



# How are they faring?

South Australia's 2020 Report Card  
for children and young people

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Parliament of South Australia for passing the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* to improve the outcomes of children and young people in South Australia.

Thank you to the Government of South Australia for gazetting South Australia's first Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People on 14 November 2019.

A special thanks to the community of South Australia, the children, young people, parents, carers and families represented by the data, figures and words in this report card.

The Child Development Council acknowledges the traditional custodians and recognise their cultural heritage, beliefs and ongoing relationship with the land, pays respect to Elders past and present and acknowledges children and young people who are current and future leaders.

## A note on COVID-19

The data in this report card reflect results and conditions prior to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. We acknowledge the unprecedented, additional challenges for many children, young people, families and communities at this time and that the effects may be long-lived. The pandemic may disproportionately compound disadvantage and economic hardship and many are likely to require additional support or services.

## Language and definitions

The term 'children and young people' is inclusive of all babies, children and young people from birth up to the age of 18 years.

The term 'Aboriginal' is used respectfully to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, adults, families and communities.

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# Executive summary



*How are they faring?* South Australia's 2020 Report Card is the first annual report of population-level outcomes for children and young people from birth to 18 years under [South Australia's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People](#). The report is a comprehensive, independent assessment of the lives and wellbeing of children and young people using the framework's five dimensions: health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship. Evidence-based, it brings together the best currently available data to provide a multi-dimensional overview of the state of children and young people in South Australia.

In 2019, there were 368,600 children and young people under 18 years estimated to be living in South Australia, representing 21% of the total population.

Most children and young people are faring well. However, the benefits of living in South Australia are not shared equally by all. Economic and social inequalities create outcome disparities, as does the

generational disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal children and young people. Existing social, built environment and transport barriers create disparities for children and young people with disability, while children and young people in out-of-home or secure care (detention) face serious challenges.

Most children and young people in South Australia are in good health. Most babies are born healthy and most children have a healthy early life. Most young people have health-promoting behaviours, consider themselves to be in good or excellent health and appear to be thriving physically. Areas of concern are the low birthweight of Aboriginal babies and higher Aboriginal infant mortality rates, the number of children and young people estimated to have an emotional, mental health or behavioural problem, increasing obesity rates and young people's alcohol and illicit drug use.

Most children and young people in South Australia live in safe housing and are safe from preventable injury, abuse and neglect, and crime. The most worrying trends related to the safety of children and young people are the number of notifications to the Child Abuse Report Line and the number of children and young people under 18 years admitted to, and in, out-of-home care.

Most children in South Australia have early experiences that enhance their ongoing development. Enrolment in preschool is high and most preschools offer high quality programs. Most children and young people feel connected to family, friends and culture and have a level of optimism about life. Most children and young people participate in cultural activities and organised activities including sport. Most report having friendships; however, 10% of children and young people do not have at least one close friend and many are experiencing bullying on a weekly basis.

Most children and young people in South Australia appear to be making good use of the available opportunities to obtain an education and transition successfully from preschool, primary school and high school to after school options. There are early indications of a positive trend in phonics at Year 1. There has been a favourable change in the proportion of South Australian students meeting national

minimum standards in reading and writing (Year 3) and reading, writing and numeracy (Year 5). However, South Australia continues to have lower rates in all reading, writing and numeracy when compared nationally. Since 2018 there has been a noticeable unfavourable change for Year 7 students, who are performing below the national rates in both literacy and numeracy.

South Australia has positive trends for young people's engagement in school, work, further education or training, and secondary school completion. Two areas of significant concern are the increasing number of developmentally vulnerable children starting school and school attendance rates.

Most young people in South Australia are gaining skills for independent living, active participation in their communities and civil engagement. Most (14-15 years) are literate and most (16-19 years) have a driver's licence. An increasing number of young people are volunteering. Worrying trends include a decline in the number of students developing proficiency in civics education, decreasing hours of paid employment for 17 year-olds and declining numbers of young people (18-19 years) enrolled to vote.

Importantly, while children and young people are faring well, compared with children and young people nationally, young South Australians under 18 years have:

- higher rates of disability
- higher rates of out-of-home care
- higher estimates of mental health problems
- higher rates of binge drinking
- lower educational achievement at Year 3 and Year 5 levels
- higher proportions (and increasing) of young children with one or more developmental vulnerabilities at school entry.

Realising better outcomes for children and young people in South Australia requires keeping all children and young people safe from harm, ensuring all are cared for in ways that allow them to reach their potential, improving their physical, mental and emotional health, improving their participation in sporting, creative, cultural and other recreational activities and

ensuring that they have opportunities and are well prepared to be active and engaged citizens.

To safeguard the trajectories of all children and young people, **priorities for collective action in 2020-21** are:

1. the number of children entering the education system with unidentified disabilities and developmental delays
2. the increasing obesity rates of children and young people
3. the poorer outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people
4. the mental health concerns of children and young people, particularly those from more disadvantaged socioeconomic areas
5. children and young people with 'dual status', that is, children and young people involved in both the child protection and the youth justice systems
6. the economic, social and health impacts of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people.



# Introduction



The world's most ratified human rights instrument, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, is evidence of broad consensus that all children and young people deserve to be loved and cared for, to be healthy and safe, and included and valued as citizens from birth.

In recognition of the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people, the Parliament of South Australia passed the [Children and Young People \(Oversight and Advocacy Bodies\) Act 2016](#) (Act), establishing four oversight and advocacy bodies for children and young people from birth to 18 years.<sup>i</sup>

The Child Development Council (Council) was set up under Part 6 of the Act to develop and maintain an [Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People](#) (framework) to improve the outcomes of South Australia's youngest citizens in five

key dimensions: health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship. The framework is organised around a Charter for Children and Young People (Charter) with 20 essential conditions for all young South Australians to thrive.

The framework employs population-based indicators and measures that enable longitudinal tracking and reporting of trends and outcomes in the five dimensions. [Data collection sources and reporting information are shown in Annex 1, a snapshot of trends for framework measures is shown in Annex 2 and data gaps are shown in Annex 3.]

Reporting of data against the indicators and measures provides all levels of government and service providers with evidence for informed decisions about policy and collaborative action.

<sup>i</sup> The entities are the Child Development Council, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Guardian for Children and Young People and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee. In 2018, the incoming Government of South Australia also fulfilled an election commitment by establishing a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

# South Australia's children and young people at a glance

## All children and young people



In 2019, there were 368,600 children and young people under 18 years estimated to be living in South Australia.

In 2019, children and young people under 18 years made up 21% of South Australia's total population; slightly more than half were male (51.3%) and 48.7% were female.

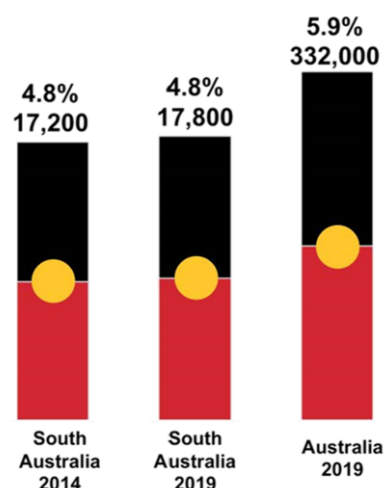
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3101.0 Australian Demographic Statistics, Sep 2019

## Aboriginal children and young people

In 2019, there were 17,800 Aboriginal children and young people estimated to be living in South Australia, making up 4.8% of all children and young people birth to 18 years. In 2017, a total of 1,028 births had one or both parents registered as being or identifying as Aboriginal, representing at least 5% of 19,485 births in South Australia in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

Nationally, Aboriginal children and young people comprised 5.9% of all children and young people in Australia in 2019 under 18 years.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3238.0 Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006 to 2031



## Age group



In 2019, 120,600 (32.7%) children in South Australia were under six years of age, 127,300 (34.5%) were six to 11 years old, and 120,700 (32.8%) young people were aged 12 to 17 years.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3101.0 Australian Demographic Statistics, Sep 2019

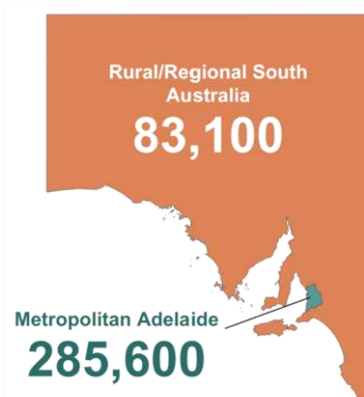


## Location

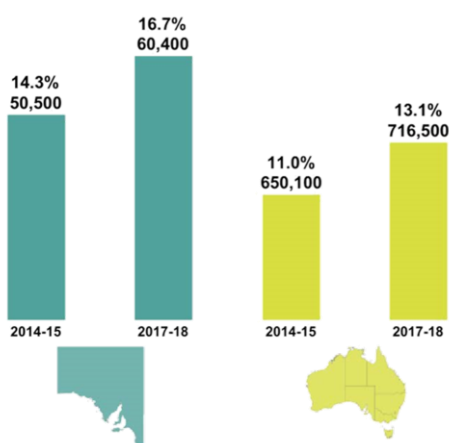
In 2019, 77.4% of children and young people in South Australia were living in the Adelaide metropolitan area and less than one quarter (22.5%) were living in rural and regional areas of the state.

