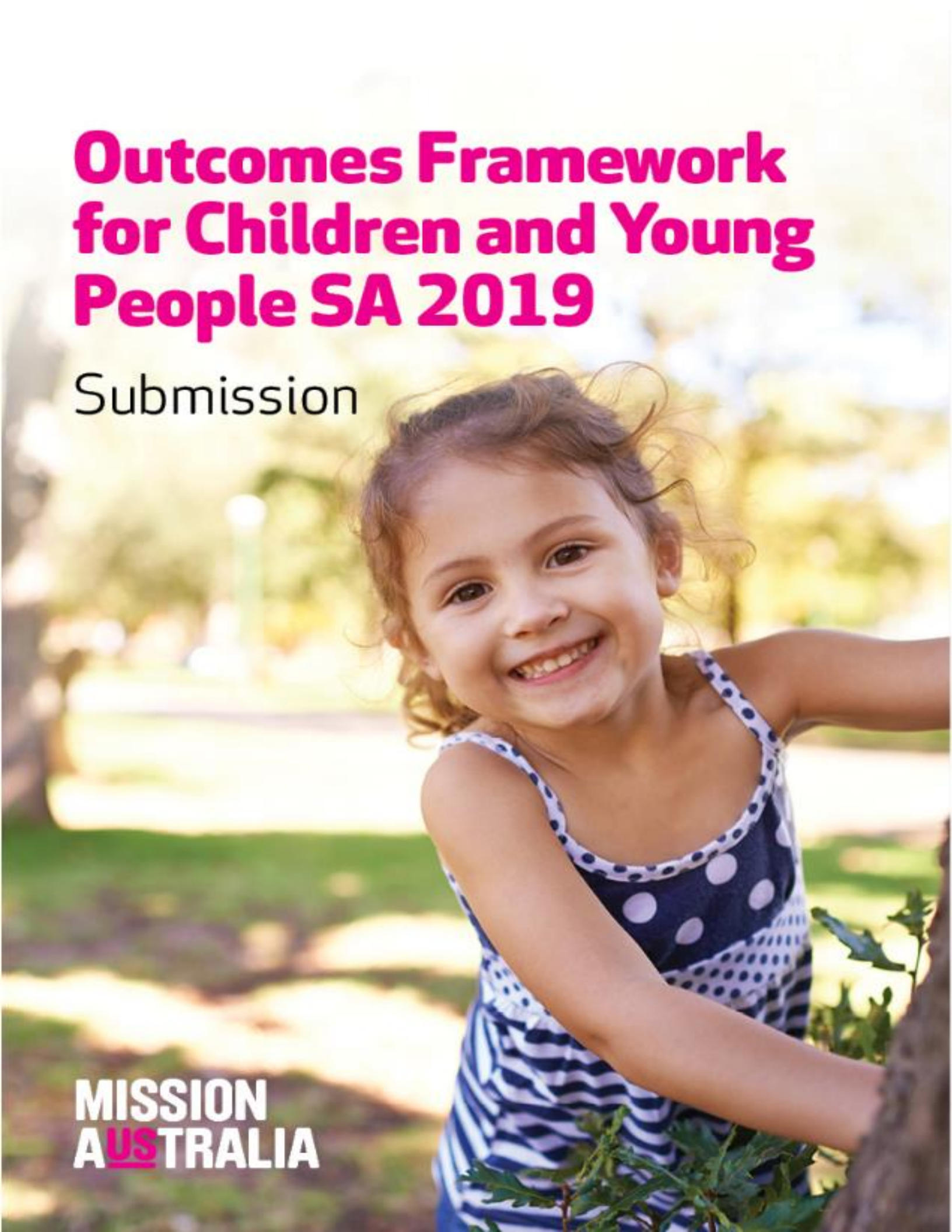


# Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People SA 2019

Submission

MISSION  
AUSTRALIA



# Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in South Australia 2019

## Introduction

Mission Australia is a national, non-denominational Christian charity that has been helping vulnerable Australians move towards independence for more than 160 years. During the 2017-18 financial year we supported over 120,000 individuals through 461 programs and services nationally.<sup>1</sup> In South Australia (SA), we supported over 1,000 children and young people aged 0 – 17 years during the last financial year.<sup>2</sup> Our children and youth services include, Flexible Learning Options (FLO), Reconnect, Transition to Work, Drug and Alcohol Youth Outreach Service and Youth Offending Prevention Program.

Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the outcomes framework for children and young people in SA. This submission is based on a combination of research and insights from our direct service provision across SA and other states. The comments are in relation to the gaps that have been identified through our service delivery experience in SA.

Children and young people grow up within a family and social context and measuring outcomes that relate to children with limited regard to the experiences, situations and impacts of family and other conditions may not provide an accurate picture of the lives of children and young people. For example, according to *Working Through it: A Youth Survey report on economically disadvantaged young people* indicated that higher proportion of economically disadvantaged young people felt there were barriers impacting upon them finding work (51.9% compared with 38.0% of respondents with parent/s or guardian/s in paid employment).<sup>3</sup>

Understanding that the mandate of the Child Development Council (the Council) is to develop a whole-of Government and whole-of-State outcomes framework across the five domains, it is important to note that in order to achieve these outcomes there are many socioeconomic factors that need to be considered. In order to improve the lives of children and young people, it is imperative that measures are in place to address the underlying challenges that families experience, particularly parents who experience economic disadvantage.

Throughout the document, the draft indicators refer to diverse age cohorts. We understand that some of these may relate to currently available data. However, we encourage consistent use of age groups as far as possible to measure outcomes across different domains.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mission Australia, Annual Report, 2018, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2018/809-annual-report-2018/file>

<sup>2</sup> Mission Australia, MA Service Delivery Census FY 2017/18 (internal).

<sup>3</sup> Mission Australia, *Working Through it: A Youth Survey report on economically disadvantaged young people*, 2019, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

There are also issues with uses of different data sets and the timelines. For example, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census information will be available every 5 years and Australian Early Development Census gathers information every 3 years. The other data are likely to be gathered annually. It is important for the Council to clarify how these different data sets are going to be synthesised when measuring outcomes.

As part of this process, the Council should work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the future findings of this outcomes measurement framework are made available to the public on a regular basis.

## **Health: young South Australians are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy**

Mission Australia supports the general principles set out under this section. However, the scope should be expanded to include other aspects that relate to broader health of young people, including aligning the outcomes to the social determinants of health.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the social determinants of health as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.<sup>4</sup> The social determinants of health discourse clearly demonstrates how some health inequities are not caused by a lack of access to health services, but by the influence of inequalities in other sectors such as housing, occupation, education or income.<sup>5</sup>

The social determinants of health provide a universal framework to build strong support systems to assist people with mental health issues and create a framework for social inclusion and economic participation. Although action on the social determinants of health involves the whole of society, the health sector has a key role in moving towards health equity and championing inter-sectoral action.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Mission Australia believes that a framework for comprehensive and cohesive health outcomes for children and young people should be underpinned by a social determinants of health framework.

Children and young people have distinct developmental and transitional stages. Outcomes should be aligned to these rather than arbitrary age groups related to data sets. For example, as children develop into adolescence we would expect some normal risk taking behaviours which we would not expect to see prior to this stage. Therefore, linking children together in the 12-17 age bracket for consuming

---

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation, Social Determinants of Health, accessible at: [https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/sdh\\_definition/en/](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)

<sup>5</sup> K. Rasanathan, E. Montesinos et al., Primary health care and the social determinants of health: essential and complementary approaches for reducing inequities in health, Community Health (2010). doi:10.1136/jech.2009.093914

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

alcohol and drugs for example, does not allow for an adequate understanding of the adolescent transition period. For this reason, we would recommend considering these developmental stages and changing the age ranges accordingly. In the health promotion category, we recommend a break down to 12-15 years and then 15-19 years to better capture behaviour of young people.

### **Babies are born healthy and children have a healthy start to life**

As discussed above, parents, especially pregnant mothers experiencing financial or other hardships can have a significant impact on their children. Inability to access appropriate medical, mental health, transport, education and housing support during and after pregnancy can have significant negative impacts on children. Considering these factors, Mission Australia recommends expanding these suggested measures to include the aforementioned perinatal indicators.

