

The Council for the Care of Children

Looking out for children

annual report
2009–2010



Government of
South Australia



The Council for the
Care of Children

Looking out for children



**Government of
South Australia**

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The Annual Report is also available from
The Council for the Care of Children internet site:
www.childrensa.sa.gov.au



Letter of transmission

The Hon Jennifer Rankine MP
Minister for Families and Communities
GPO Box 2269
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Minister

I submit to you for presentation to Parliament the 2009–2010 Annual Report of the South Australian Council for the Care of Children which has been prepared pursuant to Part 7B of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

This report highlights the Council's activities in fulfilling its statutory obligations. The report also contains information about the Council's intended activities in the future.

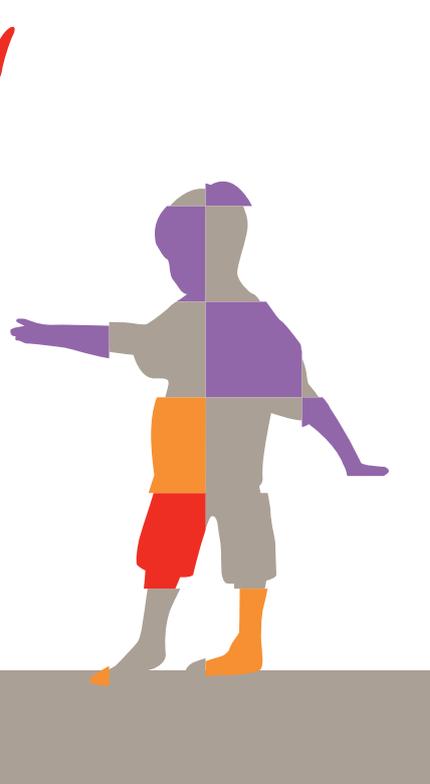
The management of human resources and financial issues of the Council is included in this Report. In compliance with the *Public Sector Act 2009* and the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987* a further report concerning the management of human resources and financial issues of the Council has been submitted. This report is part of the Department for Families and Communities' Annual Report 2009–2010.

Yours sincerely



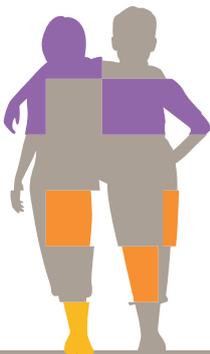
Dr Diana Hetzel
Chair
The Council for the Care of Children

29 October 2010

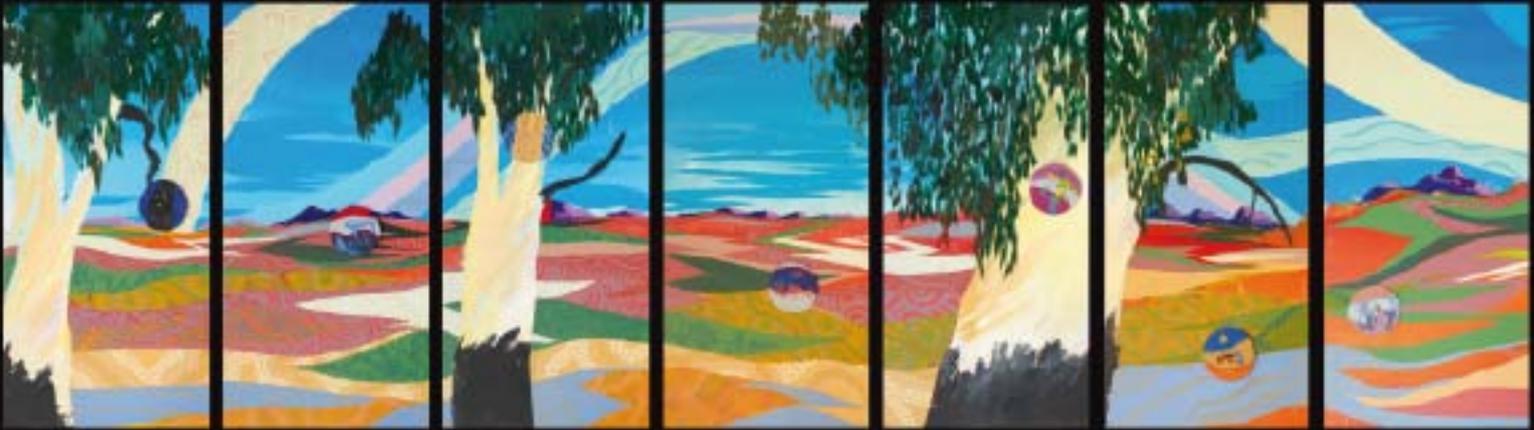


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What makes you happy



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As part of the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service Reconciliation journey, a partnership continues with the Tauondi Aboriginal Community College. The 'What makes you happy' theme was developed by children at the Women's and Children's Hospital and designed during weekly artwork sessions at the hospital school. Using these designs, artists from the College created fifteen individual artworks that combine to create a beautiful landscape. The artwork is displayed at the Women's and Children's Hospital for patients, visitors and staff to enjoy.

”

Created by Tauondi artists, Rick Taylor, Nikki Carabetta and Ivan Rehorek, with designs contributed by the children from the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service.



Foreword

On behalf of the members of the Council for the Care of Children, I welcome you to this Annual Report, the fifth in the Council's history.

The role of the Council for the Care of Children in South Australia is to speak up for children and young people and their rights, and to help strengthen and improve the systems which are there to support and protect their wellbeing and development. The Council does this mainly through its advice to the South Australian Government on children's rights and interests. In giving us this responsibility, the government acknowledges the importance of respect for children and young people as citizens, and recognises that this entails a wider role than focusing solely on their needs and vulnerabilities.

