I am very pleased to introduce the 2018 youth strategy, Your Future – Your Way, the fourth in a series of annual youth strategies for South Australia that have consecutively investigated, trialed and developed responses to key issues for young South Australians.

Beginning in 2015, It Starts with YOUth identified youth homelessness and youth transitions to further education and employment as key issues. Through this strategy, we also provided young South Australians with opportunities to discuss their issues and priorities. In 2016 and 2017, Connected to YOUth and youTHRIVE further addressed youth homelessness and youth transitions through programs including Successful Transitions, Be a Job Maker and the MoneySmart Rookie Grants. We also introduced initiatives designed to address the causes of some of these issues, for example developing a Youth Safety Strategy as a response to the unique needs of young people around family, domestic and sexual violence, and the Community of Schools and Youth Services pilot, which aims to support young people at risk of homelessness.

Each year, the youth strategy allows us to explore emerging trends that affect the wellbeing of young people, as well as look at ongoing issues in new ways. In 2017, we committed to talking further with LGBTIQ young people about their needs, and to young people from multicultural backgrounds about the nexus between media and multiculturalism. Your Future – Your Way summarises what we’ve achieved and what’s new in 2018.

The journey from 12 – 24 years is a time of enormous change – of many new adventures and experiences. It’s an exciting time during which young people shape their futures, so it is critical that they get the support they need, when they need it. Your Future – Your Way recognises that every young South Australian has the right to find their own pathway to success. Through this strategy we take an even closer look at the social and economic pathways that lead to thriving futures for young South Australians.

Your Future – Your Way encapsulates our commitment to listening to young people and delivering on opportunities that suit their aspirations and circumstances. That’s why in 2018 we’ll also be taking the time to check back in with young people and the broader community sector to find out what we can build on, where there are gaps, and how we can work together to create the best supports and opportunities for South Australian young people.

I look forward to seeing what opportunities Your Future – Your Way will bring to many young South Australians.
Building social and economic pathways to a thriving future

There are more than 265,000 young people aged 12-24 years in South Australia. The South Australian Government works to achieve fair and equitable access to social and economic pathways for all young people in South Australia, not just for some. This includes making sure young people are not denied access to pathways because of their personal circumstances or experiences, geographic location or identity.

Our Government’s vision is for South Australia to be a place where people, business and communities thrive. The pathways young people take may vary, but the basic foundations for a thriving present and future remain the same, as outlined in the diagram below.

We invest in young people’s pathways to thriving futures

**Economic**

Supporting young people to:
- complete school
- find work experience
- develop life skills and volunteer
- be financially stable
- further education and training
- be job ready
- obtain meaningful employment.

**Social**

Supporting young people to:
- have strong social and family bonds
- explore personal potential
- feel a rich sense of culture/identity
- access help when it is needed
- be safe, healthy and resilient
- have a say and inform decisions
- avoid the justice system cycle.

Our job as Government is to work together with all levels of government, non-government agencies and service providers, business, industry, community and young people to ensure that the right opportunities are available to meet young people’s specific needs and develop their skills and talents.

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion’s (DCSI’s) vision, ‘Communities for all, Opportunities for everyone’ demonstrates our commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities across different groups and communities, especially those who might experience barriers to economic and social participation.

**Community Services** is a division within DCSI and is just one of many areas of Government that turns this talk into action. We invest in initiatives and programs that help build the economic and social pathways that support young people to thrive.

We are not alone in these efforts. There are many in South Australia who share our goals and we work together to identify the issues and co-ordinate our responses. It is important that our work is informed by the latest evidence and by the experiences of young people.

Underpinning all of our work is our recognition that social and economic wellbeing are inextricably linked. We need to ensure that both are addressed if we are to improve outcomes for young people and their communities.

**Your Future – Your Way** recognises the importance of this, highlights achievements to date, and identifies opportunities on the horizon for young South Australians.

The work of Community Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

Community Services works with government, non-government and community to build opportunities for people and communities, and to ensure that social and economic pathways exist and are open to everyone, especially those at highest risk of social or economic exclusion.

We focus our work within metropolitan and regional communities experiencing social and economic challenges. We support the volunteering sector and a range of affordable living programs to improve outcomes for people and communities.