### **Children and young people are thriving**

Children and young people can experience a variety of challenges to their mental health and wellbeing. Mission Australia's 2018 Youth Survey found that 40% of young people from SA identified *mental health* as one of the most important issues in Australia today followed by *alcohol and drugs*. Three in ten SA young people reported that they were *extremely* or *very concerned* about *mental health* (31%) and *body image* (30%), while a significant proportion (16%) also identified suicide as an issue of personal concern.<sup>7</sup>

Measuring and tracking mental health of children and young people is vital to ensure that they are receiving the supports they need at the appropriate time. The recent *Mission Australia Five Year Youth Mental Health Report* found that 23% of respondents to the Mission Australia Youth Survey 2016 qualified as experiencing a probable serious mental stress, according to their responses to Kessler 6 Psychological Distress Scale (K6).<sup>8</sup> The proportion of females (30%) reporting this was higher than males (15%). Findings from the Black Dog Institute (BDI) about the prevalence of mental health concerns in Australia supports these figures.<sup>9</sup>

It is encouraging to note the rates of suicide being identified as an indicator. Suicide is the leading cause of death among people aged 15-44 years and remains the leading cause of premature mortality in Australia. In addition to mental health conditions, a range of emotional and environmental causes such as feelings of rejection and loss, academic pressure or experiences of bullying, abuse and neglect, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report 2018, accessible at:

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

<sup>8</sup> The Kessler 6 Psychological Distress Scale (K6) is a widely used validated tool that asks young people about the experience of anxiety and depressive symptoms over the past four weeks. Based on established scoring criteria, the K6 can be used to classify respondents into two groups: those who may be experiencing probable serious mental distress (PSMD) and those who may not. Further information can be found in the recent Mission Australia Youth Mental Health Report: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/706-five-year-mental-health-youth-report/file>

<sup>9</sup> Black Dog Institute, Facts & figures about mental health, accessible at:

[https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/factsheets/facts\\_figures.pdf?sfvrsn=10](https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/factsheets/facts_figures.pdf?sfvrsn=10)



alcohol and drugs dependence can be factors behind suicide.<sup>10</sup> It is also estimated that for every death by suicide, as many as 30 people attempt to end their lives.<sup>11</sup>

Recent reports demonstrated that SA, WA and QLD had the highest Indigenous youth suicide rates.<sup>12</sup> Aboriginal children as young as 10 years dying by suicide has caused national alarm and therefore, the outcomes should have a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Considering the rise in issues in relation to experiences of bullying and online harassment as well as discrimination based on race, gender, disability and other similar factors, it is important that measures in relation to mental health are able to gather evidence on these issues. This would provide a broad evidence base to better target mental health supports in the future.

## **Safety: Young South Australians are safe and nurtured**

The broad outcomes identified under this section need to be expanded significantly to obtain a better picture of the experiences of children and young people. Some specific examples of where the scope of the outcomes should be expanded are discussed below.

### **Children and young people are nurtured**

In Mission Australia's Youth Survey, young people were asked about the ability of the family to get along and the vast majority of young people in SA indicated that they get along well. However, a significant proportion thought their family's ability to get along was either fair (12%) or poor (6%). Furthermore, 11% of young people were extremely concerned or very concerned about domestic and family violence.<sup>13</sup>

Mission Australia's Youth Survey Report 2018 also indicates that young people in SA seek support from friends (86%), Parent/guardian (77%), relative/family friend (62%) or their brother/sister (55%). The overall majority of young people from SA indicated that they would seek 'soft' and informal sources of support for important issues in their lives. However, they were less likely to turn to formal service agencies for help with their concerns, aside from a GP/health professional (54%).<sup>14</sup> Just over one in six young people in SA reported that they would seek help from a telephone hotline (17%), while fewer than one in eight (12%) would seek support from a community agency. Thus, the Council's outcomes framework should be broad in scope to capture the range of informal and formal sources of help in

---

<sup>10</sup> R. M. Homes and S. Homes, *Suicide: Theory, Practice and Investigation*, Youth and Suicide, 2005, Ch. 4, p. 39 – 50.

