Synthesis Report
What It Means to Me

Charter for Children and Young People

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Child Development Council

The Child Development Council (CDC) (https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/) is an independent body set up under South Australian legislation to monitor, advise and report how well our youngest citizens in South Australia are faring in the areas of *health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship*.

Established in February 2018 under Part 6 of the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*, one of the Council's key functions is to develop an Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People *including a Charter for Children and Young People*.

The Act creates a legislative framework for the rights, development and wellbeing of young South Australians (birth to 18 years). The Council operates in accordance with the provisions of the Act and the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Regulations 2017*.

The Act defines 'rights', 'development' and 'wellbeing' and states that 'State authorities' (all state and local government entities in South Australia) should 'seek to give effect' to the internationally recognised human rights instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

South Australia's first outcomes framework was gazetted on 14 November 2019 with robust indicators and measures. The framework enables longitudinal tracking and reporting and provides a way of telling how children and young people in South Australia are developing and progressing over time.

The **Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People** (framework) guides the South Australian Government's work for children and young people and targets policy, legislation, funding and services to inform a cooperative, whole-of-government (state and local) approach to the setting of objectives or policies affecting children and young people.

The **Charter for Children and Young People** (Charter) reflects a commitment to work from a foundation of state, national and international children and young people's rights including the UNCRC and other human rights instruments.

The statements in the Charter represent the voices of children and young people, and reflect what is important to them – having a good home life, having support from trusted adults, being listened to, participating in decisions that affect them, opportunity for a quality education, employment and most importantly, being respected and valued.

2 Developing the Charter for Children and Young People

2.1 Engaging with Children & Young People

2.1.1 Children and Young People's Charter Summit 2019

In developing the framework, including the Charter, the Act and/or the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Regulations 2017* the CDC *is required to consult with children and young people, their parents, families, carers and others*.

Part of this consultation process involved a **Charter Summit**, to enable a substantial, representative group of children and young people, age 5 to 18 years, to inform the writing of the Charter. The process enabled children and young people to identify what's important to them in terms of *health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship*.

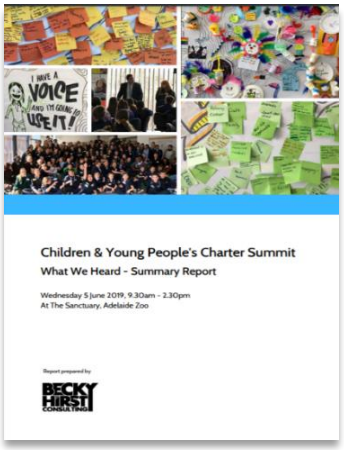
The CDC partnered with the:

- Department for Education
- Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (YACSA)
- Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Commissioner)
- Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)
- Catholic Education of South Australia (CESA) and
- Urrbrae Agricultural High School

to invite up to 147 children and young people (5-18 years) to attend the Charter Summit at the Adelaide Zoo on 5 June 2019 to:

- *identify what matters to them in terms of health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship* and
- *say what having a good life is all about*.

Children and young people's responses to activities, discussions, comments and sticky notes concerned with the five domains; *health, safety, wellbeing, education, and citizenship* were recorded and analysed into key themes within each dimension (https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Charter-Summit-What-We-Heard-Report-2019.pdf).



In addition to the report on the Charter Summit, children and young people's views were captured on film, via photographs and by three illustrators who drew on 'The Wall' throughout so that by the end of the day, the participants had a clear visual image of what they'd identified as important for children and young people to thrive and have a good life in South Australia. (https://youtu.be/L5rXDug7TRU)

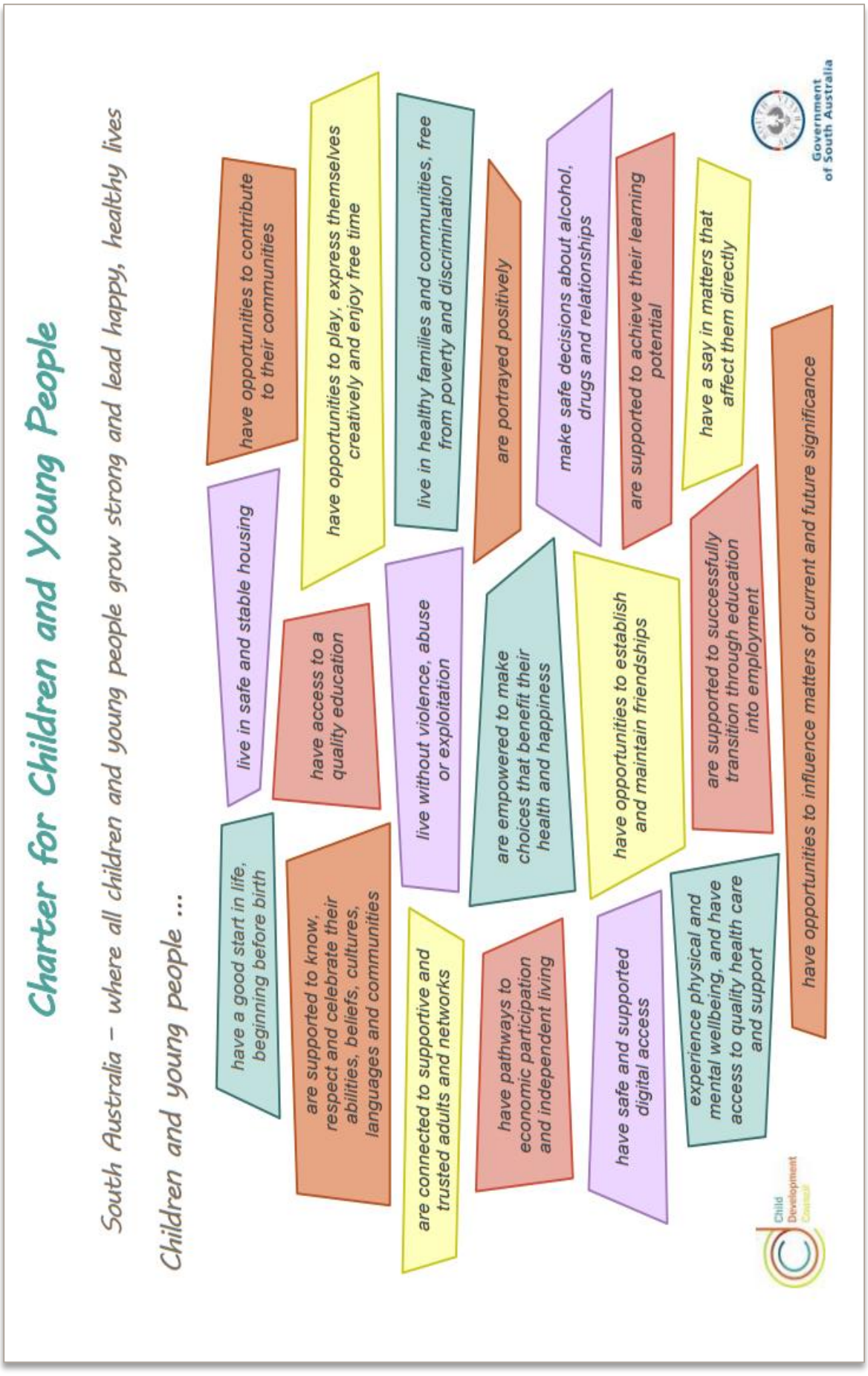
At the end of the Charter Summit (2019), each child or young person also had an individual opportunity to ***send a message to the Minister about what's important to them to have a good life***. They did this by writing and/or drawing on a post card to reiterate something they'd identified during the day or that they didn't get a chance to say.

Five hundred and twelve (512) postcards were received, 504 (98%) from children and young people 5-18 years and eight (2%) from young people 19-25 years. *Most of these children and young people had first participated in a face-to-face consultation session eg, a forum, focus group or the Charter Summit*. The postcard messages to the Minister consisted of drawings or text or a combination thereof.

