



Submission on the 20 Year State Infrastructure Strategy

October 2023

South Australia's 20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy

Infrastructure SA

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the 20 Year State Infrastructure Strategy on behalf of children and young people living in South Australia.

As the inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People for South Australia, I promote and advocate for the rights, interests and wellbeing of all children and young people living in South Australia and help to bring about improvements to the systems that negatively impact on them most.

I have heard from many children and young people about what they like and dislike about their local environments, the difficulties they have moving around, and their concerns about needing fast internet access and charging facilities wherever they go. Where young people live, the facilities available to them locally and in local towns and cities, and their ease of access to school, activities and employment have an enormous impact on their lives and can mean the difference between getting on well in life and being impoverished. However, their views are seldom considered.

The voices of children and young people will be critical to the success of the State Infrastructure Strategy. I recommend that Infrastructure SA engages meaningfully and appropriately with children and young people to thoroughly understand their unique and diverse current needs, and their valuable perspectives as the voice of future generations. Their desire for equitable access to opportunities to live, learn, earn, and play, and to be connected, creative and confident requires an inter-agency, coordinated approach to infrastructure that meets their priorities, as outlined in this paper.

In particular, the priorities of children and young people that I have highlighted in this submission are relevant to the following consultation questions:

1. What opportunities should we consider to improve South Australia's economic growth?
5. What are the barriers to increased adoption of digital technology to improve productivity?
7. How can South Australia better coordinate infrastructure investment to support a growing population?
8. What can be done to support sufficient, fit-for-purpose housing to improve housing affordability?
9. How can we improve public transport services across Adelaide and outer metropolitan areas to encourage greater patronage?
10. What investments would support a more efficient and productive health system that meets our growing and changing needs?
11. How can infrastructure support improved education and skills outcomes for South Australia?
12. How can we sustainably grow cultural, tourism and recreational infrastructure to realise greater benefits for visitors and residents?

13. How can we think differently about infrastructure investment to support equitable access and a more inclusive society?
14. What are the opportunities for infrastructure investment to accelerate attainment of the Closing the Gap targets?
20. How do we better account for the impacts of climate change in our infrastructure, to support improved resilience?
23. How can government and industry work together to support the supply of skilled labour needed to deliver a transparent infrastructure pipeline?

If you have any questions or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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Introduction

Under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*, each State authority ‘must, in carrying out its functions or exercising its powers, protect, respect and seek to give effect to the rights set out from time to time in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’.

The question of how South Australia should plan for its future infrastructure needs to take into account the interests of children and young people. Not only do under-18s form 23 per cent of the SA population, they also represent future generations. This is the generation we need to thrive if SA is to prosper in the next 20 years. If we can create a place that supports all our children and young people and is an attractive place for them to live and work, we might reverse the brain drain and the risks associated with the increasing proportion of the population that is aging in SA.

In my conversations and interactions with thousands of children and young people during my time in office they have raised a number of concerns with me about where they live and how it impacts their lives. They have also told me what they need and would like access to live better, more connected, supported, healthier and happier lives. I have provided these insights here to help inform the State Infrastructure Strategy for the future of South Australia.

Priorities for young people in relation to infrastructure focus on:

- Child and youth friendly places and spaces;
- Access to high quality internet and Wi-Fi connections, and charging facilities;
- Well-connected places where they can walk or cycle to school, uni, work and activities, or safely, easily and cheaply access direct public transport;
- Greener, climate resilient environments; and
- Access to employment information and opportunities, no matter where they live.

Child and youth friendly places and spaces

Committing to providing child friendly and child safe environments for children and young people is not merely something that is ‘nice to do’. It is a requirement under international conventions that are embedded in State Legislation.

South Australia’s children and young people are proud of where they live. They feel good about what is around them and care about how visitors perceive their towns and regions. However, they also call for more youth specific and friendly infrastructure that will support their development and inspire their career aspirations.

Having infrastructure specifically designed to meet the needs of young people involves investing in creating places and spaces in which they can gather, express themselves, and see themselves being positively reflected within their local communities. This kind of shared investment in local infrastructure helps enable them to develop a personal identity, while also contributing to building regional sustainability through connection, confidence building and creativity amongst young people.

