeling like they belong in 2022.<sup>24</sup>

Peer belonging has also decreased since 2018, from 58% of students feeling like they belong down to 42% feeling like they belong. Students who feel like they have social support from their peers has also decreased, albeit less than peer belonging, with 58% feeling like they have peer support in 2018 down to 51% in 2022.<sup>25</sup>

### Future Improvements

More needs to be done to increase the feeling of connectedness with school and peers, as they are inherently connected to student wellbeing and engagement.

All children and young people at school should feel safe and supported at school. Student wellbeing is integral to their learning outcomes and schools should ensure measures are in place to address student wellbeing.

I recommend the Department for Education:

- Develop targeted responses – with the input of students – to groups of students who consistently report challenges with their wellbeing.
- Commit to real actions and partnerships that will strengthen accountability and proactive compliance with the Disability Standards for Education
- Systemise trauma informed actions in education and ensure children in out of home care can't be excluded without Department for Child Protection approval and have an allocated support worker for critical education transitions.
- Acknowledge and implement peer to peer responses to bullying sexism, gendered norms, and stereotyping in school to address the impacts on wellbeing and participation in school for all children and young people.
- Focus on the cumulative impact of indirect and direct discrimination on LGBTQIA+ young people in school environments where they are harassed, made fun of, shamed, ignored, excluded, 'othered' or 'publicly outed'.

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## **Promise #5: Support Young Carers in their Role**

The South Australian *Carers Recognition Act 2005* (Carers Act) promises to recognise and support young carers and their role in the community.

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### **Promise kept?**



### **Government Plan**

The Carers Act requires government departments, and the organisations they fund, to demonstrate their awareness of the Act and reflect the principles it contains.

### **Why this Assessment?**

The Department for Education does not actively ask students (or their families) if they are carers. The State does not therefore know the number of young carers attending school who may need support. This means the onus is on students and their families to self identify and decide whether to disclose a young carer's responsibilities, with many barriers to not doing so. These can include the fear of State involvement, shame and embarrassment about being a carer, or simply not knowing that they may be able to access extra support. More should be done to help educators recognise and understand the signs of a young carer who may be struggling at school so they can reach out and offer support in line with the requirements of the Carers Act.

Young carers often need support to provide the significant amounts of care they extend to members of their family or to other important people in their lives. Many emphasise their caring role is a positive experience but research indicates that the physical and mental strain caring responsibilities places on the health and wellbeing of young carers is immense.

While many of life's domains can be affected by caring responsibilities, young carers who share details of the experiences they have had often describe school as either a sanctuary or a source of major distress.

## **Future Improvements**

All young carers at school should be given the support they need to ensure they can complete their education and have opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities such as sports, camps and other excursions.

I recommend the Department for Human Services undertakes to:

- Collect data on young carers at enrolment and throughout the school year.
- Develop and implement school-based supports for students with significant caring roles to improve their educational, social and community inclusion and learning outcomes. This includes taking a proactive approach to identifying students who are young carers.
- Instruct school sites to identify a young carer champion who agrees to act as a single point of contact to review students' needs on a regular basis and acts as an advocate on their behalf.



# Health Promises

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has promised the United Nations that it will:

- ensure all children have access to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment in which to live; and
- provide children and young people with age-appropriate information about how to stay safe and healthy (Article 24).

## The Law

The South Australian *Public Health Act 2011* commits to promote and provide for the protection of the health of the public of South Australia and to reduce the incidence of preventable illness, injury and disability through a public health approach. This aims to ensure all South Australians, including children and young people, have a right to the highest attainable physical, emotional and mental health.

### Promise #1: Decrease Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in Young People

The South Australian *Public Health Act 2011* commits to decreasing the incidence of communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases.

#### Promise kept?



#### Government Plan

In the State Public Health Plan 2019–2024 the government promises to reduce and prevent communicable disease including STIs.<sup>26</sup> However the plan does not include actions related to prevention through education on sexual health.

Currently, education on sexual health is assigned to schools and specifically through the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC)<sup>27</sup>, Science, and Health and Physical Education curriculum.<sup>28</sup>

The South Australian Sexually Transmissible Infections Implementation Plan 2019–2023 makes young people a “priority population” with the following targets:

- Achieve and maintain HPV adolescent vaccination coverage of 80%
- Increase STI testing coverage in priority populations
- Reduce the prevalence of gonorrhoea, chlamydia and infectious syphilis
- Eliminate congenital syphilis
- Minimise the reported experience and expression of stigma in relation to STI.