The local government areas with the highest proportions of children and young people under 18 years were Roxby Downs (28.4%), Playford (27.3%) and Light (25.4%). The smallest proportions were in Adelaide (9.8%), Robe (15.6%) and Victor Harbor (16.1%).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3235.0 Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia 2018



## Disability



In 2017-18, there were 60,400 children and young people with disability (birth to 18 years) in South Australia.

Children and young people with disability made up 16.7% of all children and young people in South Australia in 2017-18.

Nationally, children and young people with disability made up 13.1% of all children and young people in Australia in 2017-18.

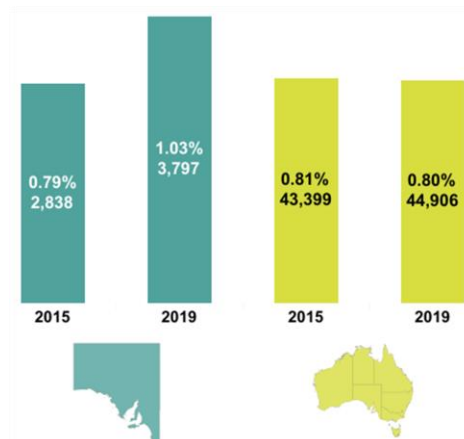
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 4364.0 National Health Survey, 2017-18

## In out-of-home care

At 30 June 2019, there were 3,797 children and young people under 18 years in out-of-home care in South Australia (1.0% compared with 0.8% nationally).

During the previous 12 months, 4,309 children and young people had been in out-of-home care at some time in South Australia.

Source: AIHW Child Protection data collection 2018-19



## Socioeconomic level (IRSD)



In 2018, 25.4% of children and young people under 18 years were estimated to be living in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances in South Australia, compared with 18.5% nationally.

More than 6 in 10 (64.2%) were estimated to be living in the middle quintiles, compared with 60.8% nationally.

In 2018, 10.4% were estimated to be living in the least disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances, compared with 20.6% nationally.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3235.0 Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia 2018 and Australian Bureau of Statistics 2033.0 Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia

## Country of birth

In 2016, more than 9 in 10 (90.6%) children and young people under 18 years living in South Australia had been born in Australia.

Of children and young people born overseas and living in South Australia most came from England, India, China (excluding SARs and Taiwan), Philippines and New Zealand.

Based on 2016 data from Dataset: Estimated resident population, Country of birth, State/territory, Age and sex – as at 30 June 1996 to 2016, Census years

	Birth to 17 years	
	Number	Percent
<b>Australia</b>	<b>332,266</b>	<b>90.6%</b>
England	4,928	1.3%
India	4,086	1.1%
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	2,572	0.7%
Philippines	1,894	0.5%
New Zealand	1,212	0.3%
Afghanistan	1,094	0.3%
Pakistan	1,066	0.3%
South Africa	1,056	0.3%
Malaysia	906	0.2%
Other	15,828	4.3%
<b>All overseas born</b>	<b>34,642</b>	<b>9.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>366,908</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Dimension 1: Health



Most children and young people in South Australia are in good health.

### **Early life**

Most babies are born healthy and most children appear to have a healthy early life. Positive trends supporting the good health of babies include a reduction in the proportion of pregnant mothers smoking in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy; a reduction in the proportion of women aged under 20 years when giving birth; and an increase in the proportion of women attending a first antenatal visit in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

Immunisation rates are generally high and compare well with national data. The proportion of children fully immunised at 12 months increased from 90% in 2014 to 95% in 2019, slightly higher than the national rate of 94%. For five-year-olds, the proportion increased from 91% in 2014 to 95% in 2017, similar to the proportion nationally, also 95%. In March 2017 three additional vaccines were included in the

definition of 'fully immunised' for the 24- to 27-month cohort and a rise is therefore expected in the rate of fully immunised two-year-olds as the change in the immunisation schedule becomes routine. Legislation underpinning a 'No Jab No Play' policy was passed by the Parliament of South Australia in late April 2020; this is also anticipated to boost vaccination rates and offer greater protection for children who are vulnerable to vaccine preventable disease or others in the community who are too young or too unwell to be vaccinated.

As health status in early life is correlated with health outcomes much later in life, for example, the correlation between birthweight and cardiovascular health in mid-years, these positive early life trends are very encouraging. An area of serious concern, however, is the early health of Aboriginal infants. Specific concerns are that Aboriginal babies experience more low body-weight births, for example, one in six (16%) babies born to Aboriginal

mothers in 2017 were of low birthweight (higher than the national rate of 12.5%), and that Aboriginal mothers tend to be younger, more likely to smoke and seek antenatal care later in pregnancy. The infant mortality rate for Aboriginal infants is 3.8 per 1,000 live births, which is lower than the national rate for Aboriginal live births (at 5.8 per 1,000), but higher than the rate for all live births in South Australia (3.2 per 1,000).<sup>ii</sup>

Among current initiatives addressing these challenges is the collaborative Aboriginal Communities and Families Health Research Alliance (ACRA) due to report from 2020 on the Aboriginal Families Study and the Aboriginal Families and Baby Bundles (ABFABB) program, which aims to improve, amongst other things, children's health, wellbeing, healthy weight and nutrition during pregnancy and the first 12 months of a baby's life. [\*Realising Potential Creating together 2026\*](#), the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) strategic plan 2020-2026,<sup>2</sup> includes priorities to improve the health and wellbeing of families and provide leading healthcare for women, babies, children and young people. A stated priority is to make meaningful gains in Aboriginal health. An Aboriginal Health Strategy and Plan is being implemented with the aim of having positive and

measurable impacts and improved access to culturally safe and respectful services.

In view of the importance of the first 1,000 days for children's health, universal developmental milestone screening of 2 to 4-year-olds in South Australia would provide further evidence of the health of young children and early identification of any health and development challenges they may be facing.

### ***Health promoting behaviours and wellness***

A majority of children and young people in South Australia have health-promoting behaviours and consider themselves to be in good or excellent health; however, just over one-fifth (21%) are estimated to have an emotional, mental health or behavioural problem. Children and young people from rural and regional South Australia have a higher rate of emotional, mental health or behavioural problems. Regional children and young people report that, at times, they provide informal support to peers and feel conflicted about whether to inform someone in authority that a friend may be struggling. They may also be in need of support themselves and would like help to deal with both situations.<sup>3</sup> No trend data on children and young people's mental health are currently available.

<sup>ii</sup> A rate of 3.8 per 1,000 live births relates to 4-6 infant deaths per year. An increase or decrease of one death in a year would make a significant change to the figures.

While there has been a steady and consistent decline in rates of tobacco use and illicit drug use over the last 20 years, the current rates of 10% (smoking tobacco) and 14% (taking illicit drugs) require attention as they represent behaviours that are potentially very detrimental to health outcomes. Similarly, that more young South Australians (57%) have engaged at some time in potentially unsafe or binge-level alcohol drinking behaviour (compared with 44% nationally) is of concern.<sup>iii</sup>

Social determinants and health behaviours in childhood and teenage years set the trajectory for life-course health outcomes, such as childhood obesity and later life Type2 diabetes. It is very encouraging that most young South Australians appear to be thriving physically. They have comparatively low rates of tooth decay; and a majority appear to be in a healthy weight range. Of concern is that, although more children and young people (2-17 years) are meeting the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines for fruit consumption (up from 67% in 2014-15 to 71% in 2017-18), there has been a decline in the proportion meeting the NHMRC guidelines

for vegetable consumption (down from 8% in 2014-15 to 4% in 2017-18). Nutrition Australia estimated that just 5% of 2-6 year olds in Australia eat adequate amounts of vegetables.<sup>4</sup> Of particular concern is that 29% of 2-17 year olds in South Australia are not meeting either the fruit or vegetable consumption guidelines (higher than the national proportion of 27%).

The proportions of children and young people reported as being either under- or overweight have not changed over the past decade. Between 2011-12 and 2017-18, the proportion of underweight children and young people (2-17 years) was 6% and the proportion of overweight 2-17 year-olds was 19%. Most worrying is that obesity rates are increasing. The proportion of children and young people being reported as obese increased from 6% in 2011-12 to 8% in 2017-18, similar to the national rate (also 8%).

Comparable health data are not always readily available for Aboriginal children and young people, particularly for health-promoting behaviours; however, where data are available, the outcome measures are mostly less favourable.