Investing in youth specific infrastructure sends children and young people the clear message that they are valued and important members of their local communities and a place where they will want to stay.

When asked what a youthful place is, young people have told me that it is somewhere where 'anything is possible' where 'tribes' of young people can get together to try out new ideas, express themselves and just 'be young and hang out' without fear of being hassled, judged or moved on.ⁱ

New developments and infill rarely take these needs into account, and this shows. In 2020, the Australian Urban Observatory found that liveability is poor beyond Adelaide's inner suburbs, in terms of economic, social, environmental and health objectives, as well as the availability of affordable housing close to public transport.ⁱⁱ This included access to childcare, community centres, libraries, GPs, sporting facilities, swimming pools schools, museums, cinemas and theatres.

Young people have told us they want spaces that are well planned, have open borders, allow connections, virtually and physically, are open, inclusive, public, and welcoming. They want places which offer things to do and places to be, including somewhere that you can speak your mind, stand up for what you believe in and express your rights.

They would like to have the opportunity to experience and have opportunities to participate in creative pursuits locally and young people spoke about the significance of seeing more colour, art and greenery, both from an aesthetic perspective, and in terms of the pride and optimism this generates.

Young people said that having a local central hub for young people to gather is critical to their needs. This hub would ideally be an all-weather structure, open and centrally located, with space to sit on the ground, as well as other seating. The hub should be big enough for high volumes of young people to gather, and for it to be 'neutral territory'.

Creating spaces where groups of young people can coexist and connect but are also able maintain their independence is considered critical. A space that is neutral, communal and owned by young people has the hallmarks of an ideal youth hub. The hub must also have interconnectivity, Wi-Fi and phone charging stations, with access to high-quality Wi-Fi seen as essential.

Access to speciality shops and precincts are a major reason for young people to travel to specific localities, with many young people expressing the view that clustering fashion, music and coffee together is the best way to activate areas in which young people will gather.

Clean public toilets should be an essential feature of any community space, with handwashing facilities, soap, sanitary bins and free period products to ensure that those who menstruate feel comfortable in public places during their periods. Otherwise, we know that many girls avoid undertaking sport and social activities for fear of being caught short.ⁱⁱⁱ

Regional young people in particular say they want more investment in public spaces and places where they live, which need to be welcoming to children and young people and

want them to stay. They want more fun activities in the community outside of school, and opportunities to be creative. Swimming pools, jetties and better playgrounds are priorities for them.

Libraries

Public libraries have unique value to children and young people, both to inspire them to read and to provide them with a safe and inclusive place to be at the heart of their community. This role should not be undervalued. It is providing vital support to improving the literacy of our community and I urge governments to invest in public libraries for the future of South Australian children.

Encouraging children and young people and their parents and families into libraries, provides a great opportunity to inspire more reading. From the early years, libraries help to engage parents in fostering a love of reading with, to and by their children. They also provide multiple opportunities to re-engage young people to read at a later age.

Libraries are one of the few places at the centre of local communities where children and young people are welcomed, and which are free to access. They offer a safe space with clean toilet facilities and Wi-Fi access at no charge – things that young people really value. There are often comfortable places inside and outside libraries where parents are comfortable for their older kids to ‘hang out’.

I have heard from children and young people across South Australia how libraries are important safe places for them to go. They are somewhere they can catch up with friends, read, play games, listen to music, charge their phones, access free Wi-Fi, and generally know they will be comfortable, whatever the weather.

Having a safe place to ‘hang’ is particularly important to teenagers, who may be nervous to meet friends in public places. The unobtrusive presence of library staff and other library users provides them with a reassuring safety net.

Libraries offer a range of onsite and online services. They provide access to technology and run programs and classes for free, or a small fee, that increase skills. Some offer outdoor games to their members, enabling them to enjoy the outside spaces around their library, as well as the facilities inside. There are homework clubs and school holiday programs which often incorporate fun activities such as art, Lego, 3D printing and online gaming.