Our focus on young people spans all of these areas.
Why economic pathways are important

Our economic participation is critical to our wellbeing. Even as children, the economic circumstances in which we enter the world can influence the course of our lives and of those closest to us.

Economic opportunities available to young people are not static – they ebb and flow depending on individual, community and even state-wide, national and global circumstances. A young person’s ability to take advantage of such opportunities may also ebb and flow with changing circumstances.

We know young people value their pathways to economic wellbeing. Mission Australia’s 2017 Youth Survey recently asked young South Australians about school, work and everything in between:

- 6 in 10 felt either positive or very positive about the future, however 1 in 10 felt negative or very negative.
- Plans after leaving school were to go to university, get a job, travel or take a gap year, go to TAFE/college or get an apprenticeship.
- Most felt extremely confident to somewhat confident in achieving study or work goals, however just over 20% felt slightly to not at all confident.

Shared economic wellbeing leads to stronger communities. We want all young South Australians to feel confident in their future. This means ensuring that they all have opportunities to acquire knowledge, develop vocational and interpersonal skills, explore talents and interests, and choose their own futures.

What contributes to economic pathways in South Australia

There are many initiatives in South Australia that contribute to the economic wellbeing of young people.

Attending school offers invaluable opportunities for young people to make connections outside of their immediate family. School is not just about education and learning. It broadens young people’s social networks and helps lay the foundations for their economic pathways later in life.

For 12 – 24 year olds, experiences in school can shape interests and the ability to take up opportunities into the future. Engaging in formal education helps us to learn how to be social, get along with others, problem solve and identify our strengths. It is often in the school environment that we first come into contact with the roles and responsibilities of the world of work, for example through work experience and volunteering.

It is important to support young people to transition successfully through the major education milestones. These include the transition from primary school to high school and the journey to completing Year 12. It is also critical to support young people beyond the formal school years to engage in further education/training or to find meaningful and stable employment.

Lead agencies in South Australia that provide supportive pathways to foster young people’s economic wellbeing include the Department for Education and Child Development and the Department of State Development. South Australia has many post school opportunities through TAFE SA, apprenticeships, traineeships and our well-regarded university sector. There are a number of national initiatives that support young people’s pathways to employment too.

Our work in the northern and southern suburbs of Adelaide through our Northern and Southern Connections programs includes initiatives that closely align with our focus on making coordinated, intentional and structured social and economic pathways available to young people. As an example, our partnership with the Habitat for Humanity program not only supports low-income families to build their own home, but also bridges generational divides and increases the skills of unemployed young people, long-term unemployed adults, job-seeking refugees, return to work participants and community volunteers.

Northern Connections also contributes to the Playford Data Observatory, a multi-sectoral partnership including representatives from federal, state and local government, as well as the not-for-profit sector. They use the findings of local longitudinal research to inform local decision-making that will influence the long-term social and economic outcomes of local young people.

Some of our initiatives are not specifically for young people but can still provide young people with economic opportunities. Launch ME, delivered in partnership with Good Shepherd Microfinance, provides individuals with small loans for new or existing small enterprises. Participants develop their entrepreneurial skills through ongoing mentoring and business coaching.

Some initiatives that Community Services supports seek to help young people in local communities and regions where economies may be going through challenging times. In recent years, we have worked together with key partners to build opportunities in communities including Coduna, Whyalla, Peterborough and the northern and southern suburbs of Adelaide. As an example, we have worked with local agencies and young people in Peterborough to create a Youth Plan, which included seed funding for community projects and a driver’s licence training program.

Our work in the northern and southern suburbs of Adelaide through our Northern and Southern Connections programs includes initiatives that closely align with our focus on making coordinated, intentional and structured social and economic pathways available to young people. As an example, our partnership with the Habitat for Humanity program not only supports low-income families to build their own home, but also bridges generational divides and increases the skills of unemployed young people, long-term unemployed adults, job-seeking refugees, return to work participants and community volunteers.

Northern Connections also contributes to the Playford Data Observatory, a multi-sectoral partnership including representatives from federal, state and local government, as well as the not-for-profit sector. They use the findings of local longitudinal research to inform local decision-making that will influence the long-term social and economic outcomes of local young people.