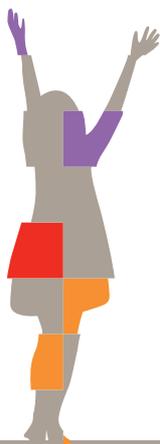
The work of the Council is framed by the *United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, which, in 1989, became the first legally binding international convention to affirm human rights for all children and young people aged up to eighteen years. It is the most widely ratified of the international human rights' treaties, and is therefore a unique and important tool for the advancement of children's rights and interests. As signatories to this international treaty, governments give promises to children and young people for their 'protection, provision and participation' through the Convention's Articles. In this way, all children and young people are entitled to benefit from

special protection and assistance, to be informed about their rights in an accessible manner, to develop their personality, abilities and talents, to participate actively in society, and to grow up safely in an environment of happiness, love and understanding.¹ These are not special rights – they are simply the basic rights which underpin the dignity of every person.

The *UNCRC* is also a framework for monitoring wellbeing, because it covers all the domains of children's and young people's lives, and emphasises the significance of the individual rights of each child and young person. These rights are indivisible and inextricably linked: all are important and all are essential to healthy development and wellbeing. To this end, Article 3 of the *UNCRC* requires governments to act first and foremost 'in the best interests of the child'; and this is the starting point for the Council's advice to the Minister for Families and Communities and the government. Our consideration of the rights and interests of children and young people in this State provides the opportunity to assess where things are going well and where extra effort is needed. We have particular oversight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander² children and young people, children and young people living with disabilities, and children and young people in the care and custodianship of the Minister, as government has recognised that these population groups deserve particular attention.

¹ Santos Pais, M, *A Human Rights Conceptual Framework for UNICEF*, Innocenti Research Essay, UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 2009

² We ask readers to note that the Council refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and Indigenous Australians throughout this report, depending upon the context and the ways these are understood by local communities or used in reports and studies.



All South Australian children and young people are entitled to participate as citizens: to be heard and to be respected, and to take their place as valued members of our community. The more children and young people are acknowledged in this way, the stronger our communities will be. For these reasons, children and young people's citizenship is a key feature of this report. The advice offered by children and young people, and their active participation in many settings every day across South Australia, are vital to the social and economic development of our State, now and into the future.

Active participation by children and young people in their communities is also the foundation of the UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities program. The Council has adopted this approach as it works to support South Australia to become a child and youth friendly State. In 2009–10, the Council initiated a project to gather views of young South Australians about what they believe are child and youth friendly attributes of their environments. The Council was especially impressed with very young children's use of cameras to record what they like and do not like about their local communities. We believe that all of our young citizens have much to contribute to plans for their futures, in changing policies that affect them, in designing spaces and places, and in improving the services they use.

While the *UNCRC* recognises their vulnerability, it also affirms the autonomy of children and young people as active agents in their own lives. In particular, Article 12 of the *UNCRC* states:



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.

This means active participation and not simply consultation, which often implies that 'adults ask questions and adults decide'.³ Participation means that children and young people are seriously involved when decisions are being made that affect their lives directly; and they are also entitled to feedback about how their views have been considered. The South Australian Youth Delegates to the National Youth Advisory Council of the CREATE Foundation, the organisation which represents the views of children and young people in care, have developed national action plans to advocate for change to improve life outcomes and the care system. The Council supports these action plans, and commends the work of these youth advocates.

³ Aynsley-Green A. Improving The Lives And Health Of Children And Young People: How Research From Listening To Their Voices Should Inform Politics, Policy, Practice And Public Attitudes. The Killam Trust Annual Lecture, Canada, December 2009.

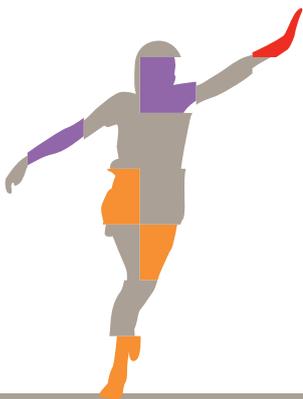
Foreword

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Many individual children, young people and adults pursue the advancement of children's rights, work towards improving their lives and speak out on their behalf in South Australia. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the retirement in 2009–10 from the Council of four of our long-standing members: Dr Fiona Arney, Ms Mellita Kimber, Mrs Jayne Lehmann and Associate Professor Daryle Rigney. These people are all passionate child and youth advocates, and they have given much of their time and considerable expertise to the Council, especially on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, those living with disability, and those with experience of the care and protection system. In October, Ms Julia Cranney, also took leave from her position as Principal Consultant to the Council. Julia was instrumental in the establishment of the Council and the development of its role, and her long-standing commitment to children and young people's rights has been pivotal in guiding the Council's work during these first five years. I wish all of these supporters of the Council success in their ongoing work, and especially in their support of disadvantaged children and young people, and thank them for their dedication to the Council over many years. We also extend our congratulations to one of our continuing Council members,

Ms Emily Rozee, who was a finalist in the Channel 9 Young Achiever Awards (which support, encourage and promote the achievements of young South Australians); in recognition of her many valued contributions to the community.

This Annual Report illustrates the breadth of the Council's statutory functions which give us the opportunity to promote the rights and interests of all young South Australians, as well as those who need our particular support and advocacy. To this end, we have also provided the Minister for Families and Communities with specific advice in areas where children and their families are particularly vulnerable. The ongoing development of our website remains an important way for the Council to showcase the efforts of children and young people across South Australia, and highlight innovation in services, programs and practice provided for them. In 2010–11, we will continue to advocate for all children and young people, especially those who are the most disadvantaged and socially excluded. We will also seek to guide South Australia to be the child and youth friendly State we know it can be. We will work to ensure that policy and programs for children and young people focus on evidence about wellbeing from research and practice findings relating to brain and other aspects of development, from pregnancy and the early years of childhood through to adolescence.