<sup>iii</sup> 'In Australia, alcohol advertising and audience viewing data were purchased for all football, cricket, and rugby league TV programmes for 2012, with a cumulative audience of 26.9 million children and adolescents, and 32 million young adults. Results showed that children and adolescents were exposed 51 million times to alcohol adverts, with 47% of this exposure occurring during the daytime.'



## Dimension 2: Safety



Most children and young people in South Australia live in safe housing and are safe from preventable injury, abuse, neglect and crime. The most worrying trends related to the safety of children and young people are the number of notifications to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) and the number of children and young people under 18 years admitted to, and in, out-of-home care. Also of concern, despite a positive trend, is that more than half of South Australian 15-19 year olds feel concerned about family violence, while one fifth of birth-14 year olds live in households experiencing financial hardship.

### **Safe housing**

The proportion of young people (15-19 years) who reported feeling some level of concern, that is, either 'slightly, somewhat, very or extremely concerned' about family conflict reduced from 63% in 2014 to 55% in 2019, similar to a decline nationally from 59% in 2014 to 55% in 2019. Despite this reduction, that almost one fifth (17%) of young South Australians (15-19 years) reported feeling 'extremely

or very concerned' about family conflict is of significant concern. In 2019, the proportion of children and young people (15-19 years) not feeling 'at all concerned' about family conflict was 45%.

Housing costs are usually the largest and least flexible item in a family budget. High housing costs can adversely affect child wellbeing through the experience of material hardship and associated impacts on parental wellbeing, family stress and the quality, size and type of housing that a family can afford. Households experiencing financial stress include those that spend more than 30% of their income on housing. In 2019, South Australian households in the lowest socioeconomic areas spent on average 28% of their income on housing while those in the highest socioeconomic areas spent only 13%. The proportion of children and young people (birth to 14 years) living in households experiencing financial hardship reduced slightly from 24% in 2011 to 21% in 2016.

Australia-wide, 19,400 (0.4%) children and young people (birth to 14 years) were homeless on Census night in 2016.<sup>5</sup> The first report by the SA Housing and Homelessness Taskforce in June 2019 identified children and young people as a specific group impacted by homelessness.<sup>6</sup>

Mission Australia reported that 16% of young people (15-19 years) experienced homelessness in South Australia. This included those experiencing a time with no fixed address, living in a refuge, living in transitional housing and/or 'couch surfing'<sup>7</sup> but did not include those sharing overcrowded accommodation with others or temporarily staying with friends or relatives, suggesting homelessness may be higher.

Domestic and family violence, poverty and a lack of affordable and suitable accommodation are resulting in a disproportionate increase in the number of homeless families. In 2017–18, across Australia, more than 60 per cent of those seeking support from specialist homelessness services were in a family living arrangement, with children in homeless families accounting for one of the largest groups experiencing homelessness.<sup>8 9 10 11</sup>

### ***Abuse, neglect and crime***

The number of arrests involving young people (10-17 years) reduced in South Australia from 3,739 in 2012 to 2,627 in 2016 (which equates to 235 and 165 per 10,000 population respectively).

In 2018-19, the rate of children and young people in secure care (detention) in South Australia was 17.3 per 10,000 population, slightly lower than the national rate of 18.8. The *Training Centre Visitor's Annual Report 2018-19* reported 608 admissions involving 299 children and young people to the Adelaide Youth Training Centre (AYTC) in that year. Of these 299 children and young people:

- each resident was detained twice on average
- 50.5% were Aboriginal
- 31.1% were children and young people under guardianship, primarily from residential care
- 19.3% were females
- 64 admissions were for children aged 10-12 years.<sup>12</sup>

A report by South Australia's Training Centre Visitor (TCV)/Guardian for Children and Young People (GCYP) in November 2019, raised awareness of 'dual status' children and young people who are involved in both the child protection and youth justice systems. The report noted

'poor provision and analysis of relevant data' and 'only a partial appreciation of the extent to which South Australian children and young people involved in the youth justice system also have a child protection background or current experience.'<sup>13</sup>

In 2018-19, the number of Aboriginal 10-17 year-olds in secure care (detention) in South Australia declined to its lowest rate since 2014-15.<sup>14</sup> However, the rate for non-Aboriginal children and young people declined even further and Aboriginal children and young people remain 32 times more likely to be in detention than non-Aboriginal children and young people.<sup>iv 15 16</sup> In April 2019, the Department for Human Services Youth Justice Assessment and Intervention Service conducted an assessment process with children and young people in secure care (detention) for the (forthcoming) AYTC Screening Project. This process found that from a sample of children and young people in secure care (detention), approximately nine out of 10 of the AYTC population had disability-related needs, including speech and intellectual impairments.<sup>17</sup>

In recent years, the number of CARL notifications has continued to climb at a concerning rate, with over 78,000 notifications made in 2018-19.<sup>18</sup> A total of

4,435 babies (12 months old or younger) and 4,823 children at 5 years were notified to the child protection system in 2018-19. Not all notifications lead to substantiation; however, research has shown that notification may be associated with poorer development, especially for children who are notified prior to 12 months of age. Notification may be an indicator that a child is not receiving the support required for healthy development. In 2018-19, an analysis by South Australia's Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee (CDSIRC) found that 28% of children and young people who died between 2005 and 2018, or their families, had experienced contact with the child protection system in the three years before dying.<sup>19</sup>

Where there are serious concerns about a child or young person being in imminent or immediate danger of serious harm or injury or chronic neglect, they may be placed in out-of-home care under a court order or an administrative authority. The number of children and young people under 18 years admitted to, and in, out of home care increased from 2,631 (30 June 2014) to 3,988 (30 June 2019) in South Australia.

A third of all children and young people in out-of-home care are Aboriginal. In 2018, 65% were placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>iv</sup> Amnesty International's *Raise the Age* report outlines community based initiatives to reduce the detention of Aboriginal children and young people.

To help deliver on its commitment to full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and to support better outcomes for all Aboriginal children and young people in care, the Department for Child Protection (DCP) has engaged a group of nationally recognised child protection experts. Recognising the critical importance of Aboriginal governance in all child protection decision making, the external Expert Aboriginal Child Protection Advisory Committee<sup>21</sup> has been established to guide DCP policy, practice and programs for Aboriginal children and young people. It met for the first time on 21 May 2020.

Although there has been negligible change in the number of children and young people (birth to 17 years) presenting to emergency departments with potentially preventable admissions, it is noted that children and young people are particularly vulnerable to certain types of injury, depending on their developmental stages. In 2014, the number of hospital admissions for preventable admissions was 5,642; in 2018 the number was 5,847, meaning that 13% of all admissions of children and young people under 18 years were potentially preventable in 2018. In South Australia, the number of deaths (birth to 14 years) attributed to

preventable/unintentional injury increased from 39 in 2010-12 to 48 in 2014-16. The rate per 100,000 population increased from 4.5 to 5.3 during the same time. An example of death attributed to preventable/unintentional injury is drowning. Between 2005 and 2018, 35 children and young people drowned in South Australia.<sup>22</sup>

Between 2005 and 2016, more children and young people in South Australia died in circumstances of greater social disadvantage. These deaths included natural causes, transport crashes, fire-related deaths, drowning and deliberate acts of others.<sup>23</sup> The CDSIRC documented a higher death rate for children and young people living in more remote regions of South Australia across all categories of death, for example, children and young people are three times more likely to die in a transport crash outside of the Adelaide metropolitan region.<sup>24</sup> When travelling in a motor vehicle, suitable, approved restraints, properly adjusted and fastened, reduce the risk of injury. In 2018-19, more than 600 police cautions or fines were issued to drivers for failing to safely restrain passengers under 16 years (unchanged from 2013-14).

## Dimension 3: Wellbeing



Most children in South Australia have early experiences that enhance their ongoing development. Enrolment in preschool is high and most preschools offer high quality programs. Most children and young people feel optimistic about life and report having friendships; however, 10% of children and young people (Year 4 to Year 10) feel they do not have at least one friend close enough to confide in. Almost 20% of Year 4 to Year 10 students in South Australia report experiencing bullying weekly.