#### Why this Assessment?

From the mandatory reporting data received by SA Health in relation to notifiable diseases or infections there has been no statistically significant change in the incidence of gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV since 2017. With increasing sexual activity as young people age, the data shows there is an increase between the incidences of STIs from the 13–15 year old age group to the 16–18 year old age group.

## Future Improvements

Young people need more information about sexual health and safety. More needs to be done to address the rise in the number of sexually transmitted infections as young people become more sexually active.

I recommend the Department for Health and Wellbeing:

- Work with relevant health providers to develop a youth led STI Taskforce to assess the extent to which the sexual health curriculum is preventing and minimising the risk of acquiring STIs.
- Develop resources and tools specifically for a teenage audience to facilitate independent access to relationship, identity and sexual health information for young people including STI prevention.

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## Promise #2: Positive Mental Health Outcomes

The South Australian *Health Care Act 2008* commits the government to providing services that enable the provision of positive health outcomes and the provision of safe, high quality services focused on both prevention and the proper management of mental health conditions.<sup>29</sup>

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### Promise kept?



### Government Plan

The government has a number of strategies and plans in place in relation to mental health. They include the SA Mental Health Strategic Plan 2022 and the Mental Health Services Plan 2020–2025.

The Mental Health Services Plan 2020–2025 made services for children and young people a priority and sets the following outcomes:

- Perinatal, infants, children (0–12) and families have improved access to and engagement with mental health services and support.
- Young people (12–24) have positive mental health and early intervention services access for any emerging mental health issues.

### Why this Assessment?

According to the South Australian Population Health Survey, undertaken in 2021, nearly one-fifth (17.2%) of South Australian children aged 5 to 15 years reported having a mental health condition. This has not significantly changed from 2018 (16.1%), 2019 (19.1%) and 2020 (19.4%).<sup>30</sup> In 2021, older children aged 10 to 15 years (19.7%) were more likely to report a mental health condition compared to those aged 5 to 9 (12.0%).<sup>31</sup> Anxiety (13.0%) was the most common reported condition, followed by ADHD (5.4%) and depression (5.2%).<sup>32</sup>

A 2022 report prepared by South Australia's Auditor-General regarding access to mental health services concluded that due to significant gaps in planning, monitoring and reporting processes, SA Health is 'not able to demonstrate how well it is performing in providing the public with access to the right mental health services at the right time'.<sup>33</sup>

In 2022, the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist reviewed the assessment, treatment, management and follow up plans of children and young people presenting to the Women's and Children's Hospital Emergency Department for mental health related conditions. This was in response to concerns raised by parents advocating for better mental health care and services for children and adolescents, particularly in relation to provision of mental health crisis support.

In 2022, the South Australian Review of the *Mental Health Act 2009* made the following recommendations that pertain to children.<sup>34</sup>

- Update language to reflect rights-based and modern practice.
- Ensure the criteria to impose a treatment order remain appropriate.
- Safeguard the decision-making capacity of consumers and the implementation of supported decision-making.
- Increase the relevance of the law to children, adolescents and older persons.
- Promote Aboriginal mental health and implement culturally responsive and appropriate services.
- Improve data collection and analysis.
- Establish a framework to translate guiding principles into practice and an accountability mechanism for non-compliance.

To date, the government has not announced whether these recommendations have been accepted.

### Future Improvements

South Australia needs to focus resources and services to ensure all children and young people in the State have access to adequate mental health services.

I recommend the Department for Health and Wellbeing:

- Review current funding of children and youth mental health services to determine whether it will deliver the outcomes expected in the Mental Health Services Plan.
- Accept the recommendations contained in the 2023 South Australian Law Reform Institute review of the *Mental Health Act 2009*.
- Provide resources to enable more young people undertaking Mental Health First Aid training at school and sports clubs.
- Seek input from community based organisations who advocate for parent voice and lived experience for children and young people grappling with mental health emergencies, life issues and crisis events, to be heard and used to inform reform of the State's youth mental health system.

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## Promise #3: Reduce Deaths by Suicide and Suicide Attempts

The South Australian *Suicide Prevention Act 2021* promises to reduce the incidence of suicide.