The year 2009 marked the twentieth anniversary of the *UNCRC*, and, on 20 November, an international commemoration was held to highlight the transformative impact of the Convention on the wellbeing of the world's children, while also acknowledging the challenges that remain to realising all rights for all children everywhere. While great progress has been made in the past two decades, the anniversary of the *UNCRC* reminds us, most of all, of what we have left to do. The Convention 'demands a revolution that places children at the heart of human development – not only because this offers a strong return on our investment (although it does) nor because the vulnerability of childhood calls upon our compassion (although it should), but rather for a more fundamental reason: because it is their right.'⁴

The Council looks forward to working with everyone who is interested in the rights of South Australian children and young people to a good life, now and into the future.

Diana Hetzel

Dr Diana Hetzel
Chair

29 October 2010



⁴ Seymour D. Convention brings progress on child rights but challenges remain. UNICEF 2009.

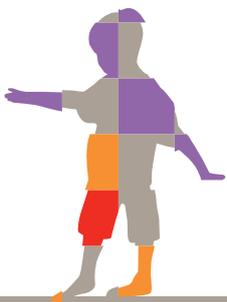
Our vision

The Council's role is to advocate for South Australian children and young people to ensure that they are cherished, nurtured and respected. We want South Australia to be a child and youth friendly state that acknowledges children's rights and seeks to ensure that children and young people are:

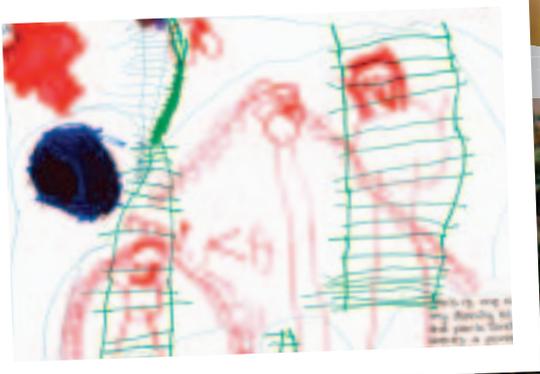
- safe;
- happy;
- healthy;
- confident and secure; and
- supported to learn and develop.

The broad goals of the Council are to:

- improve outcomes for South Australian children and young people by providing expert advice to Government on their rights, needs and interests and the implications for policy, practice, and research;
- raise awareness of issues impacting on children and young people; and monitor the wellbeing of South Australian children and young people up to the age of 18; and
- promote the wellbeing and development of vulnerable child and youth populations.



safe happy opportunity



Listening to children and young people in 2009–10

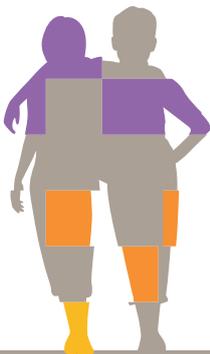
The Council has an ongoing commitment to monitor the views expressed by children and young people – in policy, service planning, practice and research. We do so, not only because children and young people are entitled to have a say under Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, but also because we firmly believe that there are no excuses for not taking the thoughts and views of children seriously.

In his role as the first independent Children’s Commissioner for England, Professor Sir Albert Aynsley-Green has argued that research from listening to children’s voices, particularly those most vulnerable and marginalised, is key, not only for effective advocacy to influence politicians and policy development and for improving practices in services supporting their needs, but also for improving the public understanding of childhood today.⁵ Furthermore, he believes that empowering children and young people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives gives them confidence that they are respected as citizens of today. The Council agrees with him, and is aware of the considerable research which has also illustrated the benefits of listening to children and young people. It follows that our Annual Report should begin with their perspectives, as it did last year.

This year we have chosen to highlight two projects which offer insights into Australian children and young people’s views of their identity, citizenship, hopes, concerns, and sense of belonging. Articles 7 and 8 of the *UNCRC* refer to children’s right to a nationality and the right to preserve their identity. All children and young people in South Australia have these rights no matter whom they are or where they live. Although we have a legislative framework that upholds these rights, there is a tendency to take them for granted and to view them as more important to children living outside Australia.

However, we know that the development of identity is critical for children’s wellbeing, and especially so for children who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, children who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children who are refugees. These two projects demonstrate the important influences that inform children and young people’s understandings of their identity and nationality. They also show that, as adults, we have a responsibility to provide each child and young person with the opportunity to consider their place in our community and how they interpret their sense of connection and identity. Both studies point to the need for further consideration of how we support children to be active citizens by giving them the skills and opportunities for genuine and confident participation. They also highlight the continuing importance of the families and carers of children and young people, and their cultures and communities, to their developmental health and happiness.

⁵ Improving The Lives And Health Of Children And Young People: How Research From Listening To Their Voices Should Inform Politics, Policy, Practice And Public Attitudes – Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green, Children’s Commissioner for England (The Killam Trust Annual Lecture, December 2009).



***In our own words – African Australians:
a review of human rights and social inclusion issues
(Australian Human Rights Commission, June 2010)***

This report was the result of three years of work between African Australians, the Australian Human Rights Commission and a number of partner agencies. *In our own words* represents the first time that human rights and social inclusion issues for African Australians have been recorded at the national level. It was also the first time that everyday experiences were told from the viewpoint of African Australians themselves, in a human rights context.