### **Early experiences**

A quality learning environment early in life leads to better health, education and employment outcomes later in life. South Australia has 827 approved services offering centre-based care, including 410 preschools and kindergartens. Of those preschools and kindergartens that have been assessed and rated under the National Quality Framework (98%), no service requires significant improvement,

that is, there is no service in which there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children. Most services meet or exceed the National Quality Standards, and South Australia has, comparatively, the highest number of services with an excellent rating.<sup>25</sup> The proportion of all four-year-olds enrolled in a quality preschool program in the year before attending fulltime school remained relatively stable during the same time periods (91% in 2015 and 90% in 2018). The proportion of three-year-old Aboriginal children enrolled in a quality preschool program increased from 64% in 2015 to 80% in 2018.<sup>v</sup>

### **Relationships**

Children and young people need care and support from adults and healthy relationships help them to develop resilience, avoid risky behaviours and prepare for adulthood. School is a centrally important place for children and young

<sup>v</sup> The early years are critical for establishing self-esteem, resilience, healthy growth and capacity to learn. The federal government provides funding for Aboriginal children to attend pre-school from three years of age leading to improved access.



people and supportive relationships with teachers and other school staff are important. The South Australian Department for Education's Wellbeing and Engagement Collection data indicate that the proportion of Year 4 to Year 10 students feeling connected to adults at school increased from 56% in 2017 to 60% in 2019, including 64% for Aboriginal students and 62% for students with disability in 2019. Despite this increase, that approximately 40% of all Year 4 to Year 10 students do not feel connected to adults at school, is of significant concern. There is a concerning drop between primary and secondary school from 66% in Year 7 to 46% in Year 8 (2019). With the scheduled transition of Year 7 to secondary school in 2022, it is likely that a reduction will be observed in Year 7.

Making friends is a vital part of growing up and an essential part of social connection and emotional development. The proportion of Year 4 to Year 10 students with one or more friends in whom they can confide is relatively stable (89% in 2016 and 90% in 2019). However, that 10% of children and young people feel they do not have at least one friend close enough to confide in, is worrying.

### **Active lives**

The proportion of children and young people (Year 4 to Year 10 students) participating in organised sport or

recreational physical activities increased from 71% in 2016 to 75% in 2019. In 2019, the participation rate from the most *advantaged* areas was 79% compared with 66% from the most *disadvantaged* areas, which may be due to the cost of organised sport. While families welcomed the increase in the South Australian sports voucher to \$100 from January 2019, participation remains expensive as most organised sports in the metropolitan area have registration fees of approximately \$200, plus added costs of transport, uniforms, equipment and other related expenses.

The proportion of South Australian children and young people (Year 4 to Year 10 students) who reported feeling optimistic about life increased slightly from 84% in 2017 to 85% in 2019. The proportion reporting a medium to high level of satisfaction with life was 79% in both 2017 and 2019. This was higher than the proportion of students with disability who reported a medium to high satisfaction with life (75% in 2017 and 77% in 2019).

Evidence exists to support the social, physical, academic and emotional benefits of engaging in creative and cultural activities. Dance, for example, develops creative thinking skills and self-confidence to overcome challenges and teaches about music, rhythm and beat. Dance helps children to develop an understanding of

spatial relationships, learning to think with both sides of the brain and to build group and social skills such as cooperation and sharing. Art, creativity and dance are also used therapeutically to assist children and adults with addressing trauma.

Data for children and young people participating in cultural activities or attending cultural events are limited. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of cultural activities includes performing arts, singing or playing a musical instrument, dancing, writing, visual art activities and craft activities; the definition of cultural events includes attending libraries and archives, art galleries, museums, cinemas, live music concerts, theatre, dance and other performing arts. Not included are open events such as NAIDOC Week and reconciliation events where everyone is welcome. In 2017-18, the proportions of children and young people participating in cultural activities or attending cultural events were 67% and 70% respectively.

Arts groups, sporting clubs and community organisations can give children and young people experiences that benefit their social competence and participation in structured after-school activities can boost competence and self-esteem, school engagement and personal satisfaction. In South Australia, the proportion of children and young people (Year 4 to Year 10)

participating in organised activities outside of school hours was stable (91% in 2017 and in 2019).

In 2016, the City of Playford set out to understand the elements that allowed a young person to successfully transition to a positive social and economic outcome.

[\*Playford Youth a new story\*](#)<sup>26</sup> found that 10 years of age proved to be a pivotal age for change and there were three core catalysts for change:

- volunteering
- being engaged in sports and recreational activities
- being engaged with arts and culture.

### ***Satisfied lives***

In 2009-13 and in 2014-18, the rate of suicide for children and young people in South Australia was 2.0 per 100,000 population (compared with a national rate of 2.4). The CDSIRC reported in 2018 that 52 young people, including 10 Aboriginal young people, had died by suicide since 2005 (3% of all deaths of children and young people under 18 years during the same period) and that suicide was the third most common cause of death among 15-17 year-olds in South Australia. Using a life chart methodology, a review of 44 deaths identified sub-groups of commonly

occurring themes including children and young people who had:

- disengaged early from home, school, community and other forms of support
- experienced anxiety, depression and other emerging mental health issues in their teenage years
- no identifiable risk factors and had not been involved with support services.<sup>27</sup>

Across Australia, primary prevention is aimed at preventing the development of problems and promoting resilience and protective factors such as optimism and interconnectedness between people and communities. The [South Australian Suicide Prevention Plan 2017-2021](#) identifies that children and young people living in out-of-home care or who have experienced trauma, especially sexual abuse in childhood, are at greater risk of suicide.<sup>28</sup>

In 2018, 50% of Year 4 to Year 10 students in South Australia reported experiencing bullying monthly and nearly one in five (almost 20%) reported experiencing bullying weekly. Feedback from children and young people to South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) indicates that bullying may occur at school, home and public places or online, and online is not

distinguished from offline.<sup>29</sup> On 13 May 2020, the government released a state-wide Bullying Prevention strategy focused on strengthening responses to bullying both inside and outside the school gates, [Connected, a community approach to bullying prevention within the school gates and beyond](#).<sup>30</sup>

The national Mission Australia 2019 survey found that more than twice the proportion of young people with disability (15-19 years) reported having experienced bullying in the past twelve months than respondents without disability (43.4% compared with 19.3%). Young people with disability reported experiencing physical bullying (34.1%) or cyberbullying (42.0%) compared with 19.5% and 35.7% of respondents without disability.<sup>31</sup>

Across Australia, approximately one in five children and young people report experiencing cyberbullying in any year. The Office of the national eSafety Commissioner evaluates, interprets and disseminates information relating to online safety, including cyberbullying, sexting, gaming and image-based abuse in accordance with section 15 of the [Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015](#).<sup>32</sup>

## Dimension 4: Education



Most children and young people in South Australia appear to be making good use of the available opportunities to obtain an education and transition successfully from preschool, primary school and high school to after school options including higher education, apprenticeships or employment.<sup>vi 33</sup> There are early indications of a positive trend in phonics at Year 1. There has been a favourable change in the proportions of Year 3 and Year 5 students achieving in reading and writing (Year 3) and reading, writing and numeracy (Year 5). The trend is less favourable for Year 7 students, highlighting literacy and numeracy challenges in the upper end of primary school.

Other positive trends relate to young people's engagement in school, work, further education or training, and to secondary school completion. Specific areas of concern are the increasing number of young children with one or more

developmental vulnerabilities at school entry, and school attendance rates, especially for Aboriginal students.

### **Starting school**

Starting school is a major milestone in children's lives and a successful transition to school builds a strong foundation for future learning and development. Worryingly, the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable in one or more of five domains under the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) when they enter school increased from 23% in 2009 to 24% in 2018, whereas the national proportion decreased from 24% to 22%.

Early identification of, and support for, students with developmental delays and disability is crucial to children gaining the skills to thrive. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) early childhood early intervention (ECEI) approach aims to support children (birth to six years) with

<sup>vi</sup> The South Australian Department for Education strategic plan commits to growth for every child in every class in every school, that is, having the highest expectations for all students, especially Aboriginal and vulnerable learners.

developmental delay or disability and supports families/carers to help children develop the skills they need to take part in daily activities and achieve the best possible outcomes. The number of children (birth to six years) receiving ECEI supports through the NDIS decreased from 482 in June 2017 to 123 in September 2019; however, the number of children (birth to six years) with an approved NDIS plan before entering school increased from 3,533 in December 2016 to 3,825 in September 2019.

### **Learning**

Language and literacy skills are vital to success at school, providing the foundation for academic achievement. Positive early reading experiences are key contributors to literacy development and learning to decode words using phonics is an important element of early reading. The first comprehensive phonics test for South Australian Year 1 students was completed in 2018, with 43% of students meeting the achievement level of 28 words out of 40, increasing to 52% of students in 2019. While this positive trend is encouraging, of concern is the high percentage of students not meeting the achievement level.

The national minimum standards in reading, writing and numeracy describe some of the skills and understandings that students can generally demonstrate at particular years of schooling in specific

subject areas or domains without needing intervention and support to progress satisfactorily. Year 3 students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading and writing rose from 92% in 2014 to 95% in 2019, while the proportion achieving at or above the national minimum standard in numeracy was relatively stable (93% in 2014 and 94% in 2019).

The proportions of Year 5 students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy were 93%, 90% and 94% respectively in 2019 (up from 92%, 87% and 92% respectively in 2014). Nationally, the Year 3 and Year 5 rates for students meeting minimum standards is notably higher for reading, writing and numeracy than in South Australia.