### Government Plan

The *Suicide Prevention Act* created a Suicide Prevention Council (“the Council”) that:

- Requires there to be a State Suicide Prevention Plan.
- Makes recommendations on policies and programs intended to reduce both deaths by suicide and attempted suicides as well as enhance postvention reports.

The SA Suicide Registry (SASR) was established in 2021 with the primary aim of capturing all suspected suicide deaths in South Australia. The data collected by SASR is used as an evidence base for public health action, and to prevent further suicides by reducing risk or harm on a population-health basis. The register has been collecting data for all suspected suicide deaths in South Australia since 2019.

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## Promise kept?



### **Why this Assessment?**

Although the Council has drafted a State plan, at the time of writing there was no publicly available version.

Wellbeing SA provided the following information about South Australian deaths by suicide amongst young people:

“Deaths by suicide of young people are routinely monitored within the SASR and are a rare occurrence and the interpretation of rare events and/or small populations are prone to bias. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the South Australian and broader Australian population’s mental, social and emotional wellbeing, deaths by suicide in persons aged less than 18 years and those aged 18 to 24 years have remained stable.

SASR data is analysed to help identify issues requiring a timely response or potential clusters. The Registry will evolve over time and enriched SASR data from a range of additional sources will help inform the implementation of intervention strategies, service planning, and evaluation of interventions that are already in place.”

### **Future Improvements**

To reduce the numbers of deaths by suicide amongst children and young people in South Australia there needs to be comprehensive co-designed prevention and early intervention mental health and wellbeing policies and actions to address the drivers of youth suicide.

I recommend Wellbeing SA:

- Ensure that young people are a priority population in the development of a State Suicide Prevention Plan and that mental health resources across the lifespan are accessible in all communities to support the development of protective factors to decrease the risk of suicide.
- Work with cross government partners for 24 hour Specialist Complex Care Services for children and young people with complex mental health, emotional and behavioural challenges that require support from the entire services system – not just health.
- Invest in the development of youth designed resources and supports that upskill young people’s help seeking behaviours.





# Safety Promises

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has promised the United Nations that children should be protected:

- “Irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status” (Article 2).

## The Law

The South Australian *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* commits the government to promoting the following outcomes for children and young people:

- To be safe from harm.
- To do well at all levels of learning and to have skills for life.
- To enjoy a healthy lifestyle.
- To be active citizens who have a voice and influence.

## Promise #1: Prevent Youth Homelessness

The Housing and Homelessness Agreement<sup>35</sup> between the State and the Commonwealth commits to working together to improving housing outcomes across the housing spectrum, including particularly those Australians who are already homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and with one of the priority groups being young people.

### Promise kept?



## Government Plan

Our Housing Future Strategy 2020–2030 is a 10 year plan that aims to provide better housing outcomes across the State. The Strategy is a commitment by the government to provide better services to prevent people from falling into homelessness, ensure people get the right support they need when they need it, and rapidly rehouse people into safe, stable and long-term housing so they don’t cycle in and out of homelessness.<sup>36</sup> The Future Directions for Homelessness in SA Strategy released in 2020 as part of these reforms aims to transform the homelessness service system through SA Homelessness Alliances.

Although the 2022 State Budget saw some reinvestment into homelessness services which had been previously cut, it did not address the specific needs of children and young people presenting alone at homelessness services.

## Why this Assessment?

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in 2021–2022, 3,056 individual young people between 15–24 years presented to homeless services. Of these 66.6% of them were female.<sup>37</sup> The data indicates a decrease in the number of young people presenting since 2017–18.<sup>38</sup> However due to data collection changes introduced in 2021, it is hard to determine whether this decreasing trend has continued. Anecdotally we hear more young people are homeless. Measures that go beyond analysis of service data are required to obtain a more complete picture of the situation.

Within the cohort of homeless young people presenting to agencies in 2021–2022, 135 had care and protection orders in place. The numbers of young people leaving care and moving into homelessness has steadily decreased from 511 in 2017–18 to 366 in 2021–22.<sup>39</sup>

Homeless young people are an especially vulnerable group. They are likely to have experienced family and/or domestic violence, sometimes be grappling with problematic drug and alcohol use and often facing mental health challenges both of their own and/or of other family members. Once homeless, young people have an increased vulnerability to violence, abuse, exploitation, school exclusion and involvement with criminal justice.