Subsequent discussion and synthesis of these data by the CDC directly informed the writing of **the Charter**:

- ***which sets out 20 conditions that all children and young people in South Australia can, and should have without discrimination.***
- see https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Charter-sml-landscape.pdf

The conditions call on all South Australians to play an active role in improving the outcomes of children and young people, including children and young people themselves, parents, families and other caregivers, local government, state government, the private sector, non-government organisations, Aboriginal communities, religious and cultural leaders, the media, and all who work with children and young people.


Charter for Children and Young People
South Australia – where all children and young people grow strong and lead happy, healthy lives
Children and young people ...
have a good start in life, beginning before birth
are supported to know, respect and celebrate their abilities, beliefs, cultures, languages and communities
are connected to supportive and trusted adults and networks
have pathways to economic participation and independent living
have safe and supported digital access
experience physical and mental wellbeing, and have access to quality health care and support
have opportunities to influence matters of current and future significance
live in safe and stable housing
have access to a quality education
live without violence, abuse or exploitation
are empowered to make choices that benefit their health and happiness
have opportunities to establish and maintain friendships
are supported to successfully transition through education into employment
have opportunities to contribute to their communities
have opportunities to play, express themselves creatively and enjoy free time
live in healthy families and communities, free from poverty and discrimination
are portrayed positively
make safe decisions about alcohol, drugs and relationships
are supported to achieve their learning potential
have a say in matters that affect them directly
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Every young South Australian counts

Young South Australians ...

... are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy

Health Indicator 1
Babies are born healthy

Measures
- Proportion of low birthweight babies as a proportion of all live births
- Proportion of pregnant mothers smoking in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy
- Proportion of mothers under 20 years when giving birth
- Proportion of women attending a first antenatal visit in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy

Health Indicator 2
Children have a healthy early life

Measures
- Rate of infant mortality per 1,000 live births
- Proportion of children fully immunised at one, two and five years
- Proportion of children meeting developmental milestones at two and four years

Health Indicator 3
Children and young people have health-promoting behaviours

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people being reported as underweight, overweight or obese
- Proportion of young people smoking tobacco
- Proportion of young people consuming alcohol
- Proportion of young people with potentially unsafe or binge-drinking behaviour
- Proportion of young people taking illicit drugs

Health Indicator 4
Children and young people are thriving

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people with access to healthy food
- Number of children and young people with tooth decay
- Proportion of children and young people considering themselves to be in good or excellent health
- Proportion of children and young people estimated to have an emotional, mental health or behavioural problem
- Proportion of 12 year olds considering themselves to be in good or excellent health
- Proportion of 16 year olds considering themselves to be in good or excellent health

... are safe and nurtured

Safety Indicator 1
Children and young people live in safe housing

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people feeling concerned about family conflict
- Proportion of children and young people living in households with financial hardship
- Number of children and young people experiencing homelessness

Safety Indicator 2
Children and young people are safe from preventable injury

Measures
- Number of children and young people presenting to emergency departments with potentially preventable hospitalisations
- Number of deaths of children and young people being attributed to preventable/ unintentional injury
- Number of police cautions or fines issued for failing to safely restrain passengers under 16 years
- Number of children and young people 5-13 years attending a swimming safety program

Safety Indicator 3
Children and young people are safe from abuse and neglect

Measures
- Number of children and young people being admitted to out-of-home care
- Proportion of children twelve months old or under being notified to the child protection system
- Proportion of children five years being notified to the child protection system

Safety Indicator 4
Children and young people are safe from crime

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people feeling unsafe in their local area at night
- Number of children and young people who are victims of offences reported to police
- Number of arrests involving young people 10-17 years

... are happy, inspired and engaged

Wellbeing Indicator 1
Children have early experiences that enhance their development

Measures
- Proportion of children with special needs, birth to five years, attending approved child care services
- Proportion and number of three-year-old Aboriginal children enrolled in a quality pre-school program
- Proportion of children enrolled in a quality pre-school program in the year before attending fulltime school

Wellbeing Indicator 2
Children and young people are connected to family, friends and culture

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people participating in cultural activities
- Proportion of children and young people attending cultural venues and events
- Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their home
- Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their school
- Proportion of children and young people feeling connected to adults in their community
- Proportion of children and young people with one or more friends, in whom they can confide

Wellbeing Indicator 3
Children and young people play and participate in recreational activities

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people participating in organised activities outside of school hours
- Proportion of children and young people participating in sport or recreational physical activities

Wellbeing Indicator 4
Children and young people are leading satisfied lives

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people feeling optimistic about life
- Proportion of children and young people reporting a medium to high level of satisfaction with life
- Rate of suicide for children and young people

... are successful learners

Education Indicator 1
Children enter the school system ready to take advantage of the learning environment

Measures
- Proportion of children developmentally vulnerable in one or more of five domains under the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) when they enter school
- Number of children receiving early childhood early intervention supports through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or with an approved NDIS plan before entering school

Education Indicator 2
Children and young people's experience of learning is positive

Measures
- Proportion of Year 1 students reading at an age-appropriate level or better
- Proportion of Year 3 students achieving at or above national minimum standard in reading, writing or numeracy
- Proportion of Year 5 students achieving at or above national minimum standard in reading, writing or numeracy
- Proportion of Year 7 students achieving at or above national minimum standard in reading, writing or numeracy

Education Indicator 3
Children and young people are engaged in school, further education, training or work

Measures
- Proportion of young people fully engaged in school, work or further education and training
- Proportion of young people with disability, partially or fully engaged in school, work or further education and training
- Rate of attendance for students enrolled in school
- Proportion of young people completing a senior secondary certificate of education qualification or equivalent by 19 years

... participate actively in society

Citizenship Indicator 1
Children and young people develop skills for an independent life

Measures
- Proportion of young people 14-15 years that are literate
- Proportion of young people 14-15 years that are numerate
- Proportion of young people 15-19 years that are financially literate
- Proportion of young people 16-19 years with a driver's licence
- Proportion of young people 15-19 years satisfied with their level of independence
- Average hours of paid employment for young people 15-19 years
- Proportion of young people 15-19 years not currently living with their parents
- Proportion of Year 10 students achieving at or above proficient standard in the Australian curriculum civics and citizenship assessment

Citizenship Indicator 2
Children and young people participate in decisions that affect them directly and the wider society

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people feeling able to have a say on important issues
- Proportion of young people 18 years enrolled to vote

Citizenship Indicator 3
Children and young people are engaged in community activities

Measures
- Proportion of children and young people participating in volunteering
- Proportion of children and young people participating in community support groups

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3 Closing the Circle

3.1 Launching the Charter & Listening to Children and Young People 2021

A second event was convened, again at the Zoo to officially launch the Charter, which had evolved directly from the original responses children and young people had indicated they needed to have a good life and to feel safe, happy and well (see *What We Heard, 2019).*

The primary purpose of the Charter launch was for a group children and young people from South Australia's communities to:

- be thanked by the Minister for their post cards and for informing the development of the Charter
- 'unpack' the 20 Charter conditions in their own words
- provide advice regarding how to promote the Charter post-launch and make it more accessible to children and young people in South Australia.

After formally thanking those who wrote post cards to him in 2019, the Hon John Gardner MP, Minister for Education officially unveiled the on 9 June 2021 at the Adelaide Zoo with 108 children and young people. He called on them to describe the conditions in their own words it so that the Charter has meaning for everyone, and to then take it out to their communities.