The proportions of Year 7 students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading and in numeracy reduced from 95% in 2014 to 94% in 2019 (reading) and from 95% in 2014 to 93% in 2019 (numeracy). The proportion achieving at or above the national minimum standards in writing has not changed significantly (88% in 2014 and 89% in 2019). The results for Year 7 students are similar to the national rate; however, since 2018 there has been an unfavourable change with South Australian Year 7 students performing below the



national rates in both literacy and numeracy. With Year 7 students transitioning to secondary schools in 2022, the trend and rate will require close monitoring.

There remains a significant difference in results in all year levels between genders, with a lower proportion of young male students meeting national minimum standards, especially in reading and writing. There is a smaller difference in numeracy but a higher proportion of young female students in all year levels who meet national minimum standards.

### **Engagement**

Education is one of the most significant determining factors in the future outcomes of children and young people. Regular school attendance assists students to maximise their full potential and to actively participate and engage in learning. Each day of school attendance may have a positive effect on development and future success. The rate of attendance for students enrolled at school (Year 1 to Year 10 students) declined from 92% in 2014 to 91% in 2019.

Children and young people in out-of-home care enrolled in government schools in Semester 1, 2018 demonstrated a higher rate of absence than the overall government school population (13 and 9.5 per cent respectively). Students in

out-of-home care from non-English speaking backgrounds had an absence rate of 10.5 per cent, compared to that of students from non-English speaking backgrounds who were not in care, who had an absence rate of 7.1 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

Aboriginal students in out-of-home care were more likely to be attending school, for example, the absence rate for Aboriginal students in out-of-home care was 14.5% compared to 20.1% for Aboriginal students not in out-of-home care. The absence rate of 20.1% for Aboriginal children not in out-of-home care was more than double the overall rate, that is, on any school day, one out of every five Aboriginal students was not at school.

Children and young people with informal caring responsibilities are a largely hidden group whose educational outcomes may be compromised. In 2017, the Australian Institute of Family Studies noted that 'While caring is a normal part of many young people's lives, for a small group being a carer significantly and negatively impacts on their schooling and by extension, their life chances.'<sup>35</sup> In 2018, an estimated 4,600 children and young people under 15 years (2%) in South Australia were carers, providing assistance to someone with disability or over 65 years.<sup>36</sup> Carers SA Australia suggests that, on average, there are two to three young carers in every classroom<sup>37</sup> and the

CCYP's 2020 [Take Care Report](#) states:  
'South Australian support agencies estimate there are more than 14,800 young people under the age of 18 who are required to take on caring roles for members of their family.'<sup>38</sup>

Completing school with a Year 12 certificate or equivalent vocational qualification increases one's chances for further study or training, getting a job, earning more and being better prepared for future challenges. The proportion of young people (Year 12 students) completing a senior secondary certificate of education qualification or equivalent by 19 years was 83% in 2012 and 88% in 2017.<sup>vii</sup> A total of 393 Aboriginal students, including 159 from country South Australia, achieved a South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) qualification in 2019 (up from 364 in 2018).<sup>39</sup>

Being engaged in education, work or training is linked to employment, higher incomes and social inclusion. In South Australia, the proportion of young people (15-19 years) fully engaged in school, work or further education and training increased from 88% in 2014 to 90% in 2019.

A slightly different measure is used to calculate the proportion for young people

with disability 15-19 years. The proportion of young people with disability (15-19 years) who were *partially* as well as *fully* engaged in school, work or further education and training increased from 81% in 2011 to 85% in 2016. Although the reasons for the partial engagement of young people with disability are varied, it may be an indicator of under-employment. Other reasons may include suspension, exclusion or expulsion, schools limiting the amount of time that a student with disability can attend school due to an inability to support the student, lower expectations of students with disability to learn and work, and a lack of meaningful support for work experience and aspirations at school.

An inquiry into suspension, exclusion and expulsion processes in South Australian government schools commenced on 16 December 2019, with a report due to the Minister for Education by 16 September 2020. The report is expected to provide further information relevant to the rates of suspension, exclusion and expulsion of students with disability.

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<sup>vii</sup> Data includes students completing the SACE requirements and students receiving a Record of Achievement for completion of at least one full year (20 credit) Stage 2 SACE subject.

## Dimension 5: Citizenship



Children and young people want to be active citizens, participate in their communities and have their ideas and views considered.<sup>40</sup> For this to be possible, they need opportunities to participate and engage, accompanied by the knowledge, skills and confidence to live satisfied lives and make a positive difference to society – locally, nationally and globally.

### ***Independent life skills***

Most young South Australians (14-15 years) are literate and most (16-19 years) have a driver's licence. Encouraging trends include that the proportion of young people in Year 9 (14-15 years) literate in writing and in numeracy increased from 80% in 2014 to 82% in 2019 (writing) and from 93% in 2014 to 95% in 2019 (numeracy), while the proportion of young people in Year 9 (14-15 years) that are literate (reading) remained stable (90% in both 2014 and 2017). However, that 10% of 14-15 year olds are not literate in reading, is a major concern, as full and effective engagement

in civil society is likely to be very challenging for these young people.

### ***Community participation and civil engagement***

An encouraging trend is volunteering, particularly as the benefits of volunteering are both personal and social. The proportion of young people (15-19 years) participating in volunteering increased from 17% in 2006 to 21% in 2016. While appearing low, young people in this age group may also be working, participating in organised sport outside of school hours and/or studying. Additional determinants are that some volunteer programs have age policies that exclude young people under 18 years, and children and young people of compulsory school age cannot volunteer when they are required to attend school or at times that may impact their education, such as early in the morning or late at night.

Worrying trends include a decline in the number of students developing proficiency in civics education, decreasing hours of paid employment for 17 year olds and the decreasing proportion of young people (18-19 years) enrolled to vote.

The National Assessment Program Civics and Citizenship (NAPCC) provides students with opportunities to investigate political and legal systems, and to explore the nature of citizenship, diversity and identity in contemporary society. The proportion of Year 10 students achieving at or above a proficient standard in the Australian curriculum civics and citizenship assessment reduced from 43% in 2007 to 34% in 2016.

Employment is linked to attaining financial security, independence, skill development and social inclusion. The average hours of paid employment for young people at 17 years of age declined from 17 hours per week in 2008 to 13 hours in 2017. The average hours per week was higher for employed young people living in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic areas (16 hours per week in 2017).

The number of young people (15-19 years) commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship has nearly halved in the past seven years and more than 30% of young people (18-19 years) in South Australia are

not fully engaged in education, work or training, with the northern areas of the state having the poorest rates of engagement.

The Youth Affairs Council of South Australia's submission to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia highlights the impact of the continuing casualisation of the workforce, unemployment and underemployment on young people. The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, shutdowns and restrictions in industries that typically employ young people have had a compounding effect with jobs in the accommodation and food services industries reducing by 27.1% and an overall decline in employment for young people under 20 years of 14.5%.<sup>41</sup>

Responses from 745 young people (12 to 18 years) to the CCYP's survey about being 'future work ready' identified five topics that young people would like to know more about including: skills required for specific jobs, educational requirements for particular careers, career pathways and subject selection, variety of jobs available and future jobs that match personal interests. Young people also highlighted a number of challenges to accessing work experience and getting advice on future career aspirations.<sup>42</sup>

Voter participation is a means of measuring civic and political engagement. Public engagement in decision-making promotes government accountability and public trust in government institutions. The Australian Electoral Commission for Schools program provides resources and information about voting in schools, and has links to the Civics and Citizenship curriculum.<sup>43</sup> The proportion of young people (18-19 years) enrolled to vote reduced from 75% for the 2007 federal election to 62% for the 2019 federal election.

Young people who have difficulties getting or keeping a driver's licence may find it harder to compete for jobs, further their study or remain socially engaged especially in regional locations. The proportion of young people (16-19 years) with a driver's licence has not changed (76% in both 2014 and 2019).

For young people with intellectual and learning disability, lack of accessibility is an important influencer of participation and social inclusion.

The proportion of young people (17 years) satisfied with their level of independence declined from 94% in 2008 to 92% in 2011. Unless another data source is found, it may not be possible to report more recent data in terms of life satisfaction or independence.

Gaining the skills for independent living is important for young people who wish to leave home and have a successful transition to living independently. The timing of leaving the family home depends on a variety of reasons such as moving closer to work or study or leaving because of conflict or restrictions. The proportion of young people (15-19 years) not currently living with their parents has not changed from 2012 to 2018. In 2018-19, the City of Onkaparinga responded to concerns raised by a young resident regarding the lack of information and assistance provided to young people in areas such as finances, tax, Centrelink, renting, purchasing and maintaining a vehicle by running a seven-week 'How to adult' pilot program for 16-25 year olds. The pilot program topics included working, finances, renting, tax, government departments, wellbeing and motor vehicles. The program was over-subscribed with a waiting list of more than 75 young people and requests from across Australia for information about running similar programs.<sup>44</sup>

At a population-level, there is a general lack of data on the participation of children and young people in decision-making, and limited available data on independent life skills development.