Food insecurity is also frequently reported amongst young people experiencing homelessness, putting them at increased risk of adverse health outcomes that include poor nutrition leading to short and long term ill-health.<sup>40</sup>

Homelessness is also disruptive to education with increased likelihood of disengagement from school and poor academic achievement over the long-term. Continuity of schooling provides stability for young people experiencing homelessness and can contribute to opportunities and overall wellbeing later in life.<sup>41</sup>

### Future Improvements

Protective factors must be developed to support the prevention of youth homelessness and to provide interventions aimed at reducing the time young people spend being homeless. This includes preventing its re-occurrence across the lifespan.

I recommend the Department for Human Services:

- Increase school-based early intervention approaches for young people who are at risk of family breakdown and early home leaving. It is vital that schools work to ensure that young people are actively supported to continue to attend school whilst family reunification or alternative housing is found.
- Increase capacity for family focused reconnection supports to facilitate pathways back home for more young people.
- Increase independent youth focused housing where returning home is not appropriate.

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## Promise #2: Improve Road Safety for Children

The South Australian Government has adopted the targets supported for inclusion in the National Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030<sup>42</sup> of at least a 50% reduction in lives lost and at least a 30% reduction in serious injuries on South Australian roads by 2031.

### Government Plan

A new State Road Safety Action Plan (2023–25) focuses on:

- Better safety in and around schools and communities so that children can safely walk, cycle or take public transport to school.
- Promoting safer vehicles and a road safety education program for young drivers and riders, especially in regional and remote areas.
- Better public transport through mass transit corridors to and from the city and key regional areas.

### Why this Assessment?

The number of children aged 16 years and under who die on South Australian roads is low and there has been significant change to the numbers of young lives lost over the past five years, remaining at around four deaths per year.

There has been an increase however, in the numbers of young people aged 17–25 years who have died on South Australian roads with 18 deaths recorded in 2018 increasing to a high of 23 in 2020 and down to 19 deaths in 2022.<sup>43</sup> There is a disparity in this age group with young people aged 16 to 24 years making up 11% of the population, but accounting for 19% of all lives lost and 20% of all serious injuries suffered in South Australia.<sup>44</sup>

Young drivers and motorcycle riders aged 16–24 years living in regional or remote South Australia are around three times more likely to be involved in an accident in which they lose their life or are seriously injured compared with young people of

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## Promise kept?



the same age living in Adelaide.<sup>45</sup> There is a disproportionate number of male drivers aged 17 to 25 years losing their lives on the road when compared to females.<sup>46</sup> Of the 24 drivers who lost their lives in 2022, 13 were between the age of 17 and 25 years, nine of whom were male.<sup>47</sup>

Rolling records made available via the Department for Infrastructure and Transport show that 12 cyclists and pedestrians have been killed in South Australia since the start of this year.<sup>48</sup> Young people say they are being deterred from walking or cycling because of safety concerns that include inadequate foot and cycle paths and unsafe roads.

### Future Improvements

Children and young people want to be involved in helping to make their communities safer when walking, cycling and skating to school, local parks and sporting grounds. They also want to drive in safe vehicles and feel safe on the road and have better access to public transport.

I recommend the Department for Transport and Infrastructure:

- Work with children and young people, local councils and communities to develop safe transport routes to schools, parks and recreational spaces used by children and young people.
- Implement a no-interest loan scheme that can help young drivers purchase late model cars that have better safety features.
- Address children and young people’s safety concerns through better street lighting at shelters and bus stops, and by offering more frequent bus, tram and train services along routes that children and young people are known to consistently use.
- Introduce free travel to and from school and sport for children and young people from low-income families on the government School Card Scheme.

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## Promise #3: Reduce Bullying Behaviour at School

The South Australian Government promises to reduce the incidence of bullying behaviour at school by requiring all government schools to have a local bullying prevention policy.<sup>49</sup>

### Government Plan

A statewide Bullying Prevention Strategy was implemented in 2019 to address bullying in South Australian schools. This plan has now lapsed. The Department for Education has stated that the initiatives devised for schools that were outlined in the strategy have now been embedded and incorporated into department policy and practice.<sup>50</sup>

### Why this Assessment?

Over the past 5 years children and young people have been reporting a steady decrease in the prevalence of physical, verbal and social bullying. Cyberbullying has remained steady. Of the children and young people who have reported, 73% rarely experience being physically bullied (62% in 2018); with 61% rarely being socially bullied (50% in 2018) and 56% rarely being bullied verbally (45% in 2018).<sup>51</sup> While these statistics are encouraging, bullying at school is still a concern.