Wheels in Motion
Northern Connections

Wheels in Motion provides young people in need living in northern Adelaide with subsidised, supervised driving lessons. Key partners of the Wheels in Motion program include Northern Connections, City of Salisbury, City of Playford and Rotary Clubs (Salisbury and Playford).

In 2016-17 alone, program volunteer mentors in the City of Playford contributed in total 1,040 hours and assisted at least 30 young people to obtain their Provisional licence. In the City of Salisbury, volunteers contributed on average 35 hours per week and assisted at least 25 young people on a pathway to obtaining their Provisional Licence.

Expanding on this success, Northern Connections and local partners have established a new multicultural women’s component of the program, and are also seeking to establish specific support for Aboriginal young people. The Wheels in Motion partners are also keen to see how previous automotive industry employees in Northern Adelaide might get involved as volunteers in the program.

Detailed information about these initiatives and more is available on the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion’s websites at dcsi.sa.gov.au and officeforyouth.sa.gov.au
What the youth strategies have helped achieve since 2015

Be a Job Maker
The Be a Job Maker program helps to build the entrepreneurial skills and experience young people need to thrive as the business leaders of tomorrow. Since the program’s pilot in 2016, it has been delivered in southern and northern Adelaide, as well as Whyalla. In 2018, the program will be delivered by Flinders New Venture Institute and partners in southern and central Adelaide, incorporating learnings from previous pilots.

Successful Transitions
The Successful Transitions program supports young people aged 17-24 to take the leap into work experience, volunteering, further education/training or secure employment. In 2018, the program continues to be delivered in partnership with the Department of State Development to further improve outcomes for program participants.

Emma, 20
Successful Transitions participant
Emma lives at home with her father just outside of metropolitan Adelaide. Although she completed Year 12, she experiences severe anxiety which has made it difficult for her to take up opportunities after school. Since joining the Successful Transitions program, Emma has graduated from needing to work one on one, to working in groups with other participants. Emma feels she is not defined by anxiety, is now sitting for her Learner’s permit and is feeling more confident to apply for jobs.

Find out more about the State Government’s support for pathways to employment by visiting statedevelopment.sa.gov.au

Social Enterprises are an emerging business model in South Australia. They provide employment opportunities for local people and social benefits for local communities. They are innovative and inclusive because they are able to trade commercially whilst still fulfilling social aims by investing profits back into the community. They can be well placed to offer supportive work environments, often with wrap-around services that allow people who might otherwise have difficulty finding a job to join the world of work.

The number of Social Enterprises in South Australia is growing; however, there are still limited social entrepreneurship programs for young people, especially for those who need a little extra support.

What we will do
We will find out from existing social entrepreneurs and other experts what exists already and how we can strengthen young South Australians’ access to social entrepreneurship programs. This work could lead to the design and delivery of a program to help young people develop social entrepreneurial skills and networks. We will also explore future models that provide seed funding for up-and-coming young social entrepreneurs.

Regional driver’s licence attainment
Having a driver’s licence can be critical to getting to and from work, study, sporting, volunteering and social events. Young people who have difficulties getting or keeping a licence can find it hard to compete for jobs, further their study or remain socially active, especially if they live regionally.

There are different strategies at play in South Australia to support young people to get and keep a driver’s licence. Legitimate safety concerns need to be balanced with fair access to opportunities.

What we will do
We will build on state, national and international knowledge about what works best in supporting young people to get and keep their licence, as well as stay safe on the roads. We will focus particularly on those living regionally. We will use existing resources and lessons learned from programs such as ‘Geared to Drive’ and ‘Wheels In Motion’, to identify gaps and opportunities for future programs.
Why social pathways are important

The social pathways we take early in life, or indeed have access to, set the foundations for our enduring social and economic wellbeing. For those aged 12-24 years, having the opportunity to develop strong family bonds, good social networks and explore their personal potential is critical during the transition from childhood to independence.

Mission Australia’s 2017 Youth Survey\(^2\) listened to the voices of young South Australians. They said mental health was a top priority, as well as establishing strong social connections and wellbeing.