Libraries tend to be situated in bushfire safe places. In hot weather they are cool, in cold weather they are warm, and many manage to keep the power on during local blackouts. Extreme heat poses a major health risk in South Australia and libraries provide a vital cool space where community members can keep cool for free.

In emergencies, such as bushfires and floods, some libraries provide a safe space where members of the community can gather and access information. This important role should be encouraged where possible particularly in areas where schools are closed on extreme fire risk days.

Swimming pools

Swimming skills are critical to the safety and enjoyment of activities in and around water, which form a major part of the recreational activities of South Australians. It is vital, therefore, that all South Australian children learn to swim and about safety around water.

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 17 people died from drowning in South Australia^{iv} at the beach, in rivers or creeks, in lakes and dams, in the ocean or harbour, in a swimming pool or in a bathtub or spa.

Non-fatal drowning is much more common, with about three non-fatal drowning incidents that require hospitalisation occurring for each fatal drowning^v – many more incidents occur that do not result in hospitalisation. Non-fatal drowning can result in varying levels of brain and other organ damage, or in death by pneumonia or other causes at a later date.

Many SA children do not have access to swimming lessons because there are no public pools close to their home or school. The 2017 South Australian Statewide Swimming Pool Audit^{vi} identified that an indoor pool with lifeguard supervision is the benchmark for provision. The audit identified many areas of SA that have no public swimming pool at all, while other areas only have access to outside pools that are only open on hotter days, while other pools have limited access because they are situated on school grounds. Some changes have been made since the Audit, including plans for an indoor pool in both Payneham and Mount Barker, and an updated Adelaide Aquatic Centre. However, there have also been pool closures, such as that at Leigh Creek. In addition, swimming infrastructure has not kept pace with areas of housing growth.

I am aware of current gaps in public swimming pool availability in the following areas:

- Ceduna
- Henley Beach/Outer Harbor
- Leigh Creek
- Lower Yorke Peninsula
- Roxby Downs
- Stirling/Crafers.

Community access to school facilities

Schools are often the most significant pieces of social infrastructure in a local community, particularly for sport, so it makes sense for this space to be utilised effectively by those who live close by.

There is significant literature and evidence outlining the economic, health and participation benefits to communities who have access to school infrastructure. Supported in principle by the Department for Education, school leaders have been at the forefront of responding to and managing requests for use, but these arrangements have largely been ad hoc, relational, and reactive.

Many operational barriers at the school level are cited as the major reason as to why these community assets are not available outside of school hours. Management and

usage agreements could be established in partnership with local councils, sports clubs and community organisations. The reality of schools as community hubs could then be realised.

Access to high quality internet and Wi-Fi connections, and charging facilities

Connection is everything

Access to fast and reliable phone coverage, internet and wireless connectivity is vital to almost every part of the lives of children and young people at home, at school, in the workplace, and everywhere they go. They have grown up in a world where their ability to maintain relationships, to be engaged in their education and communities, to access services, information, and future study or employment opportunities, depends largely on their digital access.

Based on my extensive consultation with young people, I have found that they don't make a hard and fast distinction between what bits of their lives are online and offline. They describe technology as a 'part of life now'; the way they connect to the people and places they care about, the services they need, and their worlds of learning, earning, and play. Online is simply another place where they exist – it is part of their everyday life.

Digital access is increasingly seen as an 'essential' utility that we rely upon with the same predictability as electricity, clean water, and effective sewage systems. Public health policy in many jurisdictions nationally and globally, including in South Australia, is increasingly recognising digital inclusion as a social determinant of health. As such, digital access is a means of realising fundamental rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including the rights of all children to a quality education (Articles 28 and 29) healthcare (Article 24), information (Article 13), play (Article 31) and participation in decisions that affect their lives (Article 12). It is also central to safety, citizenship and social and economic participation in work, education, and the community.

Unreliable connectivity

Children and young people have complained to me that their digital access is unreliable and described having internet connections that 'can disconnect regularly'. Although they may not speak about the 'Internet' per se, they highlight their frustration at the barriers and negative effects of not being able to fully participate online.