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## Promise kept?



In December 2022, the Minister for Education, Training and Skills held a roundtable on prevention of violence in schools. Key themes and actions proposed to address bullying include:

- Launching of a new wellbeing programs directory, providing schools with a list of evidence-informed mental health and wellbeing programs available from external providers.
- Funding restorative practices training programs and support for schools. Restorative practices focus on repairing and rebuilding relationships after conflict has occurred to foster a supportive and safe school community, taking the view that supporting schools to do this effectively will have a positive impact on student wellbeing.

#### Future Improvements

To further reduce bullying the government must involve more children and young people in policy changes, especially at the school level and empower students to address bullying through locally effective methods.

I recommend the Department for Education:

- Involve senior school students in the development of resources, programs and activities to address the diversity of bullying experiences in the senior school environment.
- Measure and monitor the impacts of mobile phone bans and other strategies put in place on their effectiveness in reducing the incidences of face-to-face and physical bullying.

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## Promise #4: Reduce Sexual Harassment of Young People

The South Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* outlaws sexual harassment in workplaces, educational institutions and other public places in South Australia.

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### Promise kept?



#### Government Plan

*Committed to Safety: A framework for addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia* was the State's policy framework up to 2022, to address sexual harassment in the workplace. However, it did not cover sexual harassment in other settings. A new statewide framework is currently being developed.

#### Why this Assessment?

Currently, the Australian Government does not release statistics on the prevalence of sexual harassment recorded for people who are under 18 years.<sup>52</sup>

However, it does collect data from people over 18 about their experience of sexual harassment before turning 15. In South Australia, 54.4% of women aged 18 years and over report having experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 years.

Data is also collected about women's sexual harassment experiences before 18 and in relation to abuse more generally. In South Australia 16.1% of females experienced both sexual and physical abuse with 11.1% experiencing just sexual abuse, 8.9% experiencing just physical abuse and 3.9% experiencing both.<sup>53</sup>

It is understood that the Department for Human Services will be addressing sexual harassment in its Youth Action Plan.

#### Future Improvements

The government should be collecting data on young people under 15 years who experience sexual harassment and reviewing how policies and practices can support.

I recommend the Department for Education:

- Review the extent to which school-based relationship and sexual health education and anti-bullying materials specifically address sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying.
- Begin collecting and publishing data on the prevalence of sexual harassment for young people at school.

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## **Promise #5: Combat Online Sexual Extortion (‘Sextortion’)**

The South Australian *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* outlaws blackmail and extortion. The eSafety Commissioner has the power to order online service providers to take down intimate images through the Image-Based Abuse Scheme. There are heavy penalties for service providers that do not comply.<sup>54</sup>

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### **Promise kept?**



### **Government Plan**

There is a multi-agency response to child exploitation that is led by the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) and includes SAPOL, the eSafety Commissioner and other state or local authorities to protect children from sexual exploitation.<sup>55</sup> Online sextortion is a crime that involves child victims being coerced into sending sexualised images by online offenders, often through the offender pretending to be another young person. The offender threatens to share these images to others unless their demands are met. The demands usually include more images, sexual favours and money.

### **Why this Assessment?**

The data indicates a rise in the level of extortion with the majority of incidents in South Australia reported to be sexual extortion affecting young men. However, there is no publicly available data on online sexual extortion for young people who are under 18 years of age.<sup>56</sup> There was also a spike in incidents over the Christmas holidays with a 60% rise in reports made in December 2022.<sup>57</sup>

The protection and legal responses that exist in relation to sexual exploitation, including sexual extortion (‘sextortion’) has significantly increased since 2018 when the Australian Government invested \$68.6 million into the Australian Federal Police to establish the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE).<sup>58</sup>

The Commonwealth government has also increased powers delegated to the eSafety Commissioner including:

- the power to require internet service providers to block access to exploitative material
- the power to order online safety providers to remove content within 24 hours; and
- the requirement for online service providers to comply with Basic Online Safety Expectations.

### **Future Improvements**

More needs to be done to protect and support children and young people from sextortion.