<sup>11</sup> Lifeline, *Statistics on Suicide in Australia*, accessible at: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/lifelineinformation/statistics-on-suicide-in-australia>

<sup>12</sup> NITV, *Indigenous youth suicide at crisis point*, 15 January 2019, accessible at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2019/01/15/indigenous-youth-suicide-crisis-point>

<sup>13</sup> Mission Australia, *Youth Survey Report 2019*, pp 118-134, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

order to ensure the government policies and investment can be directed to the relevant supports and services.

In terms of feeling connected to adults, there are numerous other considerations that should be taken into account such as who would be considered an adult, how to capture young people in out of home care (OOHC) or experiencing homelessness who may not have a 'home' with adults that they can connect with.

Mission Australia is currently collecting outcomes data across our children and family services in SA to support continuous service improvement. We use the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) which measures improvements in wellbeing across seven key domains.

*Personal safety* was identified as the most important driver of wellbeing by young people aged 15 -24 (33%) compared to the 25 – 64 year cohort (1%) across Australia. Mission Australia would be happy to provide further information on our Impact Measurement systems and analysis to the Council if required.

### **Children and young people are safe from abuse and neglect**

The current indicators under this section relate to children admitted to OOHC and children notified to the child protection system and these are both limited to children under 5 years. According to the available statistics, in SA, 13.5% of the care population lives in residential care, compared to Australia's average of 5.5%.<sup>15</sup> Further, SA accounts for 19% of Australia's total population of children and young people living in residential care.<sup>16</sup> The data also indicate that over 50% of children admitted to OOHC are between 5- 17 years.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, all outcome measures in relation to children and young people in OOHC should extend to all children and young people under 18 years of age.

Evidence also demonstrates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are overrepresented among children in care.<sup>18</sup> The framework should be able to clearly measure the outcomes of diverse cohorts and have outcomes that support a closing of the gap in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The indicators should be expanded to capture other aspects of experience of the child protection system such as the number or proportion of children and young people in contact with intensive family support services and the number or proportion of children and young people who are in out of home care who are subject to multiple placements.

---

<sup>15</sup> Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australian child protection expenditure from the Report on Government Services 2019, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies, Children in Care: September 2018, accessible at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care>

<sup>18</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies, The growing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, 2018, accessible at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2018/05/07/growing-over-representation-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children-care>

### **Children and young people are safe from crime**

The indicator in relation to the number of children and young people aged birth-17 years who were victims of an offence against the person reported to police specifically excludes sexual offences which is an area of serious vulnerability for children and young people. It is also limited to offences reported to police, which does not take into account the issue of reluctance around reporting. Considering the significance of this issue, the reporting requirement could be extended to all forms of offences and include reporting to child protection authorities, teachers, health workers, and other trusted adults.

Mission Australia reported that a higher proportion of males than females agreed that they could trust people in their local area (42% compared to 35%), whilst males tended to feel more comfortable using public spaces than females (71% males compared with 63% females).<sup>19</sup> Females were more likely than males to report feeling extremely/very concerned about personal safety (22% compared to 14%). Considering that there is a gendered angle to feelings of safety, we encourage the Council to adopt measures to breakdown these outcomes by gender where possible.

### **Wellbeing: Young South Australians are happy, inspired and engaged**

Similar to other thematic areas, wellbeing overlaps with other domains such as health, safety, education, employment and social participation. Thus, the intersectional outcomes should be clearly identified to avoid duplication of measures.

### **Children and young people play and participate in activities, according to their capabilities and interests**

The Youth Survey report indicates that 60% of young people between 15 – 19 in SA participate in sports (both as a participant and as a spectator), over 30% young people do volunteer work and participate in arts/cultural and music activities.<sup>20</sup> Although it is important to measure how many children and young people participate in extra-curricular activities, it is also vital to ascertain the proportion of young people who are unable to participate in these due to lack of financial support, lack of transport, or other similar challenges.

### **Children and young people are leading satisfied lives**

It is encouraging that the Council is measuring experiences of homelessness of young people under 19 years. Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects a significant proportion of young

---

<sup>19</sup> Mission Australia, Gender gaps: Findings from the Youth Survey 2018, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

<sup>20</sup> Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report 2019, pp 118-134, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

people in SA.<sup>21</sup> Due to various factors young people could be alone and can experience homelessness in many forms including sleeping rough, couch surfing or living in crisis or transitional accommodation.