The Commission's project was informed by a number of principles, including:

- acknowledging communities as collaborative partners;
- understanding that identity and language are major contributors to people experiencing social inclusion and exclusion; and
- the need to build evidence of good practice in relation to social inclusion and human rights, to employ and promote a 'strengths-based' approach to consultation and intervention, and to be 'solutions-focused', without minimising the evidence of disadvantage and exclusion.

Community members highlighted the importance of promoting the many positive contributions made by African Australians to Australia's social, cultural and economic life. However, community participants, service providers and stakeholders agreed that African Australians experience widespread discrimination – both direct and indirect – in relation to employment, housing, education, health services and in connection with the justice system.



You start to feel like an outsider and then you get desperate and angry and you think will I ever be part of this place?

Youth focus group, South Australia

Listening to children and young people in 2009–10

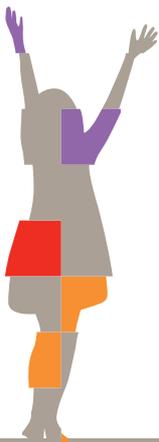
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In the project, there was a particular focus on collecting the views of young African Australians, and their families, who reported that:

- young people received increased scrutiny from police and other law enforcement agencies;
- there was a need to develop strategies targeting the multiple barriers faced by members of African Australian communities, including young people;
- there was a need to inform, educate and support communities to address issues of child protection and family violence;
- young people wanted to learn and to succeed academically, with many wanting to complete tertiary studies and find employment in different professions. However, there was a common view expressed that schools and education institutions generally lack the cultural competency and the flexibility to properly meet the needs of African Australian students, and experiences of discrimination and racism, within and beyond the school environment, were regularly highlighted;
- there were examples of children being inappropriately asked to act as interpreters for their parents and other family members;
- there were a number of issues that affected young people's health and wellbeing, including the loss of family members, the effects of torture or trauma, feelings of dislocation, and the tension of balancing family expectations with 'fitting in' to a new culture. They also discussed the importance of seeking reliable advice about drug and alcohol use, sexual health issues and nutrition; and
- there were specific challenges for young African Australians to reconcile their traditional cultures and values with an alternate set of expectations held by other young Australians.

Issues that were seen as crucial in supporting the settlement and integration of newly-arrived communities, strengthening families and promoting social inclusion reflected the importance of:

- respecting and maintaining culture, heritage and values;
- building positive gender relations;
- addressing intergenerational issues;
- countering media stereotypes;
- ensuring access to transport; and
- using sport to enhance social inclusion.



“

We decided that no one else was going to help us, so we are helping ourselves. We meet regularly and talk about the challenges and how we can help each other out. It really helps address problems of isolation and also just basic friendship needs.

Youth focus group, South Australia

A range of good practice initiatives around the country was also identified and can be accessed from the Australian Human Rights Commission at www.humanrights.gov.au/africanaus/review/index.html

The Council congratulates those who managed and contributed to this landmark project.



Listening to children and young people in 2009–10

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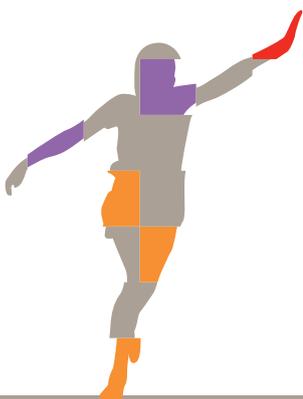
National Survey of Young Australians 2009 (Key and emerging issues) – Mission Australia, October 2009

Each year, Mission Australia conducts a national survey of young Australians about the issues that concern them, their values, who they admire and where they turn to for advice and support. In 2009, Mission Australia conducted its eighth annual survey of young Australians. There were 47 735 young people aged 11 to 24 years who participated in the survey, including 8 693 who completed the survey online. Just over half of respondents (56%) were living in a capital city, and the remainder in other areas of each state and territory. The largest proportion of respondents were aged 11 to 14 (51.1%), followed by those aged 15 to 19 (46.8%) and a small number of respondents aged 20 to 24 (2.1%). As in previous years, slightly more females than males participated in the survey (52.4% compared with 47.6%). There were 2 301 surveys returned by Indigenous young people, and 6 861 from those who spoke a language other than English at home. There were 1 109 respondents who indicated they had a disability.

In South Australia, 4 347 surveys were returned, which was 9.7% of the total number of respondents who indicated which state/territory they came from. The largest group of respondents from South Australia were aged 11 to 14 years (49.2%)

followed by 15 to 19 years (47.7%). Only a small number of respondents were aged 20 to 24 years (135 or 3.1%). 43.8% of respondents were female and 56.2% were male; and 203 or 4.7% of respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. English was the only language spoken at home by 87.5% of respondents. The 544 (12.5%) respondents who spoke a language other than English at home spoke over 50 languages between them. The most frequently spoken were (in order of frequency): Italian; Vietnamese; Chinese; Greek; Arabic; German; Cantonese; Filipino/Tagalog; French; Polish; and Indonesian. There were 163 or 3.7% young people who indicated that they had a disability. The most frequently cited disabilities were (in order of frequency): learning disability; autism; deafness or hearing impairment; Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD); and intellectual disability.

Young people were asked to rank what they value from a list of options and responses were very similar for South Australian respondents and their national counterparts, with the top three items for both being family relationships, friendships and being independent. About a third of respondents from South Australia also highly valued physical and mental health. Close to three quarters (73.0%) of South Australian respondents highly valued family relationships, and over a half (55.9%) highly valued friendships.



About a third of South Australian respondents indicated that they highly valued being independent (34.2%) and physical and mental health (30.4%).