Many young South Australians rely on free public Wi-Fi in public shopping centres, fast food outlets, and libraries to complete homework and important 'life admin' tasks. These tasks include organising transport, accessing online banking, taking or swapping shifts at work, and booking health or other appointments. Children and young people describe using public Wi-Fi 'wherever I can'.

Access to high-quality free Wi-Fi and phone charging stations are seen as essential features of public spaces for young people. Even simple solutions, like Wi-Fi and charging facilities at bus, train and tram stops can make a real difference.

'Data dead zones' are a common concern, with young people regularly complaining about areas where there is no Wi-Fi access. While children and young people living in

rural and remote areas are particularly affected by this, there are also numerous ‘dead spots’ with poor mobile phone reception and Wi-Fi connection in metropolitan Adelaide.

Where public Wi-Fi is available, it’s often not fit for purpose; it’s unreliable, slow, and often has poor security, meaning connection to important services such as mobile banking apps is restricted.

Digital exclusion

Digital access and digital inclusion are not shared by all children and young people across South Australia. A wide divide exists between children and young people from different social, economic, and geographical backgrounds. This divide ranges from those who have no digital access, or partial or interrupted access, to those who have full access.

I have heard from children, families, and schools across South Australia, that basic access to technology is not a given for many. In addition to slow broadband in many areas of the State, there is poor access in remote and regional SA, with many families unable to afford internet access or digital devices.

Rates of access in SA are poor in comparison to other States.^{vii} Indigenous young people are particularly prone to digital exclusion, as are those who live in regional and remote areas.

A significant number of children and young people live without regular access to a device, data, or Wi-Fi with which to connect to the internet. This impacts the ability of the child or young person to do their homework, connect socially, access online services, or complete other ‘life admin’ tasks.

Many young people describe having digital access as being just as ‘important’ as having access to transport and electricity. The inability of some children to have access to digital technology in the same way other children do is increasingly seen as an issue of systemic discrimination.

During the Covid-19 pandemic in particular, young people reported that digital access was central to how they coped, accessed information, and stayed connected with others and their learning.^{viii} As their social outlets moved online, those without stable digital access were severely disadvantaged.

Young people who had limited or no digital access spoke about the difficulty of having to share an unstable internet connection with several others in a household, and the impact this had on their schooling. Some described being unable to complete tests or tasks at home, as well as being unable to access libraries, or other places they would usually go to access computers and Wi-Fi. Without access to critical digital infrastructure in these safe physical community spaces, many were unable to connect, receive information, and participate socially and economically over long periods.

Of the 253 young people who participated in my 2020 Devices, Data and Digital Life Survey^{ix}:

- 20% said they always feel unsafe without a phone – young females were more likely than young males to identify this as an issue;

- 15% said not having a stable internet connection was always a problem;
- 12% said the cost of connecting to the internet was always a problem;
- 8% said not having enough data for homework was always an issue;
- 7% said access to Wi-Fi at home was always a problem;
- 5% said not having enough data to get shifts for work was always an issue.

Those who have no, limited, or low-quality digital access, face additional barriers that can negatively impact their education and other aspects of their lives. A lack of reliable digital access has further impacted on disadvantaged young people as poor digital literacy development can create a disparity in employability skills later in life, particularly when being compared to peers who have had digital access for the whole or most of their lives.

Starting in early childhood, digital devices are becoming embedded into learning and school. In some cases, the expectation is that even children under five will know how to interact with smart whiteboards, large touch screens, or iPad type devices that log into a digital roll or record the completion of a learning outcome. For children who have had no access, and who have not acquired these skills at home, they may be unable to immediately engage with the content, as they must first learn how to use the device. If school is the only place they get to practice their digital skills, this can impact on their enjoyment and learning from an early age, as they struggle to keep up with their peers.

As children progress through school, strong connectivity is even more essential. Without adequate access, young people report that it is nearly impossible to complete homework, fully participate in shared projects, communicate with teachers and peers via email, or do any compulsory operating system updates. Time spent resolving these issues of access takes time away from engaging in education, leaving some young people further behind their peers.