The ABS state that for some youth who are 'couch surfing', a usual residence may still be reported in the Census. Their homelessness is masked because their characteristics look no different to other young people who are not homeless but are simply visiting on Census night.<sup>22</sup> From our service delivery experience and other evidence, we understand that couch surfing is a predominant form of homelessness among young people and therefore, the Youth Survey contains specific questions in relation to couch surfing to capture the number of young people experiencing homelessness. Thus, we encourage the Council to incorporate more concrete measures to capture all forms of homelessness experienced by young people including couch surfing.

The responses to homelessness should vary depending on the experience of children and young people. The needs of children and young people presenting alone are quite distinct from young people who are experiencing homelessness with a family member/members. Therefore, it is important to ensure that there are separate measures to identify different forms of homelessness that children and young people are experiencing.

In addition to measuring the number of young people experiencing homelessness, the number of children and young people transitioned into stable long-term accommodation and/or crisis and transitional accommodation should also be measured. This will enable the other responsible government stakeholders to identify gaps in service delivery and direct or redirect additional investment.

## **Education: Young South Australians are successful learners**

Although there is recognition of the fact that children and young people learn in a variety of different ways, the majority of the indicators focus on achieving school related outcomes. Young people, particularly those who are disengaged from education may access alternative education and/or training options such as Flexible Learning Options (FLO) and other similar training programs.

According to Mission Australia's Youth Survey Report 2018, 3% of the participants from SA were either studying part-time. Therefore, it is imperative that the outcome measures are capable of capturing the young people outside the traditional school education frameworks.

---

<sup>21</sup> Services to Youth Council, Media Release: SYC calls for innovative solutions to address youth homelessness in South Australia, 2016, accessible at: <https://www.syc.net.au/syc-calls-for-innovative-solutions-to-address-youth-homelessness-in-south-australia/>

<sup>22</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2049.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016, March 2018, accessible at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features302016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2049.0&issue=2016&num=&view=>



### **Children enter the school system with the development, skills and capacities to take advantage of the school learning environment**

There is growing evidence to demonstrate the importance of early learning for children younger than 5 years and the need for further investment to ensure that children have access to appropriate, government funded early education services. Thus, it is imperative that there is a framework to focus on children prior to entering the school system and look at the proportion of all children aged 3-5 years attending a preschool program as well.

### **Children and young people's experience of learning is positive**

According to Mission Australia's Youth Survey Report 2018 findings, 34% of young people aged 15 – 19 years in SA were *extremely or very concerned* about *school or study problems*.<sup>23</sup> In addition to this, *coping with stress* and *mental health* were also among the top three issues of personal concern.<sup>24</sup> In addition to measuring the ability to achieve minimum standards for literacy and numeracy, there should be a tool to measure the impact of education related pressure on young people which will enable the schools, government departments and the community services to identify the needs and tailor supports to meet those needs.

### **Citizenship: Young South Australians participate actively in society**

Preparedness for adulthood and the ability to participate actively in society requires young people to have had the opportunities to develop their identities and achieve educational and other life goals. However, this may not be the same for young people experiencing challenges within their families such as domestic and family violence, economic disadvantage, or remoteness and lack of access to services as well as personal challenges such as experiences of discrimination, mental health, lack of access to appropriate and confidential services and the like.

### **Children and young people are engaged in decision-making and develop life skills**

#### **Young people aged 16-19 with driver's licence**

The ability to obtain a driver's licence can increase the young person's independence and increase employment opportunities. Evidence demonstrates that transport barriers were more often reported by young jobseekers than by older jobseekers (29.6% compared with 19.6%).<sup>25</sup>

However, the cost of obtaining a licence, a vehicle and the ongoing expenses can be prohibitive for some young people. Even though there are some services to support young people with obtaining a

---

<sup>23</sup> Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report 2018, pp 118 – 134, accessible at:

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, Reality Bites: Australia's Youth Unemployment in a Millennial Era, 2017, accessible at:

[http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/10341/1/BSL\\_Reality\\_bites\\_Australias\\_youth\\_unemployment\\_Dec2017.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/10341/1/BSL_Reality_bites_Australias_youth_unemployment_Dec2017.pdf)

driver's licence, there may not be sufficient affordable services or facilities to obtain a licence in rural and remote areas. Using this as an indicator to measure active participation in society indiscriminately may not provide an accurate picture of the young people's ability to engage in society or developing skills. Therefore, the data in relation to developing skills more broadly should be gathered in a manner that can be broken down by region and/or socioeconomic status (SES) areas.