The top 2 aspects of life young people valued most were family relationships and friendships (other than family).

The top 4 places or people to go for help when needed were friends, parents, relative/family friend, brother/sister and the internet.

The top 2 issues of personal concern were coping with stress and school or study problems.

As with any person, young people don’t live in isolation. They interact with services, systems and broader society. They rely on friends and family for support. When that’s not there, or when they are facing a complex issue, we need to make it easy for them to access quality and reliable help.

What contributes to social pathways in South Australia

There are many initiatives in South Australia that contribute to the social wellbeing of young people.

The education, health and child protection systems are essential to keeping young people safe and supported in their wellbeing and development. Local government agencies are often on the pulse of local issues, and the broader youth sector provides a range of services across the state.

Young leaders and those who volunteer their time or advice to ensure policies and programs deliver the best outcomes for young South Australians play an important role to ensure social justice and wellbeing for all.

We also have independent bodies such as the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, the Guardian for Children and Young People, and the recently established Commissioner for Children and Young People that advocate for the best interests of young people.

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion plays a key role in supporting young people at risk of exclusion, through its Housing, Youth Justice, Disability and Community Services divisions, as well as the Office for Women.

---

Opportunities for all

Community Services support for young people stretches beyond the confines and functions of the Office for Youth. The principles of fairness, equity and inclusion for all young people are embedded in all our initiatives, and there are many opportunities available to young people through our grants, programs and community-based work.

Your Future - Your Way recognises the vast opportunities available to young people across the state. Sometimes the first port of call for those wanting to support young people is to access the range of grants available from government and non-government sectors.

In our work, the Grants SA program plays a critical role in funding youth focussed projects across the state. Examples of Grants SA projects that have supported young people during 2017 include the construction of a sustainable community garden, providing learning opportunities for 350 young people in the northern suburbs; an early intervention program to develop social and communication skills for 60 young people across South Australia who are deaf or hearing impaired; equipment to support the Port Pirie Youth Theatre; the development of a mentoring program for young offenders aged between 12 – 18 years in southern Adelaide; a training program for volunteers supporting young people experiencing disadvantage across metropolitan Adelaide; employing a coordinator to work with young Aboriginal people with hearing loss living in remote communities; and developing and promoting a dedicated, accessible and safe youth space for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Providing culturally specific social support for young people is important too. We do this through the Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth and Family Service (MAYFS), as well as the Services to Aboriginal Youth (STAY) program which reaches young Aboriginal people in remote or regional communities.

Further embracing diversity in South Australia, and connected to the Multicultural Action Plan for South Australia, the Media and Multiculturalism Project has emerged to focus on challenging negative public perceptions of multicultural groups and young people. Community Services also extends support to young people from multicultural backgrounds through the Stronger Families Stronger Communities grants program. In 2017-18, many funded initiatives will reach young people with their focus on strengthening families and building strong social connections and participation in community life.

Image: Staff at social enterprise shop, provided by Yalata Anangu Aboriginal Corporation.

Services to Aboriginal Youth

Through support from the STAY program, the Yalata community has developed the Yalata Youth Hub where there is a Youth Social Enterprise Shop. The shop generates income through catering at discos/movie nights and sales of food, gifts, paintings, artefacts and bush medicine. Participants in the shop have gained experience, knowledge and confidence and increased their employability by learning computer and finance skills. Locals report that the shop is a lead factor in the resurgence of traditional artefact making and painting within the community.

The Ceduna Youth Hub is funded through a range of partners, including the Commonwealth Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The new STAY project officer provides additional support to the Hub’s highly successful Youth Mentoring Program and Senior Youth Leadership Group. The officer works with young people to build opportunities for employment, further education and training, and partnering with two Ceduna-based schools to create pathways for disengaged young people to return to school. With the additional support from STAY, and the continuing support of the Hub partners, the Hub is looking forward to progressing and expanding on the important work of the last six years.

Image: Staff at social enterprise shop, provided by Yalata Anangu Aboriginal Corporation.
Community Services works in and with local communities, especially in metropolitan and regional areas experiencing social and economic challenges. Our way of working supports the community and locally based agencies to take the lead in making decisions about priorities and solutions. This includes listening to and working with young people in the context of their local community, to understand their needs and to make the most of local strengths and assets.