Much more work is needed to identify measures and data sources that adequately demonstrate this dimension. Initiatives that encourage the participation of children and young people in South Australia include consultation by the CCYP, GCYP and the Council. In 2019, the Council hosted a Charter Summit at

which children and young people identified what is important to them to have a good life. Their views on health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship and what 'a good life' looks and feels like informed the 20 essential conditions of the Charter, an integral part of the framework.

## Priorities for action



Realising better outcomes for children and young people in South Australia requires keeping all children and young people safe from harm, ensuring all are cared for in ways that allow them to reach their potential, improving their physical, mental and emotional health, improving their participation in sporting, creative, cultural and other recreational activities and ensuring that they have opportunities and are well prepared to be active and engaged citizens.

To improve outcomes for all children and young people, the following six priorities are identified for consideration and collective action in 2020-2021.

***Priority 1 - Proactively monitoring the development of all children in South Australia from birth to school age to reduce the number of children entering the education system with unidentified disabilities and developmental delays***

There is an increasing number of ‘developmentally vulnerable’ young children who are commencing school. In tracking five key areas of early childhood development that are strong predictors of later health, wellbeing and academic success – physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based) and communication skills and general knowledge<sup>45</sup> – the AEDC demonstrates that, unlike most other jurisdictions, South Australia has shown a small but steady decline in results since the first AEDC was conducted in 2009. By comparison, other Australian jurisdictions have shown improvements in child development over this same time period.

Currently, South Australia has no population-wide data on child development prior to this federally implemented triennial AEDC, meaning that we do not know the developmental health and wellbeing of young children living in our state until they commence school. As

such, many young children are entering the education system with unidentified disabilities and developmental delays.

***Priority 2 - Addressing increasing obesity rates of children and young people, particularly for adolescent girls***

The body weight of children and young people is the most concerning physical health issue for young South Australians with the data indicating high levels of overweight and obesity. Trends suggest obesity rates increase across early life, particularly for adolescent girls. There is also a concerning trend for overweight and/or obese rates to increase in higher socioeconomic areas. Being overweight early in life sets a possible course of life-long physical health problems, as well as possible impacts on mental health, wellbeing and social life.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has described the increase in child obesity as 'one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.'<sup>46</sup> Despite the gravity of the issue in South Australia, there are insufficient data to follow population trends, and little data that substantiate the relationship between diet and nutrition and the rates for different population groups.

***Priority 3 - Addressing the poorer outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people***

The new National Agreement on Closing the Gap sets out priorities for the next ten years and outlines targets and measures. The new Closing the Gap outcomes include that Aboriginal babies, children and students:

- are born healthy and strong and thrive in their early years
- succeed at school and stay in school
- reach their full potential through further education pathways
- are not over-represented in out-of-home care.

The new Closing the Gap targets include:

- by 2028, 90-92% of babies born to Aboriginal mothers are of healthy birthweight
- by 2028, 45% of Aboriginal children are assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC
- by 2025, all Aboriginal four-year-olds are enrolled in early childhood education
- by 2028, the rate of Aboriginal children and young people in detention has been reduced by 11-19%.<sup>47</sup>

The new national outcomes and targets are well aligned with specific areas of concern highlighted in South Australia's 2020 Report Card including that:

- Aboriginal babies experience more low body weight births, for example, one in six (16%) of babies born to Aboriginal mothers in 2017 were of low birthweight (higher than the national rate of 12.5%)
- Aboriginal mothers tend to be younger, more likely to smoke and seek antenatal care later in pregnancy
- the infant mortality rate for Aboriginal infants is 3.8 per 1,000 live births, which is lower than the national rate for Aboriginal live births (at 5.8 per 1,000), but higher than the rate for all live births in South Australia (3.2 per 1,000)<sup>viii</sup>
- of 299 children and young people in the AYTC in 2018-19, 50.5% were Aboriginal
- a third (33%) of all children and young people in out-of-home care are Aboriginal<sup>48</sup>
- on any school day, 20.1% of Aboriginal students, one out of every five, are not at school.

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<sup>viii</sup> A rate of 3.8 per 1,000 live births equates to 4-6 infant deaths per year. An increase or decrease of one death in a year would make a significant change to the figures.

***Priority 4 - Implementing programs to address the mental health concerns of children and young people, particularly those from more disadvantaged socioeconomic areas, including investigating the progressive decline in children and young people's sense of wellbeing as they progress from Year 5 to Year 10***

There appears to be a decline in children and young people's sense of wellbeing as they progress from Year 5 to Year 10. The data indicate that girls of primary school age fare better than boys, while boys of secondary school age fare better than girls. More boys report feeling connected to adults at school; however, this falls markedly from Year 5 to Year 10. Taken together, and in the absence of data indicating how connected children and young people feel to adults at home and in the community, these data suggest a progressive decline in wellbeing and connectivity between 11 and 15 years, maybe more so for older girls.

Children and young people living in rural and regional South Australia are more likely to have a mental health concern than those living in metropolitan Adelaide. There are gaps in the data for the mental health and wellbeing for children and young people from disadvantaged socioeconomic areas. The data that are available indicate these children and young people are less likely to be optimistic or satisfied with life.

***Priority 5 - Addressing the matter of children and young people with 'dual status', that is children and young people involved in both the child protection and the youth justice systems***

In November 2019, the TCV/GCYP's first report raised awareness of 'dual status' children and young people who are involved in both the child protection and the youth justice systems. The report noted 'poor provision and analysis of relevant data' and 'only a partial appreciation of the extent to which South Australian children and young people involved in the youth justice system also have a child protection background or current experience.'<sup>49</sup>

Recommendations regarding the management of dual status children and young people arising from the TCV/GCYP report include a need for:

- person-centred decision making
- appropriate, applied and properly resourced models of therapeutic care



- collaborative approaches across government
- data collection for informed decision-making.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Priority 6 - Monitoring the impacts of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic***

The lives of South Australia's children and young people are expected to continue to change as a result of the initial and prolonged impact of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Some changes, including that school students are engaging in less physical activity and more screen time each day and less vigorous exercise than usual, are already evident.<sup>51</sup> While many changes are yet to be identified, and some will be temporary only, the interconnectedness of life dimensions and the likely economic, social and health effects suggests that the pandemic is likely to have extensive and wide-reaching impacts. In describing the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, the United Nations has highlighted four areas of concern: falling into poverty, learning, survival and health, and safety.<sup>52</sup>

Data are crucial to monitor and report on the impacts locally, nationally and internationally. Collecting data for all children and young people in South Australia to determine impact will require the use of existing tools and mechanisms, as well as additional collections, both quantitative and qualitative.

The impact of the pandemic is likely to be uneven with children and young people in vulnerable demographics more likely to suffer immediate and long-term effects. Those monitoring the impacts on children and young people will need to be mindful of particular sub groups at likely higher risk of negative outcomes, for example: children and young people who are Aboriginal, living with disability, in out-of-home care, from low income families, in regional and remote South Australia, and in secure care (detention) and/or under community supervision.

## Conclusion



Using the best available data, South Australia's 2020 Report Card provides a baseline of evidence regarding the outcomes for children and young people under 18 years in the framework's five dimensions: health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship.

Most children and young people in South Australia are faring well;<sup>ix</sup> however, economic and social inequalities create outcome disparities, as does the generational disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal children and young people. Existing social, built environment and transport barriers create disparities for children and young people with disability. Children and young people in out-of-home or secure care (detention) may also be born into, and experience, intergenerational disadvantage and complex challenges compounded by abuse and neglect.<sup>x</sup>

To improve the outcomes of all children and young people, South Australia's 2020 Report Card identifies six priorities for consideration and collective action, focused on unidentified disabilities and developmental delays, obesity rates, outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people, mental health concerns, children and young people with 'dual status' and the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic impacts.

The collaboration of oversight and advocacy bodies and all state and local government agencies is required to improve the outcomes for children and young people in South Australia. Future report cards will reflect the way that we, as South Australians, care for and work together to improve the outcomes of our youngest citizens in response to this baseline report card.

<sup>ix</sup> Australia was recently rated as the 12<sup>th</sup> happiest nation in the world<sup>53</sup> and The Economist Global Liveability Index 2019 rated Adelaide as the 10<sup>th</sup> most liveable city (out of 140 cities).<sup>54</sup> By international standards, South Australia would be considered a safe, healthy, prosperous, progressive and civil society.

<sup>x</sup> Children and young people in out-of-home care and children and young people with disability, have been identified for data reporting; however, data are limited, both publicly available data and data that can only be obtained by request.

## Annex 1 – Data collection and reporting

South Australia's 2020 Report Card uses routinely collected and available data, capturing the latest information from a variety of state, national and international sources to track progress. Sources include the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and accredited non-government surveys and reports.