### Satisfaction with the level of independence

An important aspect of independence is financial capacity to manage a young person's living expenses and eventually live independently. For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact upon them moving out of home in the future. Of those that responded, nearly seven in ten (67%) respondents from SA indicated that housing costs (e.g. rent, utilities) would be a future barrier to moving out of home, followed by financial stability (62%) and availability of housing (39%).<sup>26</sup> Thus, the measures should be broad in scope to identify the housing related issues such as rental stress which impact on independence, particularly for those young people not living with their parents.

### Average hours of paid employment

Almost 50% of young people in SA value *getting a job* and 54% of them value *financial security* according to the Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2018.<sup>27</sup> Compared to the rest of Australia, the majority of young people in SA planned to *get a job, go to TAFE or college or get an apprenticeship* and were less likely to indicate *going to university* as their plan after leaving school.<sup>28</sup>

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there are any barriers which impact on them finding work.<sup>29</sup> *School responsibilities, lack of skills/experience and lack of jobs* were the three most commonly cited barriers to young people finding work in SA (19.2%, 14.7% and 13.5% respectively). Over one in eight respondents indicated that they saw transport as a barrier to finding work (13.1%).<sup>30</sup>

Concerningly, unemployment and underemployment are issues that are disproportionately affecting young people across Australia. It is estimated that in October 2018, more than 550,000 young people aged 20 to 24 were working part-time.<sup>31</sup> It was also reported that the youth unemployment rate in SA is

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report 2018, pp 118 – 134, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report 2018, pp 118 – 134, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, Part-Time Purgatory: Young and Underemployed in Australia, 2018, accessible at: [Part-time\\_purgatory\\_young\\_and\\_unemployed\\_Dec2018.pdf](#)

as high as 12.7%, higher than the national average (11.2%).<sup>32</sup> It is also important to breakdown the age range 15 – 19 years with paid work as the majority of young people are likely to be in fulltime education.

The future employment market is expected to be ‘a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres; a progress defined by velocity, scope, and systems impact unlike ever seen before’.<sup>33</sup> There is this a need for a structural and systemic approach to bridge the gap between the agile future employment market and the skills and training young people receive. One of the pragmatic measures is to incorporate adequately funded career counselling services for young people through state policy. In addition to developing the measurement framework, the Council could work with the government and other stakeholders to incorporate these recommendations into government policy structures.

There are numerous national policies in place to identify the evolving employment market and the need for employment services to cater for the ‘gig economy’ and processes to ensure the transition from school to employment.<sup>34</sup> The Future Ready: A student focused National Career Education Strategy has been endorsed by COAG in February 2019 which highlights the need for students to acquire transferable skills, understand the evolving workforce dynamics and build on a strong evidence base across a range of domains.<sup>35</sup> All these factors should be taken into account when developing a framework to measure employment outcomes.

---

<sup>32</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, Smashing the Avocado Debate: Australia’s Youth Unemployment Hotspots, 2019, accessible at:

[http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/11134/2/BSL\\_Smashing\\_the\\_avocado\\_debate\\_youth\\_unemployment\\_hotspots\\_Mar2019.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/11134/2/BSL_Smashing_the_avocado_debate_youth_unemployment_hotspots_Mar2019.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Deloitte, Preparing tomorrow’s workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution For business: A framework for action, September 2018, accessible at:

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-preparing-tomorrow-workforce-for-4IR.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> See further: Department of Education and Training, National Career Education Strategy, 2019, accessible at: <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/52421> and Foundation for Young Australians, The New Work Reality, 2018, accessible at: [https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FYA\\_TheNewWorkReality\\_sml.pdf](https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FYA_TheNewWorkReality_sml.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Department of Education and Training, National Career Education Strategy, 2019, accessible at: <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/52421>