3.2 What it Means to Me: Unpacking the Charter Conditions

Children and young people spent the rest of the day in roundtable workshops discussing what the 20 Charter conditions meant to them. They also advised how the Charter could be used in the future. Their ideas were captured in the *Children and Young People's Charter Launch: What We Heard – Summary Report*. (https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Charter-Launch-Report-BH-2021-06-09.pdf)

Through asking attending schools to complete a Lived Experience and Geographic Location Matrix prior to attendance from the responses received, we know that the 108 children and young people in attendance included at least:

- children or young people with known mental health issues (n=9)
- children or young people with a disability (n=9)
- Aboriginal children or young people (n=5)
- children or young people who were migrants/refugees/new arrivals/CALD (n=4)

- children or young people with a chronic illness (n=2)
- children or young people who identify as LGBTQI+ (n=2)
- child or young person attending alternative education (ie flexible learning options) (n=1)
- child or young person experiencing homeless/at risk of homelessness (n=1)
- child or young person receiving out of home care (n=1)
- young carer (n=1)

Children and Young People's Charter Launch 2021 video
https://youtu.be/vbJ4BCPYG2g

3.3 Closing the Circle Process

In order to *'close the circle'* and determine whether the Charter had legitimacy and veracity of meaning for the children and young people present at the Charter launch in 2021, and whether that meaning related back to the original responses of the Charter Summit (2019), the CDC's Charter Reference Group undertook a process of distillation of responses from the *What We Heard* Report (June 2021).

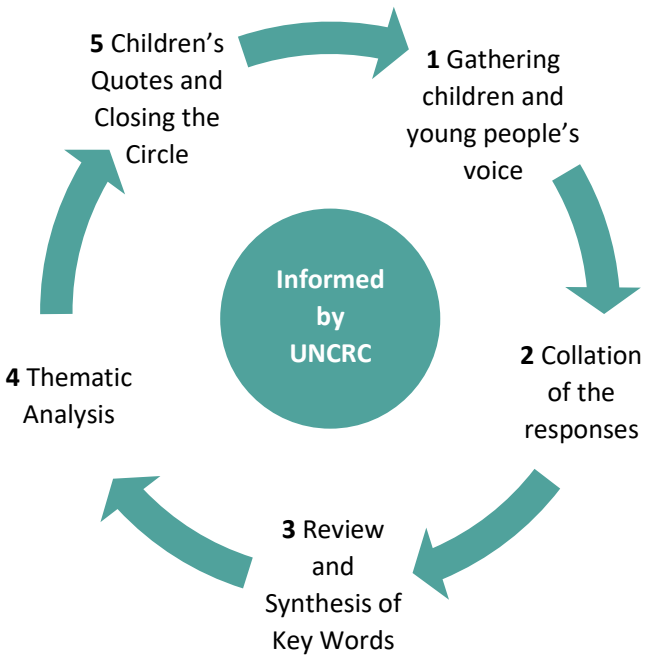

Figure 1: Closing the Circle process

3.3.1 Step 1: Children and Young People's Voices

Children and young people participated in launching the Charter and contributed on the day through the group/table activities/discussion based on the elements of the Charter. They discussed and responded, recording their responses via a *Looks Like; Sounds Like; Feels Like* chart.

3.3.2 Step 2: Collation of the Responses

Group/table responses were collected, collated and reported by the Summit facilitator, Ms Becky Hirst in the formal report of the Charter Launch, *What We Heard 2021, as a set of lists of words and phrases under each element*.

3.3.3 Step 3: Review and Synthesis of Key Words/phrases

Each member of the CDC's Charter Reference Group individually reviewed and synthesised the response lists contained in the report, summarising by selecting/highlighting terms/phrases/words which they thought were:

- *commonly recurring*
- *key, or*
- *captured the most important aspects of the children and young people's collective responses to 'What does it mean to me?'*

3.3.4 Step 4: Thematic Analysis

These highlighted words were transcribed by the Chair of the Reference Group, to an Excel spreadsheet, arranged by Charter Element and colour coded for emerging themes across the Reference Group (Adult) responses. These were then reviewed by another member of the team for inter-rater reliability and agreement of themes. It was agreed that these child-friendly meanings/terms could now be appended to the synthesis.

3.3.5 Step 5: Children and Young People's Quotes and Closing the Circle

These themes/phrases and quote were back-fitted/cross-checked for accuracy of interpretation against the original words of the children and young people from the Charter Summit 2019 (member checking) for concurrence and to locate child-friendly words/terms to use as exemplars to include in the final document.

This affirming process ensured the themes/phrases and quotes are legitimate and accurately reflect the children and young people's original intent from both the Charter Summit (2019) and the Charter Launch (2021).

4 Synthesis of Children and Young People's Responses: *What Does It Mean to Me?*

Each condition of the Charter is now supported/underpinned by the collective interpretations of the voices of children and young people (*What Does It Mean to Me?*) and exemplified with direct quotes, which serve to *'close the circle'*: confirming the original responses about what children and young people said they need in order to live a happy, safe and well life in South Australia.

Health

1.1 Have a good start in life, beginning before birth

This means having:

- People who care, love and support you and prepare you for life
  - *'Having people excited to have you in their life'*
  - '*Joy, happiness, warmth'*
- A home
  - *'Having a home'*
- Healthy parents and environment
  - *'Having healthy parents, family, food'*
- A safe, happy, peaceful, positive environment
  - *'Having people who care'*

1.2 Live in healthy families and communities free from poverty and discrimination

This means:

- Being respected, included and treating everyone equally
  - *'Treating everyone equally, no matter who they are'*
  - *'Respected for your culture'*
- Feeling connected, protected, safe and supported
  - *'Not being ignored all the time'*
  - *'Optimistic'*
- Not being bullied, cyberbullied or hassled
  - *'A safe place'*
  - *'Included'*
- Being encouraged, happy and enthusiastic
  - *'Not being worried'*
  - *'Healthy eating'*

1.3 Empowered to make choices that benefit their health and happiness

This means:

- Having a voice that is heard and listened to
  - *'Teachers listening to students and taking their thoughts into consideration'*
  - *'My body, my choice'*
- Reaching out for help and support when needed
  - *'Asking for help when needed'*
- Having trust, independence, responsibility and confidence
  - '*Having trusted adults to talk to'*
  - *'Fresh, good quality food for student to have access to'*
- Being curious and encourages, without parental pressure
  - *'Positive conversations'*

1.4 Experience physical and mental wellbeing and have access to quality health care and support

This means:

- Having trusted relationships and being cared for
  - *'People caring'*
  - *'Someone you can talk to'*
  - '*Trusted relationships'*
  - '*Support systems'*
- Helping others and being helped and supported
  - *'Offering others a hand'*
  - *'Mental health support systems'*
  - '*Physical help'*
  - '*Support staff*'
- Feeling good about yourself, being appreciated and valued
  - *'Feeling better about yourself*'
  - '*Supported'*
  - *'Helpful words'*
  - *'Seeking help when needed'*
  - *'Are you okay?'*
  - '*Do you need any help?*

Safety

2.1 Live in safe and stable housing

This means:

- Having a bed to sleep in
  - *'Having a bed to sleep in'*
- Not living in poverty
- Living safely with others, free from abuse
  - *'The house is strong and the people inside are strong'*
- Feeling warm, safe, supported and having some personal private space
  - *'It feels like nothing bad is going to happen'*
- Belonging, being happy and peaceful
  - *'Feel warm, private, safe'*

2.2 Live without violence, abuse and exploitation

This means:

- Not having to worry about safety
  - *'Being able to trust people'*
- Being around adults you trust
  - *'Not having to worry about safety'*
  - *'Being respected and respecting others'1*
  - *'Not being bullied, neglected or abused'*
  - *'Being happy, confident, calm, relaxed and without threat or fear'*

2.3 Have safe and supported digital access

This means:

- Having access with parental support
  - *'Having skills to be safe, empowered and to know what to do'*
- Being informed and aware of risks and opportunities
  - *'Having access to computers'*
- Having skills to be safe, empowered and to know what to do
  - *'Communicate with others safely'*
- Being protected from cyberbullying, stalkers
  - *'Knowing to ask for help'*