Some students described how 'lunchtime classes with technology' contributed to their feelings of 'being punished for being poor' rather than being adequately supported.

Children and young people describe the impact of digital exclusion on their school experience as being 'much broader than just on their learning'. They see it as a social issue; one that impacts the way they relate to their peers, how they feel about themselves, and how they connect to their school. The impacts of limited access to the internet also extend beyond a student's time at school. Children and young people's participation in their community, their social lives, and their pursuit of future work or study opportunities, largely depends on the degree of digital access they have.

Children and young people link digital access to their feelings of preparedness for the future, reporting that a young person with no access to devices or data would be least likely to feel 'up to date with schoolwork', 'confident applying for jobs' or 'connected to others'. They also recognise that limited digital access can be a barrier to accessing community services or activities that are key to positive health and wellbeing, both mental and physical.

Children and young people report that barriers to digital access can make it difficult to find information and services, apply for jobs, and meet entry-level job requirements that

relate to knowledge and skills of software and devices. This can really hamper their ability to 'get ahead' and to feel confident about their future.

In most areas of work, young people are expected to have a smartphone and reasonable access. For example, in entry level jobs in hospitality and retail, young people are expected to use technology to manage rostering or finding people to cover or swap shifts, and to receive and respond to compulsory training requirements.

Living in an area with no or poor reception, can really dim down a child or young person's connection to community, and the people they care about. Without a reliable connection, children and young people describe feeling 'lost' and 'unsafe'. They may be 'caught out' without money if they cannot access online banking to transfer money from their savings to their spending account. They may not be able to plan their public transport journey without access to bus timetables, or the option to recharge a MetroCard online.

Well connected places where you can walk or cycle to school, university, work and activities, or safely, easily and cheaply get direct public transport

Fit for purpose public transport infrastructure

If South Australia is to be fit for economic and social growth, it must provide good, regular, safe public transport links for all. Transport is one of the top five issues young people across the State have raised with me repeatedly. Almost 1 in 5 of all Adelaide Metro patrons are primary or secondary students.^x

The major challenges young people identify as barriers to having their transport needs met are cost, accessibility and safety.^{xi} Transport is central to how young people experience their community and means that these barriers impact their capacity to participate fully in almost every aspect of their lives.

There are strong links between children and young people's mobility and their overall social inclusion and wellbeing. Children and young people are among the most transport disadvantaged members of their community. Without alternative modes of transport (such as having a driver's license or parents, friends, and caregivers to give them a lift), children and young people can become socially excluded or isolated.

I frequently hear that children and young people in the northern and southern suburbs, as well as those further away, that they never visit Adelaide because neither their parents nor schools can afford to take them.

Transport disadvantage has a demonstrable impact on school attendance, gaining and maintaining employment, as well as on a child or young person's capacity to make and maintain their social connections. This is further exacerbated for those who have a disability, low socio-economic status or geographical remoteness.

The provision of infrastructure is one of the tools the State Government has which it can use to improve the lot of those who are least well off and improve equity and fairness in the populace. By adopting public health and wellbeing as key principles in how infrastructure is planned and developed the government can ensure new areas of growth and the expansion of existing developments can be optimised.

Public transport routes in Greater Adelaide primarily travel along major arterial routes in a hub and spoke configuration, and some new developments lack roads that can carry public transport routes. Many young people have expressed that they need to travel against the grain, both within and between suburbs, often for relatively short distances. This means they may lose hours from their day taking two buses or a bus and a train to travel the three or four kilometres needed to get to uni, or to a part-time job that offers them crucial work hours after school or on weekends.

Young people describe how poor access to public transport limits their ability to access education, employment and social activities. Many young people said they regularly travel 1-2 hours each day to attend school, sport and work. Reliance on public transport that may not be regular, cheap or reliable can be a real barrier to seeking and keeping employment in regional areas in particular.

Walkability

We cannot expect children to play outside and run around if there is nowhere safe for them to go that they can get to without a car.