The top three issues of concern for South Australian respondents were drugs, alcohol and body image. Body image and drugs were also in the top three issues identified nationally. There were a range of issues that were of major concern to respondents from South Australia, with eight items being of concern to at least one in five.

- The top issue of concern for South Australian respondents was drugs, with 28.7% of respondents identifying it as a major concern.
- Just over a quarter (27.5%) of respondents from South Australia identified alcohol as an issue of concern.
- Close to a quarter (27.3%) of respondents also identified body image as a major concern.
- Bullying/emotional abuse and suicide were also identified by a quarter of South Australian respondents as major concerns (25.7% and 25.1% respectively).

The top three sources of advice and support for South Australian respondents were friends (81.2%), parents (70.6%) and relative/family friend, (60.0%), with the internet the fourth-ranked item. Results for all items for South Australia were very similar to results nationally.

The top two activities for South Australian respondents were sports (as a participant) and sports (as a spectator). Youth groups and clubs was the third most popular activity for respondents from South Australia, while nationally, it was arts/cultural activities. Sadly, South Australian respondents' participation in arts/cultural activities (17.6%) has declined substantially from the 2008 survey (35.4%).

When asked to list three people or organisations they admired, respondents listed family members most commonly (about 30%), friends and sports teams, players and coaches were the second and third most common responses respectively.

As described in the report, as well as 'helping to inform governments, non government organisations and other institutions interested in the wellbeing of young people, these findings also provide young Australians themselves with relevant information, opportunities for action and discussion in the context of their families, educational institutions, workplaces and communities'. The Council believes that the survey program and the reports produced from it provide an essential picture of the views of young Australians, and commends Mission Australia on its ongoing commitment to undertaking the survey on an annual basis. The full report is available from the Mission Australia website at missionaustralia.com.au/downloads/214-national-survey-of-young-australians.

Good examples of those who stood up for children and young people in 2009–10

There are many outstanding citizens and organisations who continue to work tirelessly to improve the lives of South Australian children and young people. They seldom seek public recognition apart from when they are highlighting the merits of particular action that will give children the opportunity to live a fulfilling life or to address a specific issue of concern.

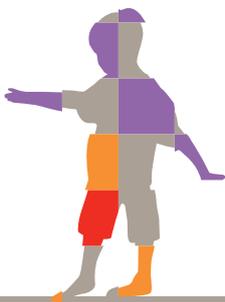
Human rights, in particular in relation to children and young people, are at the core of civilised society. The National Children's Youth and Law Centre (NCYLC) recognises the exceptional activities and commitment made by legal practitioners and organisations in advancing the legal rights and interests of Australian children and young people. Public accolade is therefore an appropriate way of recognising their dedication and expertise.

Two South Australians received awards at the 2010 Children's Law Awards ceremony held on 16 April 2010 and were presented with them by the Honourable Catherine Branson QC, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Mr Robert Croser received the National Award for outstanding Legal Representation of the Rights and Interests of Children and Young People for his work with children in the Adelaide Youth Court over a ten year period.

The Youth Affairs Council (YACSA) received the National Award for outstanding Contribution to Advocacy in Policy or Law Reform to Advance the Legal Rights and Interests of Children and Young People.

The Council congratulates both Robert Croser and YACSA and also acknowledges their commitment to the children and young people of South Australia.





The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people

As part of its role, the Council monitors key reports on children and young people from Australia and around the world. In this section of our Annual Report, we have highlighted new Australian and international reports which provide direction for policy and service planning, and research that has been conducted both within Australia and internationally. We also highlight a number of initiatives that have been undertaken in the past 12 months.

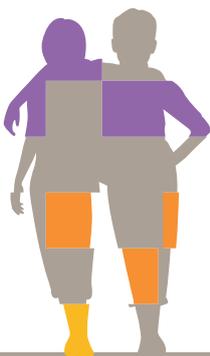
1. *A Stronger, Fairer Australia*⁶

In January 2010, the Australian Government released this report to act as a guide to reduce social disadvantage and increase national prosperity. It sets out the Australian Government's vision and strategy for social inclusion, now and into the future. Social inclusion means ensuring no Australian is left behind by giving all the opportunities, resources, capabilities and responsibilities to learn, work, connect with others and have a say in community life. The statement sets out a new approach to break down the barriers that stand between the most disadvantaged Australians and participation. Despite a strong economy in recent years, disadvantage still prevents many Australians from getting a fair go.

The report builds on the Social Inclusion Principles of education and training; employment and work in all its forms; community engagement and self-determination; which were reported on in the Council's 2008–09 Annual Report. It recognises that, while we are a prosperous nation, entrenched pockets of disadvantage are evident. Resources are finite and the way that they are used should be directed to those in most need in order to build capacity, reduce intergenerational disadvantage and increase participation in all aspects of community life.

The Government's framework for 'building a stronger, fairer Australia' is underpinned by five principles, reflected in the diagram to the right.

⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2009) *A Stronger, Fairer Australia*: Attorney General's Department, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, Pg 22



<p>Economic growth</p> <p><i>Maintaining a strong, internationally competitive economy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government economic strategy needs to be aligned with sound fiscal and macroeconomic policies to improve social outcomes between generations.
<p>Equitable social policy</p> <p><i>Creating opportunities and resources needed by every Australian to participate in the economy and community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an adequate safety net. Increase capacity for low skilled workers through training and employment strategies. Increasing self responsibility and providing support that improves capability, resilience and independence.
<p>Quality services</p> <p><i>Improving the quality and accessibility of mainstream services to those most in need in the most appropriate way</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building an exceptional education system that supports all children to prepare for work and life and in particular in the most disadvantaged schools. Building exceptional health and community services particularly for the most disadvantaged. Improving the supply of affordable housing. Closing the Gap for Indigenous Australians in areas including life expectancy, education, health, housing and employment.
<p>Strong families and communities</p> <p><i>Supporting families and building cohesive communities particularly in areas experiencing ongoing multiple disadvantage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring all communities benefit from Australia's economic prosperity. Supporting families through paid parental leave. Improved childcare and family support services. Supporting strong, diverse communities. Supporting individuals and communities to recover following critical incidents and disasters. Improve social infrastructure.
<p>Partnerships for change</p> <p><i>Building new and innovative partnerships with all sectors of the economy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Compact with the not for profit sector. Support new models of social enterprise and investment. Work in partnerships with philanthropic foundations and individuals in areas of national priority. Work in partnership with other sectors to prevent and reduce homelessness. Work in partnership with business to assist vulnerable individuals to participate in work and community life.

The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people (continued)

2. *The State of Australia's Young People*⁷

The *State of Australia's Young People: A Report on the social, economic, health and family lives of young people* was released in October 2009. This report presents a comprehensive picture of how young Australians are faring by bringing together data from a variety of sources and drawing on the comments of young people themselves. Overall the report presents a positive picture, showing how important young people are to our country and why it makes good economic and social sense for governments to invest in lifting outcomes for all young people.

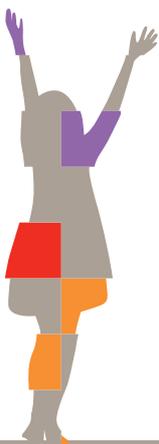
While the report shows that by and large young people are healthy, happy and productive, it also highlights some areas of significant concern.

- Not all young people are on the same footing. Indigenous young people, those not engaged in education or work, young people with a disability and those living in low socio economic households are at serious risk of social exclusion.

- 1 in 4 young people are living with a mental disorder and 1 in 3 young people experience moderate to high levels of psychological distress. Almost 1 in 3 young people are an unhealthy weight (either over or under weight).
- Male and female teenagers aged 15 – 19 years had the highest hospitalisation rates for acute intoxication from alcohol among all age groups.
- Young people are more likely to become victims of some violent crimes (including sexual offences and assaults) and are less likely than older victims to report a violent crime.
- The report also highlights emerging issues like the increasing risk that cyber bullying is posing to young people's wellbeing and underlines the important role that families, education and employment play in young people's development.

The full report is available at www.youth.gov.au/Documents/YoungPeopleReport.pdf

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009) *Australia's welfare 2009*, Australia's welfare series no 9, Cat no AUS 117, Canberra: AIHW, Pg 24



The *Stronger, Fairer Australia*, and the *State of Australia's Young People* reports will guide some of the work the Council will undertake in the next twelve months. We have already begun to address some of these issues with the launch in 2009 of *Looking out for Young South Australians – a framework for improving the lives of young South Australians*, on which the Council will report on a triennial basis.

3. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

In December 2009, COAG met to discuss health reform, early childhood education, vocational education and training and the *National Strategy for Young Australians*. Of particular interest to the Council were the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* and the *National Strategy for Young Australians*.

Agreement was reached by COAG members that, from January 2012, a national framework will be in place to improve the quality of child care provisions which will include the physical environment, staffing ratios, qualification requirements

and family and community partnerships. COAG has undertaken to review the new framework in 2014 to consider its efficacy, particularly in relation to the workforce, governance issues and the impact of the new regulatory requirements on providers.

The goal of the *National Strategy for Young Australians* is to support young people to develop and become healthy, productive and resilient adults within an environment that is nurturing and safe, and was also considered by COAG.

COAG acknowledged that the majority of young Australians are well on the path of meeting this goal, yet there are still pockets of concern. They cited issues relating to cyber bullying, negative body image, increased violence by young people in some jurisdictions and assaults on young people aged between 15 and 24 years being higher than any other age group.

It was noted that all States are developing strategies to reduce alcohol related violence through education and public awareness programs and by working with police and the justice system to minimise, manage and prevent youth crime.

The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people (continued)

4. *A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia*

*A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia – Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) National Report 2009*⁸ was released in December 2009. It is the first national AEDI report on the health and development of young Australian children through the assessment of 261 203 children. This equates to 97.5% of the estimated five year old population within Australia.

The purpose of the data collection is to provide vital information to governments, educators, school communities and families regarding how best to achieve optimal learning outcomes and to support the ongoing healthy development of children through to maturity.

The AEDI checklist was adapted from the Canadian *Early Development Instrument (EDI)* and relates to five domains in early childhood development which are specified below.

- Physical health and wellbeing;
- Social competence;
- Emotional maturity;
- Language and cognitive skills (school based); and
- Communication skills and general knowledge.

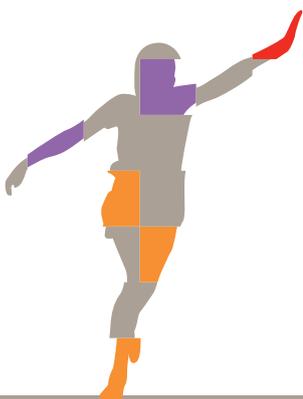
Data were collected by 15 528 teachers, from 7 425 Government, Catholic and Independent schools during 1 May – 31 July 2009 via a computer generated checklist for children in their first full-time school. At the time that the AEDI checklist was completed, the average age of children was 5.7 years.

As background, it was reported that 17.2% of all children (including Indigenous children) spoke 246 languages other than English at home, with 22.3% of Indigenous children speaking 111 different languages other than English at home. Furthermore, 6.5% of children were born outside Australia in 190 different countries.