[1] These are both direct quotes and themes

2.4 Make safe decisions about alcohol, drugs and relationships

This means:

- Having access to quality education and information
  - *'Education starting from a younger age'*
  - *'Being informed about the risks involved with alcohol/drugs'*
- Being respectful of yourself ad others
  - *'Being respectful of yourself and others'*
- Becoming empowered through skill development
  - *'Feeling better about yourself - confidence, balanced and good wellbeing'*
  - *'Getting accurate information'*
- Support and guidance from adults
  - *'Conversations regarding consent'*

Wellbeing

3.1 Have opportunities to play, express themselves creatively and enjoy free time

This means:

- Freedom, fun and expression
  - *'You are having fun and are happy'*
  - *'Enjoying expressing ourselves'*
- Being with friends
  - *'Playing games with friends'*
- Having few boundaries, but safe expectations
  - *'Having few boundaries, but safe expectations'*
  - *'Freedom'*

3.2 Are connected to supportive and trusted adults and networks

This means:

- Having positive, trusting relationships
  - *'Having trusted friends and adults'*
  - *'A network of people around you'*
  - *'Talking to an adult'*
- Feeling safe and secure
  - *'Always having someone to go to'*
  - *'Asking for help'*

- Being loved and cared for
  - *'kids talking and parents listening'*
  - *'Kids able to talk to their parents and other adults'*

3.3 Have opportunities to establish and maintain friendships

This means:

- Connection and connectedness with others
  - *'Children look forward to going to school or other social settings'*
  - *'Connection'*
  - *'To be known'*
- Developing relationship skills
  - *'Part of a group'*
  - *'Encouragement'*
  - *'Listening'*
  - *'Kind words'*
  - *'Happy conversations'*

3.4 Have a say in matters that affect them directly

This means:

- Having rights and a voice
  - *'Respected'*
  - *'Understood'*
  - *'Listened to'*
- Being included, understood and respected
  - *'Being comfortable enough in school environment to address issues with authorities when they arise'*
- Developing life skills

Education

4.1 Have access to a quality education

This means:

- Being safe and supported with learning
  - *'Having access to school supplies'*
- Equity and Fairness
  - *Everyone treated the same*
- Challenging yourself and having fun

- *'Stretching yourself'*
- Goal Setting for success
  - *'I'm going to get a good job'*

4.2 Supported to achieve their learning potential

This means:

- Adults helping, guiding and supporting you
  - *'Children getting encouraging sayings'*
  - *'Helped and supported'*
  - *'You are capable of achieving more, keep trying (Adult)'*
  - *'Encouraging voices from family and friends'*
- Sharing and helping others
  - *'Helping friends'*
  - *'Respectful learning'*
- Feeling confident; to take risks and opportunities
  - *'Best they can be'*
  - *'Opportunities to improve'*
  - *'Un-judgemental [sic] environment'*
  - *'Not being afraid to ask'*

4.3 Have pathways to economic participation

This means:

- Being informed and educated
  - *'Being taught about real life issues'*
  - *'Participation'*
- Having rights, opportunities, choice and options
  - *Fair jobs'*
  - *'Opportunity'*
  - *'Choices'*
- Having skills: to be independent, confident, goal-oriented and open minded
  - *'Having the chance to try something new'*
  - *'Different options'*
- Feeling safe and optimistic
  - *'Not worried for the future'*
  - *'Equal rights'*
  - *'Good pay'*

4.4 Are supported to successfully transition through education into employment

This means:

- Having clear pathways, and planning
  - *'Clear pathways into careers'*
  - *'Taught to research and evaluate education'*
- Having practice and experiences
  - *'Come and Try Days for different careers and education'*
  - *'Volunteering/work experience from year 8'*
  - *'Being encouraged and supported'*
- Having commitment from adults
  - *'Having commitment from adults'*

Citizenship

5.1 Supported to know, respect, and celebrate abilities, beliefs, culture, languages and communities.

This means:

- Everybody thriving
  - *'Celebrating people's difference'*
  - *'Comfortable in your own skin'*
- Equality and respect for others
  - *'Not judging people for appearance'*
- Celebrating cultures and differences
  - *Celebrating cultures and differences'*
  - *'Doing traditions with pride'*
- Being non-judgemental
  - *'Equality'*
  - *'People respecting each other'*
- Having deep connections and emotions
  - *'Celebrating your culture'*
  - *'Respecting other cultures'*

5.2 Are portrayed positively

This means:

- Children and young people having rights and being listened to
  - *'Looked at in a positive view'*

- *'Portrayed well online and in the media'*
- Having good news stories about kids
  - *'Media doesn't paint children in a negative light'*
  - *'Being looked at positively'*
  - *'Good news stories about kids'*
- Feeling safe, confident and comfortable in your own skin
  - *'Everyone feels included'*
  - *'Not always the same but fair'*
  - *'No pressure to be or act a certain way'*

5.3 Have opportunities to contribute to their communities

This means:

- Being taken seriously, listened to and being included
  - *'Children having a say in matters involving them'*
  - *'Having positive relationships in the community'*
- Being empowered to take leadership and action
  - *'You have a voice'*

5.4 Have opportunities to influence matters of current and future significance

This means:

- Having a voice about things that matter and what happens in the world
  - *'Having a say in climate change'*
  - *'Being involved in things to do with civics and citizenship'*
  - *'Being listened to'*
- Learning about others, having choice and playing a part
  - *'You have a voice'*
  - *'Open to what they are saying'*
- Having power over yourself
  - *'Encouraged to express opinions'*
  - *'Included'*

5 Contexts

The themes/phrases/quotes explaining each Charter condition from the perspective of *'What It Means To Me'* need to be briefly considered in the contexts of current literatures and understandings of contemporary society to give gravitas and evidence to support the voices of children and young people.

Contextual information includes consideration of:

- *the UNCRC and contemporary views of childhood*
  - the 'post-modern/digital child' – whereby those <18 years have more agency and technological capacity now than when the UNCRC first came into effect
  - Digital Rights of the Child
- *other relevant social and developmental knowledges*
  - Models of Participation
  - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
  - Connectedness/Belonging for positive Mental Health & Wellbeing
  - Help-seeking & social connectedness.

5.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

According to UNICEF, the UNCRC has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. When world leaders committed to improving the lives of the world's children and young people 30 years ago, through agreeing to a set of non-negotiable standards and obligations in health care, education, legal and social and civil services, this international agreement on childhood set the course for ensuring children and young people globally should be provided with the conditions required to flourish. They are founded on respect for the dignity and worth of every individual, without discrimination and regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability.

The four core principles of the Convention are:

- *non-discrimination*
- *devotion to the best interest of the child*
- *the right to life, survival and development and*
- *respect for the views of the child.*

The full UNCRC has 54 Articles in all; Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure that all children and young people get all their rights (https://www.unicef.org.au/upload/unicef/media/unicef-simplified-convention-child-rights.pdf).

The ***Charter for Children and Young People*** (Charter), co-designed by young South Australians, pays heed to and is underpinned by the notions of the UNCRC, but is not a charter of rights per se, rather it reflects the conditions which should be available to all children and young people in South Australia, without discrimination, so they can lead fulfilling, happy, safe, well and educated lives.

Articles of the UNCRC which are particularly pertinent and relevant to the development of the Charter include:

- Article 2, *The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.*
- Article 3, *All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.*
- Article 5, *Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly.*
- Article 12, *Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.*
- Article 13, *Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.*
- Article 16, *Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their family and their home.*
- Article 17, *Children have the right to reliable information from the media. Mass media such as television, radio and newspapers should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.*
- Article 19, *Governments should ensure that children are properly care for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.*
- Article 24, *Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.*
- Article 27, *Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.*
- Article 28, *Children have the right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthier countries should help poorer countries achieve this.*
- Article 29, *Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.*

- Article 31, *Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.*
- Article 33, *Governments should provide ways of protecting children from dangerous drugs.*
- Article 34, *Governments should protect children from sexual abuse.*

5.1.1 Article 12

Article 12 is the most relevant provision when considering how to develop the Charter directly with children and young people. Closer examination of the full text (below) reveals there are two elements, *the right to express a view; and the right to have the view given due weight*.