I recommend the Attorney General’s Department, Department for Education and SAPOL work together to:

- Raise awareness about sextortion within the school relationships and sexual education curriculum including ways to keep safe online and minimise risks.
- Educate young people so they know the difference between sexploitation and sextortion, including what to do if they are being blackmailed or coerced.



# Wellbeing Promises

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has promised the United Nations that:

- all decisions that affect children are made in their best interests (Article 3)
- every child has the right to life and to ensure that children survive and develop in the best possible way (Article 6); and
- every child has rights to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way. The government should help families and children who cannot afford this (Article 27).

## The Law

The South Australian *Family and Community Services Act 1972* objectives are to promote the welfare of the community generally and of individuals and families, as well as to promote the dignity of the individual and the welfare of the family as the basis of the welfare of the community.

### Promise #1: Improve Food Security Outcomes

The South Australian Food Relief Charter<sup>59</sup> is a commitment to working collaboratively towards an optimal food relief system that leads to improved client and community outcomes. It has been co-designed in partnership between the food relief sector and State government to improve wellbeing. The government promises to improve individual and household food security outcomes.

### Promise kept?



### Government Plan

One of the goals set in South Australia's Wellbeing Strategic Plan 2020–2025<sup>60</sup> is to increase long term health and wellbeing for all South Australians and to reduce chronic disease, including obesity, through better provision of nutritional food.

This goal aligns with the National Preventive Health Strategy (2021–2030)<sup>61</sup> which states that people living in food insecure households are more likely to develop chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension and mental health issues. This is due to the consumption of food and drinks high in energy, fat and sugar, which provide low nutritional value.

### Why this Assessment?

The State government needs to do more to address rising food insecurity in households to ensure all children are eating nutritious food and not going hungry. Although the Food Relief Charter is a step in the right direction, signing up to the Charter is optional. In addition, although the Wellbeing Strategy addresses and recognises the connection between health and food, there is no direct link or commitment made to helping those who find themselves in the most insecure and vulnerable situations.

Food insecurity is increasing due to rising costs of living. This is especially so for single parent households. According to Foodbank over 78,000 children in South Australia have lived in severely food insecure households over the past year, meaning they regularly go hungry and are not eating nutritious food. Over 130,000 people living in households throughout South Australia went hungry over the last twelve months, sometimes skipping meals or going whole days without eating.<sup>62</sup>

Nearly half of food insecure households in South Australia (46%) had someone in paid work. There were 29% of South Australian households paying mortgages that experienced food insecurity in the past year.<sup>63</sup>

While the government provides funding for school breakfast schemes, these can stigmatise those who use them and tend to serve foods with lower nutritional value.

According to the 2021 South Australian Population Health Survey a total of 4.4% of children across the State reported running out of food in the past 12 months. This figure is an improvement on 2019 (7.3%), but similar to 2018 (5.0%) and 2020 (5.0%). In 2021, respondents living in lower socioeconomic areas were more likely to report food insecurity.<sup>64</sup>

### Future Improvements

Food insecurity must be addressed in households with children and young people.

I recommend:

- the Department for Human Services and the Department for Education work together to provide free healthy meals in schools to ensure children and young people are not attending school hungry and consume at least one full nutritious meal a day; and
- the State government make an explicit commitment to addressing food insecurity in households where there are children and young people.

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## Promise #2: Support Children to Move and Play More

The State government through the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing's (ORSR) Strategic Plan 2021–2025 has committed to improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people by supporting them to move and play more. This includes development of an action plan that explores youth inactivity and provides a pathway to influence increased youth movement, play and performance.

### Government Plan

The ORSR Strategic Plan includes the following goals:

- Youth (13–17) achieving activity targets to increase to 18% by 2025 (60 minutes of activity) (baseline 14% of youth).
- Children (0–12) achieving activity targets to increase to 30% by 2025 (60 minutes of activity) (baseline 26% children).<sup>65</sup>

The Game On SA! initiative has set a goal of 55% of young people participating in sports or recreation at least one day a week.