The report card includes feedback from children and young people to the Commissioner for Children and Young People and data or information from the Guardian for Children and Young People, Training Centre Visitor, Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee and Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

While South Australia's 2020 Report Card is a population-level report, it acknowledges specific cohorts of children and young people as part of monitoring inequalities between population groups. To identify and reduce inequalities, particular attention is given to groups of children and young people at risk of marginalisation and/or disadvantage.

[South Australia's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People Data and Technical Report](#) sets out the basis and specifications for reporting the data and identifies limitations in the evidence, such as a lack of accessible and current data.

Data are analysed using a multi-dimensional approach, involving two discrete stages. In Stage 1, the data are tracked from the baseline year to the current or latest available year. Where data show a positive trend from the baseline year (five years whenever possible) this is reported as a favourable change. Insignificant change from the baseline year is reported as 'no change'. If there has been a positive change from the baseline year but the trend has been erratic, the data may be classified and reported as no change. If the data describe a negative trend, the data are classified and reported as an unfavourable change. Where there has been insignificant change and the comparative overall national change is favourable, the data may also be reported as an unfavourable change. In this report, a snapshot of trends for framework measures is shown in Annex 2 and data gaps are shown in Annex 3.

Stage 2 of analysis involves benchmarking against national and international data. Where possible, South Australian data are compared with national trends overall or with individual states and territories. Data are also benchmarked internationally with OECD countries, a commonly used international benchmark.

## Annex 2 – South Australia's framework 2020 snapshot

Dimension 1: Health			
Indicator	Babies are born healthy		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of low birthweight babies as a proportion of all live births	Low birthweight	Birth	No change
Proportion of pregnant mothers smoking in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy	Pregnant mothers smoking	Before birth	Favourable change
Proportion of mothers under 20 years when giving birth	Proportion of all mothers	Under 20 years	Favourable change
Proportion of mothers under 20 years when giving birth	Birth rate (per 1,000 of population)	Under 20 years	Favourable change
Proportion of women attending a first antenatal visit in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy	First antenatal visit in first 14 weeks	Before birth	Favourable change
Indicator	Children have a healthy early life		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Rate of infant mortality per 1,000 live births	Infant mortality rate	Under 12 months	No change
Proportion of children fully immunised at one, two and five years	Fully immunised	1 year	Favourable change
Proportion of children fully immunised at one, two and five years	Fully immunised	2 years	No change
Proportion of children fully immunised at one, two and five years	Fully immunised	5 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children meeting developmental milestones at two and four years	Developmental milestones	2 years	Not available
Proportion of children meeting developmental milestones at two and four years	Developmental milestones	4 years	Not available
Indicator	Children and young people have health-promoting behaviours		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people being reported as underweight, overweight or obese	Underweight	2-17 years	No change
Proportion of children and young people being reported as underweight, overweight or obese	Overweight	2-17 years	No change

## Dimension 1: Health

Indicator	Children and young people have health-promoting behaviours		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people being reported as underweight, overweight or obese	Obese	2-17 years	Unfavourable change
Proportion of young people smoking tobacco	Ever smoked tobacco	12-17 years	Favourable change
Proportion of young people consuming alcohol	Ever consumed alcohol	12-17 years	Favourable change
Proportion of young people with potentially unsafe or binge-drinking behaviour	Unsafe or binge drinking - ever	12-17 years	No change
Proportion of young people taking illicit drugs	Ever taken illicit drugs (including cannabis)	12-17 years	Favourable change
Proportion of young people taking illicit drugs	Ever taken cannabis	12-17 years	Favourable change
Indicator	Children and young people are thriving		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people with access to healthy food	Meeting NHMRC fruit guidelines	2-17 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children and young people with access to healthy food	Meeting NHMRC vegetable guidelines	2-17 years	Unfavourable change
Number of children and young people with tooth decay	Tooth decay in deciduous teeth (%)	5-10 years	No change
Number of children and young people with tooth decay	Tooth decay in permanent teeth (%)	6-14 years	No change
Proportion of children and young people considering themselves to be in good or excellent health	Good or excellent health	Year 4 to Year 10	No change
Proportion of 12 year olds considering themselves to be in good or excellent health	Good or excellent health	Year 6	No change
Proportion of 16 year olds considering themselves to be in good or excellent health	Good or excellent health	Year 10	No change
Proportion of children and young people estimated to have an emotional, mental health or behavioural problem	Mental health support service	5-17 years	No change



## Dimension 2: Safety

Indicator	Children and young people live in safe housing		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people feeling concerned about family conflict	Family conflict	15-19 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children and young people living in households with financial hardship	Financial hardship	Birth to 14 years	Unfavourable change
Number of children and young people experiencing homelessness	Homelessness (per 1,000 population)	Birth to 18 years	Favourable change
Indicator	Children and young people are safe from preventable injury		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Number of children and young people presenting to emergency departments with potentially preventable hospitalisations	Potentially preventable hospitalisations (% of total admissions)	Birth to 17 years	No change
Number of deaths of children and young people being attributed to preventable/unintentional injury	Injury death (per 100,000) population	Birth to 14 years	Unfavourable change
Number of police cautions or fines issued for failing to safely restrain passengers under 16 years	Failing to safely restrain passengers	Under 16 years	No change
Number of children and young people 5-13 years attending a swimming safety program	Swimming safety program	5-13 years	Not available
Indicator	Children and young people are safe from abuse and neglect		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Number of children and young people being admitted to out-of-home-care	Admitted to out-of-home-care (per 1,000 population)	Under 18 years	Unfavourable change
Number of children and young people being admitted to out-of-home-care	In out-of-home-care (per 1,000 population) at 30 June	Under 18 years	Unfavourable change
Proportion of children twelve months old or under being notified to the child protection system	Substantiations of notifications to child protection (per 1,000 population)	Under 12 months	No change
Proportion of children aged five years being notified to the child protection system	Substantiations of notifications to child protection (per 1,000 population)	1-4 years	No change

## Dimension 2: Safety

Indicator	Children and young people are safe from abuse and neglect		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children aged five years being notified to the child protection system	Substantiations of notifications to child protection (per 1,000 population)	5-9 years	No change
Indicator	Children and young people are safe from crime		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people feeling unsafe in their local area at night	Feeling unsafe at night	12-16 years	Not available
Number of children and young people who are victims of offences reported to police	Victims of crime	Birth to 17 years	Not available
Number of arrests involving young people 10-17 years	Apprehended by police (per 10,000 population)	10-17 years	Favourable change

## Dimension 3: Wellbeing

Indicator	Children have early experiences that enhance their development		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services	Vulnerable group: Aboriginal children	Birth to 5 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services	Vulnerable group: Children with disability	Birth to 5 years	No change
Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services	Vulnerable group: Regional areas	Birth to 5 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services	Vulnerable group: Remote areas	Birth to 5 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services	Vulnerable group: Low income families	Birth to 5 years	No change
Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services	Vulnerable group: Non-English speaking background	Birth to 5 years	Favourable change
Proportion and number of three-year-old Aboriginal children enrolled in a quality preschool program	Aboriginal	3 years	Favourable change
Proportion of children enrolled in a quality preschool program in the year before attending fulltime school	Preschool	4 years	No change

### Dimension 3: Wellbeing

Indicator	Children and young people are connected to family, friends and culture		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people participating in cultural activities	Participating in cultural activities	5-14 years	No change
Proportion of children and young people attending cultural venues and events	Attending at least one cultural venue or event	5-14 years	No change
Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their home	Connected to adults in their home	Year 4 to Year 10 students	Not available
Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their school	Connected to adults in their school	Year 4 to Year 10 students	Favourable change
Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their community	Connected to adults in their community	Year 4 to Year 10 students	Not available
Proportion of children and young people with one or more friends in whom they can confide	Friendships	Year 4 to Year 10 students	No change
Indicator	Children and young people play and participate in recreational activities		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people participating in organised activities outside of school hours	Organised activities	Year 4 to Year 10 students	No change
Proportion of children and young people participating in sport or recreational physical activities	Organised sport	Year 4 to Year 10 students	Favourable change
Indicator	Children and young people are leading satisfied lives		
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend
Proportion of children and young people feeling optimistic about life	Optimism	Year 4 to Year 10 students	Favourable change
Proportion of children and young people reporting a medium to high level of satisfaction with life	Satisfaction with life	Year 4 to Year 10 students	Favourable change
Rate of suicide for children and young people	Suicide (per 100,000 population)	5-17 years	No change

## Dimension 4: Education

Indicator	Children enter the school system ready to take advantage of the learning environment			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of children developmentally vulnerable in one or more of five domains under the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) when they enter school	Developmentally vulnerable	4-6 years	Unfavourable change	
Number of children receiving early childhood intervention supports through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or with approved NDIS plan before entering school	Early childhood early intervention	Birth to 6 years	Unfavourable change	
Number of children receiving early childhood intervention supports through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or with approved NDIS plan before entering school	NDIS plan	Birth to 6 years	Favourable change	
Indicator	Children and young people's experience of learning is positive			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of Year 1 students reading at an age-appropriate level or better	Phonics	Year 1	Favourable change	
Proportion of Year 3 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Reading	Year 3	Favourable change	
Proportion of Year 3 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Writing	Year 3	Favourable change	
Proportion of Year 3 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Numeracy	Year 3	No change	
Proportion of Year 5 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Reading	Year 5	Favourable change	