- States parties shall assure to the child or young person who is capable of forming his or her own views

  the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- For this purpose, the child or young person shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard

  in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Article 12 however, cannot be considered in isolation, as Lundy (2007) points out:

> ***'the meaning of the individual provisions …can only be understood when they are read and interpreted in conjunction with the other rights protected in the Convention' (p 932).***
>
> ***For example: Article 2 (non-discrimination); Article 3 (best interests); Article 5 (right to guidance); Article 13 (right to seek, receive and impart information); and Article 19 (protection from abuse).***

Lundy proposed a new model for the successful implementation of Article 12 (p 933): one that considers the implications of four separate factors, operating in the context of other Articles:

Space	Children must be given the *opportunity* to express a view
Voice	Children must be *facilitated* to express their views
Audience	The view must be *listened* to
Influence	The view must be *acted upon*, as appropriate

In this model**:**

- ***Space and Voice*** *recognise the* ***right to express a view****, and*
- ***Influence and Audience*** *recognise the* ***right to have those views given due weight***
- *and are contextualised by:*
  - Article 2, Non-discrimination
  - Article 3, Best Interests
  - Article 13, Right to Information
  - Article 5, Right to Guidance from Adults
  - Article 19, The Right to Be Safe.

In developing this Charter, the CDC has indeed paid heed to Lundy's notions of *Space and Voice; Audience and Influence*:

- two summits or events have provided the *opportunity* and *facilitation*; recognising the right to express their views
- the Audience has 'listened' to their input through the provision of two reports of the children and young people's responses and the synthesis of those responses into the key conditions children and young people said they need to be safe, happy and well; *The Charter*
- the reports and syntheses *give due weight to the views*, and
- these views are now 'being acted upon' through the '*What Does It Mean to Me?'* process and the next phase, dissemination of the Charter and calls to action for schools and young people to now activate it and give it life.

5.2 The Agentic, Competent and Wireless/Digital Child

From: Spears, B., Taddeo, C., & Ey, L. (2021). Using participatory design to inform cyber/bullying prevention and intervention practices: Evidence-informed insights and strategies. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools, 1-13, doi:10.1017/jgc.2021.20*

Traditionally and historically, children and young people have had no voice; they have been silenced and not heard or listened to until relatively recently, largely in conjunction with the UNCRC (1989). Slee et al (2012, pp 32-53) outlined western societies'/adults' changing views of children/childhood, and it is apparent how these views shaped how children and young people have been seen, 'heard' …or not.

Historically, children and young people were variously viewed as; *property* (of God and fathers); or *inherently evil/sinful* to be 'broken' and 'moulded' into obedience (Wesley); or *virtuous and inherently good/innocent* (Rousseau); or *blank slates* to be 'filled' with learning and knowledge (*tabula rasa*; Locke); or as *slave labour* to be exploited. Child labour laws in the 19th century in Europe however, began to protect children and young people from being exploited, and gradually society's view of children and childhood changed.

Education, which had been largely for the privileged became increasingly possible and important for all; children and young people began attending school with their peers rather than learning from home/family; and *'childhood'* came to be considered a stage/sequence of human development beyond infancy, paving the way for greater understanding of the progression to adulthood and citizenship.

The '*post-modern'* child of the 1960s-70s was seen to be *agentic* in their own environment, and Elkind's *'competent*' child of the mid 1980s, heralded the view that children and young people had more capabilities than they were credited with. The *'wired*' and now *'wire-less/digital*' child of the last 30 years (1990s/2020s) reflects the most recent generation of children and young people, *who are shaping and being shaped by the online/digital environment*, in ways that most adults have not previously experienced (Slee et al, 2012).

Progressively, in synch with changes in society, western children and young people came to be viewed as emerging individuals with a voice, rights and responsibilities, but who also needed guidance and nurturing as they grew and developed in a rapidly changing global and digital society. As noted above, the UNCRC (1989) heralded the arrival of a new attitude towards all children and young people, one where; the four principles of *non-discrimination; serving their best interests; the right to survival and development; and respecting the views of the child* became central.

What is relevant here, is that children and young people today can *only* conduct their familial, peer, conflictual and romantic relationships in the context of a fluid digital setting. This was not the case when the original UNCRC was ratified.

The messiness and complexity of children and young people's lives as they shift across the on/offline continuum, points to the real need for understanding their experiences and the *relevance* of socio-ecological settings to *them.* This becomes increasingly important in a COVID-19 era, where all learning and social settings have been fractured/impacted.

Adults need to therefore engage closely, listen carefully and learn from children and young people as they navigate their daily, lived, social and digital realities.

Adults also need to acknowledge their *own* world view of children and childhood, as *their attitude impacts on their own capacity to relinquish/shift power in the relationship, towards children and young people, to support them to become agents of change, co-designers and learning or research partners.*

For several hundred years, children and young people were treated/viewed as chattels/commodities by and for adults' use and direction. By contrast, in the 2020s, the rights of children and young people to be heard and listened to should now be considered fundamental, yet Lundy (2007) acknowledges that whilst adults *appear* to comply through, for example, consultation/tokenistic participation, they ultimately have the power to ignore children and young people's views.

One practical way to ensure this does not happen, is to be transparent and feed back to children and young people *how* their views are taken into account so they can see if they have had any influence or not (Lundy (2007).

This 'closing the circle' is an important part of the process which demonstrates children and young people's views have been respected and given 'due weight' as prescribed by Article 12 (UNCRC, 1989).

How adults view and engage with children and young people as they navigate the constant social and emotional demands on and offline, is critical.

The rights ensconced in the UNCRC (1989) Article 12:

- *respect for children's views: to give opinions freely on issues that affect them; to have adults listen and be taken seriously*)

and Article13

- *sharing thoughts freely: the right to share freely what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing without harming others*)

are therefore *contextualised* by the most current views of childhood noted earlier: children and young people now have:

- ***agency*** *(the post-modern child)*
- ***competency*** *(the competent child) and*
- ***experience*** *of the digital settings in which they now conduct their relationships (the wireless/digital child).*

5.3 Rights of the Child in a Digital Setting

Article 12 however, cannot be considered in isolation, as Lundy (2007) points out

> ***Over thirty years after the invention of the world wide web, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has laid out the ways that young people and children should be treated in the digital world and how their rights should be protected. (March 24, 2021)***

After nearly two years of consultation, involving over 700 children and young people aged 9-22 years from 27 countries, the General Comment No. 25 (2021) on children and young people's rights in relation to the digital environment was adopted at the 86th session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and published March 2nd, 2021. It emphasizes that the rights of every child or young person must be respected, protected and *fulfilled in the digital environment*, and that children and young people *should have access to age-appropriate and empowering digital content, and information from a wide diversity of trusted sources*. (https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088182).

The four core principles provide a guide '*for determining the measures needed to guarantee the realization of children's rights in relation to the digital environment*'.

In particular, General Comment No 25, children's rights in relation to the digital environment states:

Non-discrimination

The right to non-discrimination requires that States parties:

- ensure that all children and young people have equal and effective access to the digital environment in ways that are meaningful for them.

States parties should take all measures necessary:

- to overcome digital exclusion.

That includes:

- providing free and safe access for children and young people in dedicated public locations and investing in policies and programmes that support all children and young people's affordable access to, and knowledgeable use of, digital technologies in educational settings, communities and homes.

Best Interests of the Child

- The *best interests of the child* is a dynamic concept that requires an assessment appropriate to the specific context.