One of the actions undertaken by government to get more children into sport is the \$100 sport voucher program. In 2022, this was extended to include Year 8 and 9 students. The program states that the objective is to increase participation in sport rather than help families who are most in need afford the costs associated with their children participating in sports or physical activity.<sup>66</sup>

The Sports Vouchers program<sup>67</sup> is run by the ORSR to provide children from Reception to Year 9 with up to a \$100 discount on sport, dance, learn to swim fees, and Guides and Scouts. The 2021–2022 Annual Report set a goal of 87,000 sports vouchers redeemed.<sup>68</sup>

### Why this Assessment?

At this point in time there are no updated indicators in relation to the activity goals outlined in the Strategy. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of children aged between 5–14 years participating in sports or recreation once a week, up from 51% in 2019 to 53% in 2022.<sup>69</sup>

There has been a steady increase in the number of sports vouchers issued since 2015; from 37,150 to 83,123 in 2022 – although the scheme has not hit the goal of 87,000. Slightly more boys than girls claim the vouchers, but there is more parity than in 2015 where 57% of vouchers were for boys, this percentage decreasing to 52% in 2022.<sup>70</sup>

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## Promise kept?



There are 2.2% of children from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and 9.3% from a CALD background receiving the vouchers. Disability is a new data set that was counted in 2022, revealing that 3% of vouchers are being taken up by families who have a child or children living with a disability.<sup>71</sup>

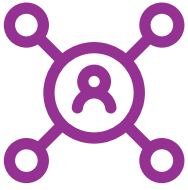
### **Future Improvements**

The State government needs to provide real opportunities for South Australian children and young people to access sporting activities.

I recommend that the Office for Sport, Recreation and Racing:

- Increase the provision of extra curricular activities in communities where cost is a significant barrier to participation.
- Address financial and transport barriers to accessing sports for children and young people from low-income families.
- Increase value, expand scope and better target the Sports Voucher Scheme.





# Citizenship Promises

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has promised the United Nations that it will promote, protect and provide for every child so that they are able to become an active and engaged citizen in their local community and broader society.

This is achieved through upholding each child's right to:

- a say in the decisions that affect their lives and to have their views, feelings and wishes considered and taken seriously (Article 12)
- an education (Articles 28 and 29)
- life and to develop in the best possible way (Article 6)
- food, clothing and a safe home (Article 27)
- freedom to think and associate with others (Articles 13 and 14)
- safety from attacks and abuse (Article 19); and
- a right to have a say about their lives (Article 12).

## The Law

The South Australian *State Electoral Act 1985* entitles people to vote from 18 years of age. It also entitles young people to enrol to vote when they turn 16 years of age.

### Promise #1: Increase the Number of Young People Enrolling to Vote

The State government, through the Electoral Commission's Strategic Plan 2021–2024 has committed to engaging the community and stakeholders to promote electoral awareness, participation and compliance.

#### Promise kept?



#### Government Plan

Although one of the priorities of the Electoral Commission of South Australia's 2021–24 Strategic Plan<sup>72</sup> is to “engage the community and stakeholders to promote electoral awareness, participation and compliance”, there is nothing in the plan that specifically addresses young people. However, the plan does include delivering an ongoing education program to improve understanding of the electoral process, particularly with those groups with low turnout rates.

#### Why this Assessment?

Young people are underrepresented in enrolment statistics. Of total enrolments in SA, only 9% are young people between the age of 18 and 24 years. Other age groups have enrolment levels at 15–16% while levels for those aged 65 years and over are around 27% of total enrolments.<sup>73</sup>

On 31 March 2023, only 54.9% of all eligible 18 year olds were enrolled to vote. This is lower than other age groups where the proportion of enrolments in SA is over 90%. The proportion of 18 year olds who were enrolled is actually less than the 73.3%<sup>74</sup> recorded on 31 March 2022, which followed the campaign to get 18 year olds enrolled so they could vote in the 2021 state and federal elections held that year.<sup>75</sup>

The Electoral Commission's 2021–22 Annual Report states that it has partnered with stakeholders across a range of sectors, including young people, to co-design and implement strategies to promote enrolling and voting at subsequent state elections.<sup>76</sup>

South Australia's decision to accept national Australian curriculum changes to reduce active citizenship education does not support its commitment to increase young people's opportunities for participation and have input into decisions that affect them.

## Future Improvements

Young people describe a lack of education as one of many barriers they face to enrolment and to voting.<sup>77</sup> The State government needs to do more to support young people to become active citizens, including promoting the importance of enrolling and exercising their right to vote whenever local, state and federal elections are held:

I recommend the Attorney General's Department:

- Amend the Act to make it easier for young people to enrol and vote, including allowing young people to enrol on the day of the election; and
- Department for Education review policies or practices that preclude them from assisting young people to provisionally enrol when they turn 16 years.

