

FOR THE SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN

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Commitments given to improve education, health and safety outcomes for South Australia's kids will face added scrutiny under a new reporting system which will monitor, map and grade promises made.

Today, the state's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, is rolling out her office's first "Keeping Our Promises" report, which will set a benchmark to measure future progress – or regress – against.

The surveillance report, believed to be the first of its kind in Australia, will be released annually.

"Monitoring of and reporting on activities of government is important for accountability and tracking the achievements and failures ... in relation to children and young people's rights, lives and futures," Ms Connolly said.

"This is closing the loop and being accountable back to kids around the things we've said we are going to do to make their lives better, to ensure children in this state are healthy, safe and thriving."

The report assesses progress on commitments to education, health, safety, wellbeing and citizenship, marking them with a tick denoting "strong evidence", a partial tick, "some evidence" or a cross, "little evidence".

In the first 12-month report, based on the most recent data, "increasing rates of SACE completion" gets a cross, as does preventing youth homelessness, improving road safety for children, reducing sexual harassment of young people and supporting young carers.

"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 commissioner said.

A promise to "reduce exclusionary discipline" is awarded a middle-ground assessment, despite the statistics showing an increase in the number of exclusions and suspensions in government primary schools in 2022, compared with 2021.

There's evidence, too, that school disengagement has increased, despite a

commitment to address the drop-off.

“The data is worse, absolutely, but what I am aware of is the amount of effort the department is putting in ... there has been a real shift in the past six months,” Ms Connolly said.

“There is no point just standing on the sidelines and throwing grenades.”

Efforts around boosting digital access for all South Australian school children gets a tick.

But “improving food security” gets a fail due to rising costs of living.

The report recommends improvements in a range of government departments.