- The digital environment was not originally designed for children and young people, yet it plays a significant role in their lives.
- States parties should ensure that, in all actions regarding the provision, regulation, design, management and use of the digital environment, the best interests of every child or young person is a primary consideration.
- States parties should involve the national and local bodies that oversee the fulfilment of the rights of children and young people in such actions. In considering the *best interests of the child*, they should have regard for all children and young people's rights, including their rights to seek, receive and impart information, to be protected from harm and to have their views given due weight, and ensure transparency in the assessment of the *best interests of the child* and the criteria that have been applied.

Right to life, survival and development

- Opportunities provided by the digital environment play an increasingly crucial role in the development of children and young people and may be vital for their lives and survival, especially in situations of crisis.
- States parties should take all appropriate measures to protect children and young people from risks to their right to life, survival and development. Risks relating to content, contact, conduct and contract encompass, among other things, violent and sexual content, cyberaggression and harassment, gambling, exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and the promotion of or incitement to suicide or life-threatening activities, including by criminals or armed groups designated as terrorist or violent extremist.
- States parties should identify and address the emerging risks that children and young people face in diverse contexts, including by listening to their views on the nature of the particular risks that they face.
- The use of digital devices should not be harmful, nor should it be a substitute for in-person interactions among children or between children, young people and parents or caregivers.
- States parties should pay specific attention to the effects of technology in the earliest years of life, when brain plasticity is maximal and the social environment, in particular relationships with parents and caregivers, is crucial to shaping young children's cognitive, emotional and social development.
- In the early years, precautions may be required, depending on the design, purpose and uses of technologies. Training and advice on the appropriate use of digital devices should be given to parents, caregivers, educators and other relevant actors, taking into account the research on the effects of digital technologies on children and young people's development, especially during the critical neurological growth spurts of early childhood and again in adolescence.

Respect for the views of the child

- Children and young people reported that the digital environment afforded them crucial opportunities for their voices to be heard in matters that affected them. The use of digital technologies can help to realize children and young people's participation at the local, national and international levels.
- States parties should promote awareness of, and access to, digital means for children and young people to express their views and offer training and support for them to participate on an equal basis with adults, anonymously where needed, so that they can be effective advocates for their rights, individually and as a group.
- When developing legislation, policies, programmes, services and training on the rights of children and young people in relation to the digital environment, States parties should involve all children and young people, listen to their needs and give due weight to their views.
- They should ensure that digital service providers actively engage with children and young people, applying appropriate safeguards, and give their views due consideration when developing products and services.
- States parties are encouraged to utilize the digital environment to consult with children and young people on relevant legislative, administrative and other measures and to ensure that their views are considered seriously and that children and young people's participation does not result in undue monitoring or data collection that violates their right to privacy, freedom of thought and opinion.
- They should ensure that consultative processes are inclusive of children and young people who lack access to technology or the skills to use it.

The views of the children and young people who co-designed the Charter in South Australia reflect these digital rights considerations, and demonstrate the relevance and importance of a contemporary view of childhood which acknowledges the agentic, competent and digital child noted above.

5.4 Models of Participation

Alongside the changing world views of children and young people, the emergence of the rights of children and young people to be *heard and given due weight*, and an acknowledgement of their *digital* rights, rests the notion of participation and what it really means for child and youth informed practice.

Schooling initially positioned children and young people solely as learners in adult-controlled, authoritarian-directed school settings, as passive recipients of adult-determined knowledge. Participation was adult directed, largely decorative, manipulated and tokenistic. Over time, shifts from the authoritarian pedagogies of the early 1900s to more socially democratic; liberal; and neo-liberal orientations

occurred, paving the way for children and young people to have greater participation and involvement in their education and emerging citizenry, one of the goals of an educated society. It is relevant to the development of the Charter to understand the different approaches to and potential levels of participation.

5.4.1 Hart's and Fletcher's Ladder of Participation

Hart's well-known 'ladder of participation' first emerged not long after the UNCRC agreement (1989), in his citizenship work for UNICEF *(*Hart, 1992). Believing that *'participation is the fundamental right of citizenship*' (p 5) and defined as the process of *'sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives*', Hart conceived of eight 'levels/rungs' of participation which could support a child or young person's trajectory towards citizenship:

- *manipulation*
- *decoration*
- *tokenism*

Non-Participatory

- *assigned but informed*
- *consulted and informed*
- *adult-initiated, shared decisions with children*
- *child initiated and directed*
- *child initiated, shared decisions with adults.*

Incremental shifts in power: *away from the adult* progressively towards the young person.

Fletcher, founder of *SoundOut!* an organization devoted to promoting student voice and engagement in schools, adapted Hart's ladder in 2003 to reflect the practical structure of contemporary schools: *Ladder of Meaningful Student Engagement* (https://soundout.org/2015/02/02/ladder-of-student-involvement/).

The bottom three rungs remain non-participatory, where adults retain control:

- *student manipulation, decoration and tokenism.*

The middle rungs/layers represent where adults still have some control, but students have progressively greater input with each step:

- *student centred; informed and consulted.*

The uppermost levels/rungs reflect where students become increasingly equitable with adults, in trusting, respectful, empowered partnerships/relationships:

- *student/adult equality; completely student driven; and student/adult equity*.

What is important, is that ***these are not strictly hierarchical representations, but one where there is incremental change in how adults and children and young people participate together***.

5.4.2 Lundy's Model of Accountability to Article 12

Lundy's model (2012) previously noted, specifically called for greater accountability to Article 12 of the UNCRC, *the right to express views and for them to be given due weight.* Lundy's model considers the following four elements (p 933):

Space	*Children must be provided with safe and inclusive opportunities to form and express their views*
Voice	*Children must be facilitated to express their view*
Audience	*The view must be listened to*
Influence	*The view must be acted upon, as appropriate*

and also takes account of other relevant UNCRC provisions situating participation in a wider human rights' context viz:

- Article 2 (*non-discrimination*)
- Article 3 (*best interest*)
- Article 5 (*right to guidance*)
- Article 13 (*right to seek, receive, and impart information*) and
- Article 19 (*protection from abuse*).

Taken together, these elements provide a practical approach/strategy/process for engaging children and young people in areas that matter to them. *Creating a safe, inclusive space*, where *student views can be elicited, listened to and then acted upon* supports Articles 12 and 13, but it also acknowledges that whilst adults may still control the process eg, through Article 5, *the right to guidance*, that as children and young people mature this control diminishes, and is counterbalanced by the need to listen and to give weight to their views.

Finally, Lundy asserts that *'student involvement and engagement in decision-making, is a permanent, non-negotiable human right*' (2007, p 940).

5.4.3 Hagen et al's Participatory Co-Design Approach

Article 12 however, cannot be considered in isolation, as Lundy (2007) points out

'In Participatory Design the people destined to use the system play a critical role in designing it.'
(Schuler & Namioka 1993)

From: Hagen, P., Collin, P., Metcalf, A., Nicholas, M., Rahilly, K., & Swainston, N. (2012).

Participatory Design of evidence-based online youth mental health promotion, prevention, early intervention and treatment. Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.

Another relevant model of participation draws on the notions of end-users, participatory design and co-design principles. Originating in Scandinavia in the late 1960s, when workers pushed for input into the design of technology being introduced into their workplaces, (Schuler & Namioka, 1993), the practices of participatory design have now been successfully adapted to support a range of improvements to service provision across health care; community; civic participation; including the co-design of educational materials with school students. Through meaningful involvement of stakeholders, the end-users become part of the design process.

In the case of the Charter, the conditions for living safe, supported, happy and well lives came directly from the children and young people at the Charter Summit in 2019. The facilitation process was engaging, participatory and empowering, enabling participants to contribute their ideas and lived realities freely. Participatory design is characterised by generative, experiential and action-based methods that put emphasis on play, co-operative learning, creating visions of the future and design-by-doing (Greenbaum & Kyng, 1991) and this formed the premise for all activities on the day.