From Whyalla to Port Augusta, and Mount Gambier to the Barossa, under the Community Services Support Program we provide funding towards many local agencies that deliver tailored, local opportunities and support to young people. We also contribute funding to metropolitan services such as Urban Youth.

We recognise and celebrate young people throughout the state through initiatives such as SA Youth Week (SAYW) and the Young Volunteers Scholarship Award. We also sponsor initiatives such as the Channel 9 Young Achievers Awards and the YMCA’s Youth Parliament program.

Our initiatives supported under Northern and Southern Connections, like Mend the Cycle, pay social as well as economic dividends by supporting young people to build social and employability skills. We also connect to state-wide strategies such as the Volunteering Strategy of SA, where we are working with partners to increase the uptake of volunteering in the curriculum in schools, and developing other initiatives that focus on volunteering as a social and employment pathway for young people. There are also initiatives that aim to keep young people safe, for example the Dry Zone – Hub and Safe Transport Home Service and the Youth Safety Strategy.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on community-based collaborative initiatives that benefit young people, including Making an Impact and Together in the North. More initiatives of this kind are emerging, including how we can support the Adelaide Wellbeing Collective in the CBD. All of these initiatives are designed to respond to complex social challenges affecting young people in their local neighbourhoods.

Detailed information about these initiatives and more is available on the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion’s websites: dcsi.sa.gov.au and officeforyouth.sa.gov.au

SA Youth Week (SAYW) will be held from 13-22 April 2018, and is the largest annual event on the South Australian youth calendar. A number of youth organisations have received grants to deliver events across the state with, and for, young people.

Each year, an SA Youth Week Young Member is appointed to act as the official SA Youth Week ambassador, who plays an important role in planning, promoting, implementing and evaluating SA Youth Week.

The Young Member this year is Wathnak Vy. Here’s what Wathnak had to say about being the 2018 Young Member and what Your Future – Your Way means to him:

Imagine if you could do whatever you wanted to do, go places you have only dreamed of, and become the person you have always hoped to be. It is your time young people of South Australia.

As the 2018 Young Member, my goal is to be your greatest supporter. A person who will help you to plan, promote, run and evaluate your events, as well as put our hands together and celebrate 2018 SAYW.

Our future is in our hands. Let’s plan for the future we want, take action, seek the help we need to make it happen and celebrate our achievements along the way!
What the youth strategies have helped achieve since 2015

**Media and multiculturalism**

Mainstream media portrayals of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not always positive or accurate. There are limited opportunities in South Australia for young people to develop free, basic skills to generate their own media content. Access to such opportunities can help young people from diverse backgrounds share their own multicultural or migration story, or the story of their communities.

As South Australia’s only multi-art form organisation dedicated to outcomes by and for people aged 26 and under, Carclew will support young people in 2018 to develop their storytelling skills, and build their capacity to generate their own media, by producing their chosen migration or multicultural story to share with wider audiences.

**Development of a Youth Safety Strategy**

Consultation with the community sector and young people has identified the need to better support young people in South Australia experiencing and/or engaging in relationship, family or sexual violence. In 2017, we co-designed a Youth Safety Strategy framework with government, the community sector and young people that aims to shine a light on the required service, system and societal responses needed to keep young people safe.

The co-design process highlighted the importance of engaging with young people, particularly those with lived experience, to ensure the most effective and informed responses are developed. Young people we spoke with had this to say about the process so far:

> It was engaging, easily understandable, easy to participate in and safe. (It worked well) how we discussed so many different topics and that our voices will be heard.

– Young participants in 2017 workshops

The draft co-designed strategy framework was made available for public consultation in late 2017. Action and implementation will be developed through an across government response, and informed through ongoing collaboration with the sector and young people.

**Community of Schools and Youth Services**

Early identification and support is crucial to preventing at-risk young people from moving into unstable and unpredictable living situations.

In 2017, the University of South Australia and partners, Uniting Communities and SYC, began the two-year Community of Schools and Youth Services pilot program in Mount Gambier. The pilot operates across local high schools, using a whole of school survey to identify students at risk and offer them and their families a range of supports to prevent disengagement and homelessness.