We know that some areas of Adelaide are considered to be entirely reliant on private car travel. The Global Observatory of Healthy and Sustainable Cities^{xiii} found that Adelaide 'does not appear to have transport planning policies incorporating health-focussed actions or air pollution policies related to transport or land use planning.' Only 54 per cent of residents have nearby access to public transport stops with regular services and no neighbourhoods in Adelaide have the population density levels recommended by the World Health Organisation to increase physical activity.^{xiii}

As a result, South Australian children and young people are some of the most obese and least active in the world. According to the 2021 South Australian Population Health Survey 12.6 per cent of children are obese.^{xiv} The Australian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend that children aged 5–17 years should do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intense physical activity every day^{xv} – in 2021, a quarter of children aged 5–17 years reported meeting this level.^{xvi}

Physical activity in children and young people is vital – childhood is the most sensitive period of human development in which to promote long-lasting health-enhancing behaviours. The benefits of regular exercise include better health and fitness, better mental wellbeing, improved physical literacy, and the long-term prevention of chronic disease.

Active travel to school is an easy way for kids to be physically active as part of their daily routine. However, poorly designed infrastructure, lack of safe footpaths and adequate cycle lanes, and road safety concerns are a barrier to walking and cycling in most neighbourhoods, including Adelaide itself.

Fear of road accidents means parents are reluctant to let their children outside by themselves – a look at their local area will often lead them to conclude that it is not safe for children to play, cycle or even walk there. In Australia, transport injuries are the most common cause of death and the second most common cause of injury resulting in hospital admission for children aged 0–14 years.^{xvii} Across SA, there were 218 road crashes in 2020 which resulted in a pedestrian casualty, of which 38 were under the age of 18.^{xviii}

The Australian Urban Observatory has provided walkability data for Adelaide's metropolitan suburbs.^{xix} The 'walkability' of a route is calculated based on the proximity of schools and other destinations; street/path connectivity; and dwelling density.^{xx} Planned growth areas like Hackham are deemed car-dependent, with Sellicks Beach having one of the worst walkability scores in Greater Adelaide, meaning it is entirely car dependent.

We also know that places where growth is proposed, like Goolwa and Victor Harbor, Murray Bridge, Gawler and the Inner North are extremely dependent on car transport.

Improve traffic and road safety around schools

It is essential that the State Infrastructure Strategy includes improvements to the walkability and safety of its neighbourhoods around schools and other educational institutions.

I recommend that the State Government coordinates its approach to improving traffic, road safety and infrastructure around schools by working with local government, school communities, children and young people, families and Governing Councils to understand local concerns and potential solutions to improve road safety.

In their postcards to me many children have reported that they currently do not feel safe when arriving and leaving schools due to the traffic at those times and they have solutions for what it would make it safer when arriving and leaving schools. They want cars to slow down, traffic crossings and safer footpaths and bike lanes. Governing Councils have also raised this as an issue requiring an urgent inter-agency response.

I recommend that the State Infrastructure Strategy includes the provision of safe footpaths, cycle paths and crossings within the immediate area of all schools, shops, sports facilities and parks, with good street lighting, effective signage, and speed restrictions in line with those recommended by the World Health Organisation.^{xxi}

Greener, climate resilient environments

South Australian children and young people consistently raise concerns about climate change in the context of conversations about poverty, health, education and transport.^{xxii} This highlights the significant impacts of climate change on children and young people's daily lives, the people, places and animals they care about, and how they feel about the future.

Children and young people are deeply protective of their ability to be outdoors and want more parks and recreational facilities that take advantage of South Australian biodiversity.

Children and young people recognise the impact of climate change and pollution on their local community. They recognise the importance of trees and green spaces to improve the appeal of their local area and address air quality issues and heat stress. They have many ideas on how to address climate and environmental challenges, and they want the tools to empower them to do so themselves.

Improving skills outcomes

We know that fewer young people are taking a linear journey from education and training into work than previous generations, and the time it takes to get from school to work is

increasing. However, many young people tell me this is contrary to the pressure they feel at school when subject selection from year 10 is portrayed as a major life decision and one they are increasingly concerned about.^{xxiii} This decision is called for at a time when most young people are still exploring their own interests and skills.