Participatory design, in seeking to understand the lived experience of users, acknowledges they are always contextualised, embedded in the everyday, and shaped by motivations and feelings (Schuler & Namiola, 1993), and thus the approach is complementary to other participatory approaches and user-centric disciplines and techniques.

Participatory design emphasises designing from the perspective of the user, and goes beyond consultation and testing what works and what doesn't, to seek the active contribution of users as co-designers in the creation of the outcome, *throughout the design process* (Blomberg, et al, 1993). This differs from user-centred design where it is design or expert led, and users become information sources rather than co-designers. In participatory design, knowledge is generated by *both* researchers and users through methods supporting a learning process (Shuler & Namioka, 1993) which also creates a shared language between them.

Revisiting the children and young people informed Charter conditions at the Charter Launch in 2021, enabled another group of children and young people, including some who had been present in 2019, to participate throughout the design process, as we 'closed the circle', returning to the words and voices of children and young

people. Ongoing involvement by and with children and young people throughout the process increases the feasibility and acceptability of the co-designed outcomes and ensures that recommendations generated by children and young people, and then interpreted by researchers or designers, still effectively, and honestly reflect children and young people's input. This was the case with the development of the Charter.

Continuous engagement also helps to keep pace with change, mitigating some of the impacts of time between the original Charter Summit (2019) and the Charter Launch (2021). Distribution and dissemination of the Charter will also undergo further engagement processes with the 67 children and young people who volunteered to further the work of the Charter in their school settings.

The model itself has four key components and operates iteratively across each:

- Identify: *What is the problem?*
- Define: *Why it occurs and who it effects? What is the magnitude of the problem?*
- Design: *Intervention, planning and evaluation framework: What works for whom?*
- Evaluate: *Impact, process and outcome*.

At the Charter Launch (2021) children and young people were engaged in articulating *What Does It Mean to Me?* In mixed age and school table groups, they sought to describe what the conditions of the Charter *Looked Like, Sounded Like and Felt Like* to them through fun activities, using generative methods. In doing so, they discussed and identified the issue; they clarified their experiences and understandings; and they proposed ideas for moving forward.

Taken together, the notions and models of participation presented here have all contributed to the conceptualisation of need for the user-driven approach to co-designing the Charter consisting of conditions directly with children and young people.

5.5 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

From: Slee, P.T., Campbell, M. & Spears, B. (Eds) (2012, 3rd Ed) *Child, Adolescent & Family Development* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maslow was a leading exponent of humanistic psychology, and emphasised the mental *health* of individuals, as opposed to the mental *illness* emphasised by psychoanalysts such as Freud. His work focused on the individual and the potential for development. In 1968, he described humans' *basic* needs and *growth* needs in terms of five ascending levels, from the most urgent survival needs to the highest level of achieving one's potential:

1. *Food, shelter, clothing: physiological needs;* the most urgent needs for survival

2. *Safety, protection, security*
3. *Belongingness; love: affiliation, acceptance; affection*
4. *Respect; esteem; approval; dignity; self-respect: involves two approaches: respect from others; and self-respect*
5. *Self-Actualisation: the achievement of one's full potential*.

Levels 1-4 represent the *deficit needs (D-needs)* and Level 5 represents the growth or being needs (*B-needs*). Maslow reminds us that considering children and young people's basic needs such as shelter, food, safety, appropriate clothing, and love, respect and belonging must all be met before individuals can grow to meet their full potential. One of the critiques of this theory however, concerns the very hierarchical nature of the model (often represented as an ascending triangle) and the sequence it follows.

The children and young people who contributed to developing the conditions in 2019 they *identified as needing* in order to live happy, safe, supported and well lives, together with those who reviewed the conditions in 2021 in terms of what each condition *meant to them*, have clearly articulated the survival, safety, belonging, and respect/esteem conditions they need to fare well in South Australia, and to have the opportunity to reach their full academic, social, technological, cultural and emotional potential. What they have also demonstrated, is that those conditions are not necessarily sequential or hierarchical but are simply required.

5.5.1 Connectedness/Connection/Belonging

From: McLoughlin, L., Spears, B., Taddeo, C. & Hermens, D.F. (2019). Remaining connected in the face of cyberbullying: Why social connectedness is important for mental health. *Psychology in the Schools*. Psychology in Schools 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22232

As one of the basic needs noted by Maslow, belonging and connectedness take on new meaning for contemporary agentic, competent and digitally involved children and young people. Connection to culture as well as to, with and through technology are also important lenses through which to view contemporary connectedness.

Social connectedness refers to one's ability to feel comfortable, confident, and have a sense of belonging within a larger social context in addition to family or friends (Lee & Robbins, 1995). If a person lacks a sense of connectedness, she/he may feel they cannot relate to the people around them, she/he may struggle to develop relationships, and feel isolated (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Other negative consequences associated with low social connectedness include low self-esteem, distancing oneself from society, a lack of trust, and the absence of a sense of belongingness (Lee & Robbins, 1995).

Foster et al (2017) examined domains of connectedness in relation to adjustment and revealed that *family and school connectedness may buffer youth on a trajectory of risk* (including bullying involvement and low social connectedness). Arango et al (2018) examined connectedness subtypes (family, school, and community) and found that *family and school connectedness were negatively associated with depression and suicidal ideation and that across time points, community connectedness was negatively associated with suicidal ideation*.

Rates of depression and anxiety increase as children enter adolescence, suggesting that this transition is a vulnerable time for their mental health (Hankin et al, 1998). Being socially connected can reduce levels of depression and emotional/behavioural difficulties (Fraser & Pakenham, 2009). Furthermore, research shows that higher levels of social connectedness may result in more positive mental health and wellbeing (Arabiat, Shaheen, Nassar, Saleh, & Mansour, 2018), and may reduce the risk of suicidal behaviour (Holland, Vivolo-Kantor, Logan, & Leemis, 2017) in young people, and may play a role in predicting different coping strategies in response to cybervictimization (McLoughlin, Spears, & Taddeo, 2018).

Of related concern, is that young people with depression are reluctant to seek help, and those with high levels of depressive symptoms are less likely to seek help from anyone compared with their peers with lower levels of depressive symptoms (Lawrence et al, 2015; Sawyer et al, 2012). Young people are more likely to turn to friends or family members as sources of help, depending on their perception of social support, rather than more formal services (Sawyer et al, 2012). These perceptions of support are important regarding social connectedness, and young people who feel disconnected from the people around them may consequently also feel they have no support systems in place.

Researchers have examined other aspects of connectedness in young people such as *school* connectedness (Chung-Do, Goebert, Hamagani, Chang, & Hishinuma, 2015; Millings, Buck, Montgomery, Spears, & Stallard, 2012; Niehaus, Irvin, & Rogelberg, 2016; Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012) or *parent* connectedness (Borowsky, Taliaferro, & McMorris, 2013), and *internet use and social connectedness* (Wu, Outley, Matarrita-Cascante, & Murphrey, 2015.

When considering the Charter conditions developed and reviewed by children and young people, belonging and connectedness feature across the five domains, suggesting that this need is indeed fundamental to these contemporary children and young people for their health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship. Connection to culture and respect for diversity also feature strongly, as do their needs to have fair digital/technological access so they can connect with friends and family. This became especially important with the advent of COVID-19, when

children and young people effectively were unable to connect in-person with their friends when in lockdowns, and had to rely on online learning and zoom gatherings for human connection/interaction. Alongside that, COVID-19 saw the decimation of many rights of passage for children and young people, such as when they graduated from school or entered higher education or workplaces during 2020-21.

Being able to reach out for help is a productive coping mechanism, and help-seeking and social connectedness are two important coping strategies and contexts for wellbeing, which young people have reflected in the Charter.