We’re committed to the success of the Mount Gambier Community of Schools and Youth Services pilot. This is an opportunity for services to do something different and create change in young people’s lives for the better.

– Tasja Barelds – Headspace / Uniting Communities Mount Gambier
Ensuring the best outcomes for young carers

There are an estimated 30,300 young carers in South Australia. Whilst some services are available to them, many young carers are ‘hidden’ as they may still be at school or working while also caring for a loved one.

Carers SA’s 2016 research highlighted that many young carers experience significant social and emotional stress, and that there was a need for evidence-based approaches to supporting young carers. In 2017, Carers SA piloted a proof-of-concept model, funded through Grants SA. This has further highlighted the need for comprehensive support for young carers, to help them achieve their goals and to ensure they can access support when and where it is needed.

What we will do

Expanding on Carers SA’s work, in 2018 we will bring together Carers SA and the broader Carer Support Network to explore the next steps of a comprehensive support model for young carers. This model will have a focus on ways to support individual young carers to achieve their goals, and on better integrating government and non-government efforts to meet the needs of young carers across South Australia.

Listening to LGBTIQ young people and supporting inclusive services

In South Australia, a limited number of groups and organisations, sometimes led by young people, provide safe places for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) young people to access support, connect with others and express their views.

We also know when it comes to services, it’s important that they are truly LGBTIQ inclusive, especially in regional areas where LGBTIQ young people are unlikely to have access to LGBTIQ specific services and are at higher risk of the impacts from potential discrimination and isolation.

What we will do

We have teamed up with the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia to support our 2018 conversations with LGBTIQ young people and the organisations/groups around them. These conversations will result in a published report that will inform the ‘state of play’ for LGBTIQ young people in SA, identifying what is working well and what else might be needed. We will also use the feedback from these conversations to strengthen young people’s voices in ‘The Way Forward’ consultation.

In 2018, we will also offer regional youth-oriented services in South Australia inclusion LGBTIQ awareness training for staff and volunteers that might otherwise find it difficult to gain access to such training. In addition, up to ten youth-oriented organisations will receive subsidised access to Shine SAs accredited How2 training program that supports organisations to achieve inclusive LGBTIQ services. A subsidy for travel will be available for up to six regional organisations. We will document our experiences and share the learnings with other youth-oriented services.
Going forward
2019 - time to check in

Your Future – Your Way reports on our actions over the last four years on the issues of successful transitions, preventing homelessness and engaging further with young people. During this time, we have also listened to young people and the youth sector’s feedback about each annual youth strategy.

We know that issues and contexts are always evolving. As old problems are resolved, new challenges and opportunities arise. We need to work with young people and our partners to shape the best responses. We need to develop a shared strategic vision for young South Australians that looks toward the future whilst remaining responsive to current needs and issues.

The landscape for young people in South Australia has also changed over the last three years with the introduction of our first Commissioner for Children and Young People, as well as multiple new Acts that aim to improve the safety and developmental outcomes of children and young people. We need to take into account any new responsibilities or opportunities these represent.

It is time to check back in with young people and the youth sector.

In 2018, we will begin a state-wide stocktake of where young people are at and what their needs and ideas are for their future. We will invite feedback from key government departments and the youth sector, seeking productive and genuine partnerships to influence key issues for young South Australians.

Through this engagement, we hope to develop a renewed plan that addresses the priority issues facing young people in South Australia. This will include agreed upon actions to address them. It will also include a priority focus on young people at risk of exclusion from social and economic pathways.

We look forward to working with young people and the people and agencies that support them throughout 2018. As further details emerge, we will make them available at officeforyouth.sa.gov.au.

Feedback
DCSI Client Feedback
GPO Box 292 Adelaide SA 5001
Email: DCSI.clientfeedbackandcomplaints@sa.gov.au

Alternative formats
The information in this publication can be provided in an alternative format or another language on request by calling (08) 8413 8178.

Stock images may appear in this publication. These images are for illustrative purposes only, and people depicted in these images may not be associated with the publication’s subject matter.