## Dimension 4: Education

Indicator	Children and young people's experience of learning is positive			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of Year 5 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Writing	Year 5	Favourable change	
Proportion of Year 5 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Numeracy	Year 5	Favourable change	
Proportion of Year 7 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Reading	Year 7	Unfavourable change	
Proportion of Year 7 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Writing	Year 7	No change	
Proportion of Year 7 students achieving at or above minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy	Numeracy	Year 7	Unfavourable change	
Indicator	Children and young people are engaged in school, further education, training or work			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of young people fully engaged in school, work or further education and training	Fully engaged	15-19 years	Favourable change	
Proportion of young people with disability, partially or fully engaged in school, work or further education and training	Partially or fully engaged	15-19 years	Favourable change	
Rate of attendance for students enrolled at school	Rate of school attendance	Year 1 to Year 10	Unfavourable change	
Proportion of young people completing a senior secondary certificate of education qualification or equivalent by 19 years	Senior secondary certificate	Year 12	Favourable change	



## Dimension 5: Citizenship

Indicator	Children and young people develop skills for an independent life			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of young people 14-15 years that are literate	Reading	Year 9	No change	
Proportion of young people 14-15 years that are literate	Writing	Year 9	Favourable change	
Proportion of young people 14-15 years that are numerate	Numeracy	Year 9	Favourable change	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate	Financial numeracy	15-20 years	Not available	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate	Inflation	15-20 years	Not available	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate	Diversification	15-20 years	Not available	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate	Risk-return	15-20 years	Not available	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate	Money illusion	15-20 years	Not available	
Proportion of young people 16-19 years with a driver's licence	Driver's licence	16-19 years	No change	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years satisfied with their level of independence	Satisfied with independence	17 years	Unfavourable change	
Average hours of paid employment for young people 15-19 years	Employed young people (hours)	17 years	Unfavourable change	
Proportion of young people 15-19 years not currently living with their parents	Not living with parents	18 years	No change	
Proportion of Year 10 students achieving at or above proficient standard in the Australian curriculum civics and citizenship assessment	Civics and Citizenship	Year 10	Unfavourable change	
Indicator	Children and young people participate in decisions that affect them directly and the wider society			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of children and young people feeling able to have a say on important issues	Having a say on important issues	15-17 years	Not available	
Proportion of young people 18 years enrolled to vote	Enrolled to vote	18-19 years	Unfavourable change	
Indicator	Children and young people are engaged in community activities			
Measure	Measure detail	Age	Trend	
Proportion of children and young people participating in volunteering	Volunteering	15-19 years	Favourable change	
Proportion of children and young people participating in community support groups	Community support groups	15-17 years	Not available	

## Annex 3 – Data gaps

Dimension 1: Health		
Indicator	Children have a healthy early life	
Measure	Rationale	Data Gap
Proportion of children meeting developmental milestones at two and four years	To ensure that children are on track with their growth and development children should be screened at regular intervals. As children grow, they should achieve certain milestones at certain ages. If these milestones are not met, then referrals and/or additional supports should be provided to the family and child. The earlier developmental delays are identified, the better the opportunity to successfully intervene and support the child to get back on track.	No data available (baseline or current)
Number of children and young people with tooth decay	Good oral health is fundamental to overall health and wellbeing. Without it, a person's quality of life and the ability to eat, speak and socialise is compromised and may result in pain, discomfort and embarrassment. Poor oral health - mainly tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss - affects many children and young people	Data out of date and more recent data may not be available
Proportion of children and young people estimated to have an emotional, mental health or behavioural problem	Good mental health is fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals, their families and the population as a whole. Mental health disorders include anxiety and depression, as well as conditions such as schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. Mental health disorders may be induced by trauma and substance abuse. Mental health problems and mental illness include a range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural disorders.	No trend data and only current data available. Current year is baseline year and more data should be available by the end of 2020.

Dimension 2: Safety		
Indicator	Children and young people are safe from preventable injury	
Measure	Rationale	Data Gap
Number of children and young people 5-13 years attending a swimming safety program	A swimming safety program provides children and young people with opportunities to develop a range of skills and positive experiences in water safety, confidence and competence in the water, personal survival activities and basic aquatic emergency procedures.	No data available (baseline or current)
Indicator	Children and young people are safe from crime	
Measure	Rationale	
Proportion of children and young people feeling unsafe in their local area at night	Children and young people feeling safe in their neighbourhood is important for mental health and overall wellbeing. Factors that can contribute to a child or young person's perception of neighbourhood safety include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seeing other children and young people out and about</li> <li>• having friends who live nearby</li> <li>• having access to useful facilities</li> <li>• having positive relationships with neighbours.</li> </ul>	No South Australia-specific data available (baseline or current)
Indicator	Children and young people are safe from crime	
Measure	Rationale	Data Gap
Number of children and young people who are victims of offences reported to police	Crime can have a severe and lasting impact especially on children and young people. Exposure to crime and violence has been shown to impact a child or young person's development and physical, social and psychological functioning. The data are being collected but are not currently available due to operational level changes in collation and reporting.	Data out of date. Data are being collected but are not yet available due to change in collation and reporting

<i>Number of arrests involving young people 10-17 years</i>	Children and young people who offend may come into contact with the youth justice system. Youth justice encompasses important areas of public policy including systemic disadvantage, community safety, rehabilitation and human rights. Youth justice is distinct from the mainstream criminal justice system due to the unique circumstances and the context of offending.	Data out of date. Data are being collected but are not currently available due to change in collation and reporting
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### Dimension 3: Wellbeing

Indicator	<i>Children and young people are connected to family, friends and culture</i>	
Measure	Rationale	Data Gaps
<i>Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their home</i>	Children and young people need care and support from adults in their home, school and community. These relationships help children and young people to develop resilience, avoid risky behaviours and prepare for adulthood.	No data available (baseline or current)
<i>Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their community</i>	Children and young people need care and support from adults in their home, school and community. These relationships help children and young people to develop resilience, avoid risky behaviours and prepare for adulthood.	No data available (baseline or current)

### Dimension 5: Citizenship

Indicator	<i>Children and young people develop skills for an independent life</i>	
Measure	Rationale	Data Gaps
<i>Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate</i>	Financial literacy is an essential life skill. It means having the financial knowledge, skills and attitude needed to make good financial decisions. This includes learning how to budget and manage money, weighing up whether to save or spend, and what to spend on.	Only current year data available ie no trend data and future intentions are not known.
<i>Proportion of young people 15-19 years satisfied with their level of independence</i>	Achieving independence is an essential part of the journey to adulthood for young people. To be successful young people need freedom to try new things, take more responsibility, form their own identity, make decisions and solve problems	Data out of date and unclear if current data will be available
Indicator	<i>Children and young people participate in decisions that affect them directly and the wider society</i>	
Measure	Rationale	Data Gaps
<i>Proportion of children and young people feeling able to have a say on important issues</i>	As part of becoming independent, young people need the freedom to try new things, take on responsibility, form their own identity, make decisions and learn to solve problems.	No data available (current or baseline). Data may be available at the end of 2020.
Indicator	<i>Children and young people are engaged in community activities</i>	
Measure	Rationale	
<i>Proportion of children and young people participating in community support groups</i>	Children and young people care about issues that affect their communities. They have a range of experiences, thoughts, ideas and perspectives that can enrich decision making processes and lead to more relevant and inclusive policies, programs, use of resources and outcomes. Support groups can sometimes help children and young people in many ways by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing emotional and social support</li> <li>• developing new skills</li> <li>• sharing information</li> <li>• offering advice and a place to learn from others</li> <li>• improving motivation.</li> </ul>	No data available (current or baseline). Data may be available at the end of 2020.

## Acronyms

ABFABB	Aboriginal Families and Baby Bundles
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACRA	Aboriginal Communities and Families Health Research Alliance
Act	<a href="#"><i>Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016</i></a>
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AYTC	Adelaide Youth Training Centre
CARL	Child Abuse Report Line
Charter	Charter for Children and Young People
CDSIRC	Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee
CACYP	Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
CCYP	Commissioner for Children and Young People
Council	Child Development Council
DCP	Department for Child Protection
ECEI	Early childhood early intervention
Framework	<a href="#"><i>South Australia's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People</i></a>
GCYP	Guardian for Children and Young People
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NAPCC	National Assessment Program Civics and Citizenship
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
SA	South Australia
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
TCV	Training Centre Visitor
WCHN	Women's and Children's Health Network
WHO	World Health Organisation

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