5.5.2 Help-seeking, Social Connectedness and Technology

From: Spears, B.A. & Taddeo C. (2021) Coping with Cyberbullying (Ch 13). In P.K. Smith and J. O'Higgins Norman (Eds). *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Bullying: A Comprehensive and International Review of Research and Intervention Vol 2*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Help-seeking is considered a coping process whereby an individual seeks external support either from formal or informal sources for a problem (Stretton, Spears, Taddeo, & Drennan, 2018), and social connectedness is defined simply as a sense of closeness to others (Lee & Robbins, 2000).

Social connectedness has been identified as fundamental for developing and experiencing a sense of belonging (Carroll, Bower, & Muspratt, 2017), and can be enhanced through development and experiences of proximal and distal relationships: including family, friends, and communities (Lee & Robbins, 1995, 2000). Social connectedness has been shown to be an indicator of both vulnerability and positive wellbeing (Roffey, 2013); reduce levels of depression and emotional/behavioural difficulties (Fraser & Pakenham, 2009); and has been identified as an important dimension of feeling safe and well (Spears et al, 2016a, 2016b). Social connectedness may further provide a *protective* mechanism against poor mental health outcomes often associated with cybervictimisation (McLoughlin, 2019; McLoughlin et al, 2018, 2019).

Technology affords opportunities for providing and facilitating both positive and negative connections for contemporary children and young people, evidenced by the ever-increasing numbers of social media users and the accompanying rise in cyberbullying and cybervictimisation. Data from each year of a four-year *Young and Well CRC: Safe and Well Online* cohort study (Spears et al, 2015a;b, 2016a; b; c), consistently revealed a group of children and young people who reported low levels of social connectedness, poor mental health, and experiences of cyberbullying and victimization. Together these factors present a complex mix of concerns for contemporary children and young people, for which generic and previously promoted coping strategies *may not be adequate*.

Stretton et al (2018) found that seeking help *online* may have completely different proximate predictors when compared with formal and informal help-seeking *offline*. This does present some challenges given the rapid development of online resources making it difficult for help-seekers to make informed decisions about credible and useful services and sources of help that best suit their needs.

In line with the importance of social connectedness, young people identified a range of factors that influenced their attitudes to help-seeking, *with friends and peer relationships central*. Respect for self and others, levels of trust, past experiences, suggestions from friends, recommendations from family, accessibility, feelings of safety, as well as resource design and content were all considered potential influencing factors when deciding whether to seek help or not (Spears et al, 2015a; b, 2016a; b; c). Young people further noted the complicated nature of help-seeking, *the more likely a young person was to engage in online help-seeking, the less socially connected that young person may be, but the more likely they were to consider online social connectedness to be important*. This reinforces the critical role of online help-seeking services and resources in facilitating sustainable, meaningful social connections for young people both as part of the help-seeking process and as part of preventative measures to promote wellbeing (Spears et al, 2016b) and productive coping strategies.

Youth-driven and informed resource design and content were considered important factors influencing attitudes to help-seeking, especially for targeting young males, who are renowned for not reaching out or connecting with services or resources. Spears et al (2016a) highlighted that if help-seeking is to be embraced as a proactive and productive coping strategy (for victims of cyberbullying), then a help-seeking ecosystem is necessary which has a range of relevant socio-material, support, and resources, and which is tailored to and enhances their help-seeking capacities and preferences.

The merits of social connectedness as a protective buffer between cyberbullying involvement and help-seeking intentions, as part of their strategies for wellbeing and coping, warrant further investigation. Studies have shown that frequent involvement in cyberbullying can predict *reduced* likelihood of seeking help, and others suggest social connectedness may be a *protective* factor. Providing opportunities that support children and young people to develop and sustain social connectedness, in both off- and online settings, and helping them build skills that facilitate positive social connections and relationships, is of critical importance. In concert with the affordances of current technologies and the available and broader help-seeking services and support ecology, initiatives aimed at improving the coping behaviours of young people who experience cyberbullying, need to consider the role social connectedness, help-seeking behaviours, positive relationships, and respect for self

and others play as personalised and relevant *strategies of wellbeing*, to support coping with cyberbullying in the context of being 'always on.'

The children and young people who contributed to the development and review of the Charter, have highlighted the intersectionality of help-seeking; social connectedness; and technology in their lives by expressing the importance and relevance of them to the conditions they require to live happy, safe, and well lives.

6 Summary and Conclusion

The Child Development Council (CDC) is an independent body set up under South Australian legislation to monitor, advise and report how well our youngest citizens in South Australia are faring in the areas of *health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship*.

One of the Council's key functions is to develop an Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People (framework) *including a Charter for Children and Young People* (Charter).

The **framework** guides the South Australian Government's work for children and young people and targets policy, legislation, funding and services to inform a cooperative, whole-of-government (state and local) approach to the setting of objectives or policies affecting children and young people.

The **Charter** reflects a commitment to work from a foundation of state, national and international children and young people's rights including the UNCRC and other human rights instruments.

The statements in the Charter represent the voices of children and young people and reflect what is important to them – having a good home life, having support from trusted adults, being listened to, participating in decisions that affect them, opportunity for a quality education, employment and most importantly, being respected and valued.

In developing the framework, including the Charter, the Act and/or the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Regulations 2017* the CDC *is required to consult with children and young people, their parents, families, carers and others*.

Part of this consultation process involved a **Charter Summit**, which aimed to enable a substantial, representative group of children and young people, age 5 to 18 years old, to inform the writing of the Charter. The process enabled children and young people to identify what's important to them in terms of *health, safety, wellbeing, education and citizenship*.

The Charter *sets out 20 conditions that all children and young people in South Australia can, and should have, without discrimination.*

- See https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Charter-sml-landscape.pdf

The conditions call on all South Australians to play an active role in improving the outcomes of children and young people, including children and young people themselves, parents, families and other caregivers, local governments, state government, the private sector, non-government organisations, Aboriginal communities, religious and cultural leaders, the media, and all who work with children and young people.

A second event was convened in 2021 to officially launch the Charter, which had evolved directly from the original responses in 2019 from children and young people who had indicated they needed to have a good life and to feel safe, happy and well.

Children and young people discussed what the 20 Charter conditions *meant to them* and also advised how the Charter could be used in the future. Their ideas were captured in the *Children and Young People's Charter Launch: What We Heard – Summary Report*. (https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Charter-Launch-Report-BH-2021-06-09.pdf)

In order to *'close the circle*' and determine whether the Charter had legitimacy and veracity of meaning for the children and young people present in 2021, and whether that meaning related back to the original responses of the Charter Summit (2019), the CDC Charter Reference Group undertook a process of distillation of responses from the *What We Heard Report* (June 2021).

When the responses to the Charter conditions were synthesised, it became clear that *they had real meaning for the new cohort, and their words resonated and reflected the original intent of the children and young people from 2019 who told us what matters to them,* to enable them to live a happy, safe and well life.

When those responses are viewed in terms of current literatures and knowledges about children and young people's: rights; development; participation; basic needs; and social and emotional contexts, it is clear that this Charter consisting of conditions for optimal wellbeing and happy, safe and well lives, co-designed by, with and for the children and young people of South Australia, is credible, legitimate and powerful.

It speaks to the strengths of a process which empowered children and young people with the responsibility and freedom to say what matters to them, in a safe and supported space, and where what they said was given due weight. Closing the circle,

by ensuring the contributions were visible and taken seriously, has meant the CDC has demonstrated trust in and respect for the children and young people in South Australia.

Moving Forward: Advice from Children and Young People

Children and young people indicated their willingness to take the Charter and make it 'live' in school communities. The 67 children and young people who nominated to be involved following the Charter Launch, have proffered suggestions as to how this might occur, and the CDC is now working through those ideas, so that the next phase of the participatory co-design approach can be actioned.

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