Despite a growth in the variety of jobs available, many young people are still not aware of the options available or what this means for them. On a personal level this can affect engagement and aspiration and young people feel inadequately prepared for the job market. They feel the current education system is letting them down. They want more practical information to be made available to them about current career and work options, and about how to get the jobs they want.

Many people support children and young people in their transition from school, including parents, guardians, and educators. However, this is becoming more difficult as many of these traditional supports don't understand what opportunities exist and how best to prepare for them.

My conversations with those involved in preparing young people for work highlight concerns that preparing young people for life after school continues to operate largely in isolation and in a self-interested way that depends on the individual contacts of students, their families and their teachers, which builds on existing inequities. What is needed is a systemic approach that builds collaboration and shared responsibility for developing adaptable future workforces across the State and its diverse communities, this is the only way to achieve the productivity and innovation gains central to competitiveness in an increasingly globalised world and address the brain drain.

Feedback from young people involves disrupting the traditional 'Pathways' mentality in favour of better approaches that are more flexible and allow young people to properly explore. A more favourable approach would incorporate Ecosystems thinking which recognises the shared interest that multiple stakeholders have in children and young people's schooling outcomes and how each entity can better improve this journey and take greater responsibility for the outcomes that it produces.

The development of future work skills should be at the core of preparing our young people for their future, and educators, government, employers, and the community all have a role. It is essential that the perspectives of young people are included in designing creative solutions that engage young people to be future work ready and ready to remain in South Australia.

Accessing information

Children and young people want to be able to find and access practical and up to date information easily, and to be able to explore this in detail both online and offline. Many young people talk about wanting to have the ability to talk through things with an adult. Whether that was a career advisor if they are exploring their interests, or an industry professional if they wanted to hear more about a job or field.

There are a number of websites available to young people that allow them to explore jobs and careers broadly as well as find how they fit with their interests. However, many of

these sites seriously lack an engaging user experience and a connection to their audience. There is limited capability to access personalised results or, when narrowing down interests, sites tend to force the user to make binary choices that are not reflective of the real world.

Poor linkages and other design issues also mean that rather than being able to ‘click through’ and ‘explore’ a job and how it relates to an interest, the information is dispersed. Often this includes means the separation of the study, skills or experience that typical work in that field requires along with information about job security, course information and where jobs are located.

Not all children and young people have the same experience of career guidance in school. While some schools have career nights, guest speakers or careers advisors who have the time to assist them, there is a significant variance between schools and the information children and young people receive.

Strengthening the VET narrative

I strongly support the promotion of VET as a valued and skilled pathway. In recent years the obsession with ATAR scores has led to students who complete VET studies feeling that their efforts and achievements are undervalued. I would welcome repositioning VET within secondary schools to combat the current focus on university education as the only pathway of choice, which results in students making inappropriate career choices, encourages skills gaps, and can create high university drop-out rates.

The presentation of vocational pathways as a credible option requires early and continual discussion of careers for children and young people throughout their education. We know that children and young people’s career aspirations are shaped early by the reality they experience in the world around them. The proposal that stakeholders should be involved in improving outcomes is essential. Meaningful, targeted and ongoing consultation and engagement with trainees, apprentices and potential learners will ensure that the systems and offerings are appropriate to the needs of students and employers.

Inclusive access

Inclusive access is vital to the success of any skills program. In addition to meeting the diverse physical and neurological needs of young people, this must include consideration of cost and the barriers faced by young people from poorer, Indigenous and more regional backgrounds. Additional support must be provided to those who need it, including consideration of free training, free transport, and digital access for those who cannot afford the technology or internet connection they require to complete their training.

Young people in regional South Australia have repeatedly raised concerns about their lack of access to training opportunities, with even those in Adelaide’s outer suburbs are faced by prohibitive travel costs and journey times.

Migrant and refugee young people experience a range of barriers to training which must be addressed, including language and communication, cost and cultural ‘clash’.

Work readiness

Employers continually complain that young people are not work ready and young people do not feel that they are learning skills in school that are relevant to their future.

