

# COMMISSIONER'S REGIONAL WRAP UP

In 2017, I commenced as South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People. My role is to position the needs, interests and well-being of children and young people front and centre in policy, practice and services affecting them.

In fulfilling my role I am committed to being a Commissioner who:

- engages in two-way discussions with children and young people
- connects to children and young people in both metro and rural areas
- meets children and young people in their spaces and in their time and this includes at early learning centres, schools and community centres
- liaises with services and advocates alongside children and young people
- demonstrates respect and valuing of children through active involvement in all that I do.

## Mount Gambier

Over the next five years, I will visit regional communities across South Australia to ensure young regional voices inform and contribute to my work.

I will ensure that local decision makers and service providers receive my regional wrap-up as a record of some of the views and opinions of local children and young people.

I encourage community leaders to create opportunities to engage children and young people in ongoing dialogues as a tangible way of building community participation.

I kicked off my Listening tour in Mount Gambier on June 15th, 2017.

What brought me to Mount Gambier as my first stop was a letter written by the Youth Advisory Committee. The letter was a contribution to the consultation about what young people wanted in a Commissioner and sent to the Minister. I was given this letter upon commencement of my role and thought it would be appropriate to meet this group as a priority.

### What I did...

With the support of the Mount Gambier Council staff I was able to schedule this visit to coincide with the Limestone Coast Early Childhood Forum and attend the "Play Grows Brains" lecture as well as a breakfast meeting with the Mayor and Council executive. Here I was able to hear first-hand about the City of Mount Gambier's Charter for Children and how it is being used to drive new relationships with children and young people in the region.

### Who I saw

In addition to the sessions with children and young people I took the opportunity to meet with local services to hear their challenges including Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation, Australian Migrant Centre, ac.care and I addressed the Limestone Coast Early Childhood Forum.

However, it was the direct conversations with children and young people that were the highlight of my visit.

These conversations were made possible through the on-going relationships and programs of the following agencies:

- Uniting Communities
- Carers SA
- Acacia Kindergarten
- Mount Gambier North Primary School
- Tenison Woods College
- Burrandies
- ac.care



## Mount Gambier

### Where I went...

In small groups at the kindy, schools and library, Burrandies and Ruby's, children and young people were asked to share in words and pictures what is important to them, what they would change to make life better for children and young people in South Australia and what actions they think I should prioritise.

A number of sessions were held at the Mount Gambier Library. I was impressed by the high utilisation, the flexibility and the ownership in the space by children and young people. It seemed everyone loved the library and used it, and is a jewel in the Mount Gambier crown.

### What I was asked to share...

While the library was almost universally supported by children and young people in the community there was also a desire for a more youth specific venues to see, play and experience live music. Some young people were keen for Mount Gambier to bid for the triple j One Night Stand in 2018.

Many children and young people spoke about the importance of sport in their life but acknowledged that this wasn't always inclusive of all and that a diversity of expressive arts and other leisure pursuits were required and at an affordable price.

Cost of living pressures was spoken about by a number of primary school students with many comments on the "things I would change" question relating to cheaper food, cheaper medication, more affordable electricity and

water bills, free wifi to save internet costs, cheaper clothes.

For the older age group, they expressed concerns about changes to the P plate rules, in particular, the impact on safety due to the inability of designated drivers to take passengers.

Housing and homelessness issues in the local area featured. A number of young people, across all settings, spoke about the issue but felt because it is not as visible as in the city it was not at the forefront of the communities mind.

Many of the young people I listened to felt that as a group they were "talked down" and portrayed as having everything given to them on a silver platter and only interested in themselves. They expressed frustration with this and said they are in fact very hard working; they think about equality and are genuinely concerned for the future.



South Australia's first commissioner for children and young people, Helen Connolly, has kicked off her "listening tour" in Mount Gambier, speaking with students through agencies.

### What we heard?

“I would like to see less bullying in Australia and more fairness”