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## Promise #2: Engage and Empower Digital Learning Experiences

The State government through the Department for Education's Digital Strategy<sup>78</sup> promises that all students have engaging and empowering digital learning experiences which help to improve achievement and better prepare them to live, learn and work in the future.

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### Promise kept?



### Government Plan

The Department for Education's Digital Strategy aims to support students to have age-appropriate access to devices and internet connectivity for learning when they need it.

The Department will also provide cost savings to schools and families who purchase devices, leveraging the Department's bulk-purchasing power and delivering ongoing internet access to School Card students for learning at home, where they do not currently have internet access.

The Digital Strategy will:

- Establish a primary school device program to deliver an average digital device access ratio of 1 device per every 3 students in all primary schools. The program will provide a costed per capita amount to primary schools to help purchase devices for use at school.
- Establish a secondary school device program to help ensure secondary students have access to personal digital devices for their learning, at school and at home. The program will provide guidance on 1:1 device models at the school level, and a costed per capita amount to each school to support devices for School Card students who need them.
- Enhance existing digital education programs to strengthen digital foundations, build capability, maximise the benefits of digital technologies for teaching and learning, streamline and modernise operations, and mobilise ICT support where it is needed – for the benefit of all SA students, including those attending preschool.

### Why this Assessment?

At this point in time there are no numbers released to determine how implementation of the strategy is faring. However, as at 31 December 2021, the Department for Education has provided 324 devices and 2,334 home internet solutions to students across a range of sites and year levels who needed to learn from home and who didn't have access to devices.<sup>79</sup>

The Department is now implementing policies to ensure all public school students on a School Card get a free laptop for the duration of secondary school, kept up to date by the school. It is working on a similar device policy for primary school students based on a 1-to-3 student to device ratio. Free internet and Wi-Fi has been installed at all regional public schools and the installation process is underway for all metropolitan public schools.

## Future Improvements

All students require access to digital learning.

I recommend the Department for Education:

- Ensure all children on the School Card Scheme be given access to free devices and Wi-Fi so they are able to adequately undertake their schooling.

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## Promise #3: Increase Digital Access and Inclusion

The State government promises better digital access for all South Australian households by designing a Digital Inclusion Strategy.

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## Promise kept?



### Government Plan

In 2021, the South Australian Government asked people, especially those who experience barriers to provide feedback to inform design of the government's Digital Inclusion Strategy. Although submissions closed in December 2021, to date there has been no report or strategy released. The Department for Premier and Cabinet's website states that these releases are imminent.<sup>80</sup>

Free Wi-Fi is now available in a range of public places and spaces, including across the City of Adelaide and at key locations within many other councils, including most libraries and schools, hospitals, train stations and on Adelaide trams.<sup>81</sup>

### Why this Assessment?

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index<sup>82</sup> measures digital inclusion in three dimensions: access, affordability and digital ability. The 2021 figures show that South Australia is below the national average overall and (with Tasmania) is one of the least digitally inclusive states. For South Australia, the score is 69.9% compared to the national level of 71.1%. Regional centres are especially excluded with Peterborough, Barunga West and Yorke Peninsula at 59%. The highest score is in Roxby Downs at 77% and then Adelaide 75% where there is higher employment and more young people.

Digital inclusion is harder for families on an income less than \$33,800 with a national average of 55.8% of those in this category experiencing digital exclusion. Of those who receive income support, 62.4% are considered to be digitally excluded, while those who live in the regions on income support are experiencing even higher rates of exclusion at 67.4%.

Note: The Index threshold scores for the four groups are: Highly excluded (45% or below); Excluded (above 45% and below 61%); Included (61% and below 80%); Highly included (80% and above).

### Future Improvements

All South Australians should have access to Wi-Fi, including in public spaces as well as protecting their rights to privacy.

I recommend the Department for Premier and Cabinet:

- Recognise internet access as an essential utility and explore local solutions to increase accessibility through data donation, zero rating and universal access in public buildings.
- Work with Department for Transport and Infrastructure to expand free Wi-Fi to public transport infrastructure and facilities, including bus, train and tram stops, stations and shelters.

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