The key findings were:

- the majority of children are doing well in each of the five domains;
- 23.4% of children are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain(s);
- 11.8% of children are developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains;
- a higher percentage of children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities and in very remote areas are developmentally vulnerable in all five domains;
- Indigenous children are generally developmentally able in four of the domains with the exception of language and cognitive skills;

⁸ Centre for Community Child Health and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (2009) *A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia – AEDI National Report 2009*, Australian Government, Canberra



- children who are proficient in English and speak another language at home are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable in most domains compared to all other children; and
- some children who only speak English but are not proficient in this language are likely to be developmentally vulnerable in all five domains.

It was also noted in the report that:

- 4.4% of children have special needs status relating to chronic physical, intellectual and medical needs; and
- 10.5% of all children were identified by their teachers as requiring more assessment.

5. *YouthCONNECT – South Australia's young people: emerging issues and priorities*⁹

The Australian Institute for Social Research (AISR) at the University of Adelaide, in a response to a request by the Office for Youth, undertook to develop a research paper regarding the health and welfare of young South Australians. The subsequent report was tabled in September 2009. The project outcomes will guide the Office for Youth in the next stage of strategic policy development to be known as YouthCONNECT, which, in turn, replaces *South Australia's Youth Action Plan (2005-2007)*.

The Office for Youth recognised that for any new initiative to gain acceptance, wide and comprehensive consultation was an imperative. Additionally, a collaborative relationship between government agencies, young people and the communities in which they live is an essential ingredient to success.



⁹ The Australian Institute for Social Research (2009) Youth Connect – youth report; South Australia's young people: emerging issues and priorities, Office for Youth, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.

The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people *(continued)*

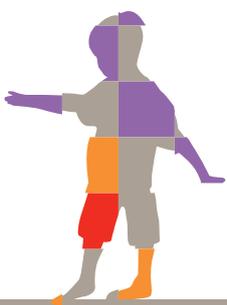
While there is no universal definition for what constitutes a young person, for the purpose of the review, researchers used the Australian Government and the South Australian Office for Youth definition as a young person being between the ages of 12 and 25 years.

Consultations began in 2008, with some 1 000 young people from a cross section of young South Australians including Indigenous youth, those from diverse ethnic backgrounds, young people with disabilities and those living in regional centres. Furthermore, eight government departments, 13 local Councils and seven community organisations were also consulted.

Young people were invited to comment, contribute and advise on key issues that were important to them. The AISR also reviewed national and international research that identified significant issues facing young people generally, as well as examining those relating specifically to young South Australians.

Twenty-seven trends and issues were identified and mapped against the relevant *South Australia's Strategic Plan* objectives. Of particular interest to the Council were those relating to building communities and improving wellbeing.

For example, in relation to building communities, there are a growing number of people settling in South Australia who have humanitarian or refugee status. Of these, 60% are under 30 years of age. Additionally, the number of international students undertaking higher education has increased by 14.1% since 2006. In order for a cohesive, tolerant and compassionate community to flourish, there needs to be a greater awareness of issues facing these populations. This can be achieved through targeted public awareness campaigns and linkages within and between school and campus communities.



The Council considers that the following targets from *South Australia's Strategic Plan* are relevant to its work.

- 1 *Target: Multiculturalism – increase the percentage of South Australians who accept cultural diversity as a positive influence in the community*

The proportion of South Australians who accept cultural diversity as a positive influence in the community has risen marginally from 87.7% in 2008 to 89.4% in 2009.

2. *Target: Reduce the proportion of young cigarette smokers by 10% by 2014*

In regard to the improving wellbeing category, the incidence of smoking among 15 – 29 year age group has fallen since 1990, although, in 2008, 23% of young South Australians reported that they smoked. Of these, higher proportions lived in the most disadvantaged areas, were Indigenous young people and/or had a serious mental illness.

3. *Target: Increase the proportion of young South Australians 18 and over with healthy weight by 10% by 2014*

In relation to healthy weight, the rate of overweight people over the last 10 years has been on the rise within the State and nationally. An estimated 23.3% of young South Australians in the 16–19 year age bracket are overweight or obese. At the other end of the scale, is the growing number of young people with eating disorders and poor body image.

4. *Target: Exceed the Australian average for participation in sport and physical activity by 2014*

Wellbeing is enhanced by physical activity. Almost 30% of young South Australians either do not take part in, or are minimally engaged in physical activity. A higher proportion of young women and young people who are socially disadvantaged are represented in this group.

5. *Target: Psychological wellbeing: equal or lower than the Australian average for psychological distress by 2014*

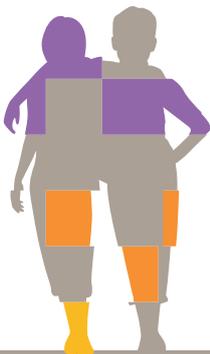
Poor mental health is another significant issue facing young people, with 16 – 19 years olds being the most likely to be diagnosed with a mental illness than any other group of South Australians.

The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people (continued)

International research

The Council believes that the world of childhood should be one that allows children to expand their horizons, reach their individual potential, be joyful within their families and communities, feel safe wherever they go and confidently progress through each stage of their development to healthy, happy, resilient young adults.

The Council recognises that there are, and will continue to be, challenges that prevent some children from attaining these goals. To this end, the Council examines research to guide it in its work. While there are differences across countries relating to the economic climate, government policy agendas and cultural norms, there is much to be learned from well conducted research and policy development undertaken overseas. The Council highlights the following four projects, which have informed its work in 2009–10.