Young people are aware of the importance of learning the skills required for life and for the workforce but there are few opportunities for most students to access meaningful work experience, voluntary work or internship opportunities.

Recognition of the need for supplementary human skills development alongside more specific training is essential and is something young people are eager to gain. They need to be better equipped with the 'soft' and enterprise skills they will need to be work ready.

Work experience and volunteer work can offer valuable ways to provide insight into the reality of work. Formal contact with the world of work can also help demystify and debunk commonly held misconceptions about particular industries, including gender stereotypes. However, businesses and NGOs are often reluctant to offer young people work or voluntary experience. Building trust with industry and business is important to ensure young people are provided with the opportunities to be adequately prepared for the current and future demands of industry and for employers to have confidence in the training and preparedness of young people to meet future challenges.

In a survey I undertook of small businesses throughout metropolitan Adelaide I found that while most businesses consider employing young people just over half felt that young people were 'ready' or 'sometimes ready' for work. This was rarely attributed to technical skills but to softer skills such as financial literacy, communication, and confidence in tackling problems.

Engagement with Children and Young People

Many of the people who are currently being consulted about the State Infrastructure Strategy will not be in power and may not even be alive in 20 years' time. It is essential that children and young people from across South Australia are engaged effectively, so that they can provide their unique insights both as young people today and as future adult populations.

It is important to hear firsthand from children and young people from a variety of backgrounds, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- Children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
- Those with caring responsibilities;
- LGBTQIA+ young people;
- Children and young people with a disability;
- Those living with chronic illness; and
- Children and young people living in relevant metropolitan and regional communities.

Understanding the nuances and complexity of young people's experiences provides insights into where Infrastructure SA and other agencies need to focus their coordinated efforts.

Our young people have unique perspectives on what makes a place tick. They provide lived insight into how to attract, train and retain young talent; how to be resilient, how to be clean and green; and how to ensure our actions are inclusive and visionary. Young people have developed views about both the benefits and negative aspects of growing up in different parts of the State. They know what they want, and they would like to be invited to participate in meaningful opportunities to share their ideas with decision makers and community leaders.

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ⁱⁱ Liveability Report for Adelaide, Australian Urban Observatory, 2020, https://auo.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AUO_Scorecard_Adelaide.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Menstruation Matters: The impact of menstruation on wellbeing, participation and school attendance, CCYP, March 2021, <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Menstruation-Matters.pdf>

^{iv} Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report 2023, https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/76824/National_Drowning_Report_2023.pdf

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^{vii} Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2022, <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/dashboard/National.aspx>

^{viii} Reflections on COVID-19, In their own words, South Australian young people reflect on the impact of the coronavirus on the world and their futures, CCYP, June 2020, <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Reflections-on-COVID-19-In-their-own-words-South-Australian-young-people-reflect-on-the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-on-their-world-and-their-futures.pdf>

^{ix} My Digital Life: Understanding the impact of digital poverty on children and young people, CCYP, August 2021, <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/My-Digital-Life-Understanding-the-impact-of-digital-poverty-on-children-and-young-people.pdf>

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^{xi} Safe and Sound: Views and experiences of young people on public transport, CCYP, June 2023, <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Safe-and-Sound-Report.pdf>

^{xii} Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators Report: Comparisons with 25 cities internationally: Adelaide, Australia, Global Observatory of Healthy & Sustainable Cities, 2022, https://rmit.figshare.com/articles/report/Adelaide_Australia_Healthy_and_Sustainable_City_Indicators_Report_Comparisons_with_25_cities_internationally/19614009

^{xiii} *ibid*

^{xiv} SA Health, 2021. South Australian Population Health Survey 2021 Annual Report – Children. Available at <https://www.wellbeing.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/SAPHS/SAPHS-2021-AnnualChildren-Report.pdf>.

^{xv} Department of Health. 2019. Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines and the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. Available at Physical activity and exercise guidelines for all Australians | Australian Government Department of Health

^{xvi} SA Health, 2021. South Australian Population Health Survey 2021 Annual Report – Children. Available at <https://www.wellbeing.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/SAPHS/SAPHS-2021-Annual-ChildrenReport.pdf>

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