¹⁰ Layard R & Dunn J (2009). *A Good Childhood: Searching for Values in a Competitive Age*. The Children's Society, London: Penguin Books.

1. UK Children's Society: *The Good Childhood Inquiry*

In 2009, the UK Children's Society commissioned *The Good Childhood Inquiry*, the largest and most comprehensive investigation ever undertaken into the nature of childhood in England, including taking evidence from over 30 000 children and young people.¹⁰ The Inquiry concluded that, while in many ways children have 'never had it so good,' nonetheless, five challenges compromise their emotional wellbeing and mental health:

- the culture of excessive individualism;
- soaring rates of family breakdown;
- massive commercialisation with the targeting of children for profit;
- an overly competitive education system which must raise important questions over the purpose of education; and
- dire poverty.

The Council for the Care of Children also believes that similar issues concern young South Australians, and they underpin our work, especially with regard to the most disadvantaged of our children and young people, and their families.

2. *Deprivation and risk: the case for early intervention*¹¹

This research was undertaken by Action for Children UK, to gauge the influence that deprivation has on the lives of children and their families. They identified that deprivation is insidious and that, within such environments, destructive practices, such as substance abuse and criminal behaviour, flourish.

While children are resilient and survive under extraordinary circumstances, their physical and emotional wellbeing are best served within loving and nurturing families. Conversely, long term family unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, isolation, violence and mental illness will have a harmful impact on the developmental health and wellbeing of children within such family environments. Therefore, it is important when tackling issues relating to the wellbeing and development of children living in very disadvantaged families not only to provide intensive support to the children but also to address issues for the family as a whole.



¹¹ Action for Children (2010) Deprivation and risk: the case for early intervention, Action for Children, London, www.actionforchildren.org.uk/uploads/media/36/9432.pdf accessed 11/08/10

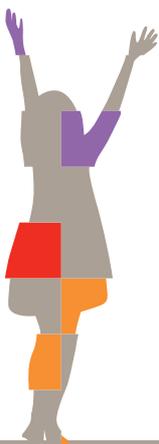
The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people *(continued)*

Key findings follow.

- For intervention to be effective, it must be put in place early. The sooner an effective intervention is in place, the greater the likelihood of positive long term outcomes for the children and their families.
- Depression, mental ill health and substance use can adversely affect parental attachment as well as prematurity and/or babies with long term health problems.
- Compounding these problems are issues relating to isolation and stress which can lead to neglect and abuse.
- A child's cognitive and social development can become impaired due to postnatal depression and this is associated with considerable levels of social and behavioural disturbance, particularly among boys.
- Successful parenting occurs in environments where poverty is reduced and access to resources, education, family support and community interaction is enhanced.
- Within families where parents face multiple disadvantages such as entrenched unemployment, substance use, violence or mental illness or a combination of two or more of these, the probability of psychological problems in a child multiplies.
- Children in disadvantaged families living in impoverished communities generally have less access to external resources and therefore their ability to develop resilience is compromised.
- Within the education system, such children are less likely to learn and develop, and their needs are prone to being overlooked.
- Unsupported single parent families, step families, families with a disabled child, and those headed by a teenage parent or where no adult is employed, are more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged.

The key messages are:

- early intervention – sooner rather than later;
- parenting programs and family therapy to support families to understand and undertake behaviours that enhance family life and childhood development;
- quality preschool programs to assist overall development for young children;
- supportive communities where children thrive;
- safe and permanent housing; and
- education is a key to prevention.



3. UK National survey of young people's wellbeing¹²

The Children's Society (UK) in partnership with the University of York undertook a major survey of young people's wellbeing in England. The research assessed young people's wellbeing – or happiness – by asking some 7 000 children and young people aged 10 to 15 years to undertake a self-appraisal of the level of satisfaction with their lives.

The questionnaire included over 100 questions relating to a broad range of areas of young people's lives, their relationships and their feelings about the world in which they lived.

This report is the second from an ongoing research programme relating to young people's wellbeing.

Some key findings follow.

- The young people were asked a series of questions about overall wellbeing which included how happy they were with their lives and how they felt life was going. Overall, they felt that life was generally good – average score 7.7 on a 0 – 10 scale. Around 7% – 10% of respondents described being 'unhappy' or having poor wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing fell off with age, and more so for girls than boys.
- Children who reported having learning difficulties (6.9 out of 10) and those with disabilities (6.7) also reported lower levels of wellbeing than the average (7.7).
- Young people who felt that their family got along well together had much higher average levels of wellbeing than those who did not, irrespective of the family structure they lived in. The difference between a young person's family getting along – or not – explained 20% of the variation in overall happiness with life, whereas differences in family structure only explained 2%.
- The small number of young people who did not live with either parent or were in out of home care, reported lower levels of wellbeing (average 6.2).
- Recent experience with bullying by peers and being treated unjustly by adults lowered young people's subjective wellbeing.

Young people were least happy about their appearance (17%) and confidence. Gender differences were apparent in this area: 21% of girls compared to 13% of boys. This was even greater in the 14 – 15 age group – 28% of girls compared to 14% of boys. After appearance and confidence, the aspects that children were least happy with were their local area (14%) and school work (12%).

¹² The Children's Society (2010) *Understanding children's wellbeing: A national survey of young people's well-being*, The Children's Society, London

The year in review – Key reports and policy directions for children and young people *(continued)*

Other areas where more than 10% of children were unhappy were the amount of freedom and choice they had in life and their expectations of the future. This highlights the importance of a sense of autonomy as a fundamental ingredient of a good childhood.

This study bears out earlier findings that the quality of family relationships free from significant conflict is far more important than family structure and has the greatest bearing on young people's happiness.

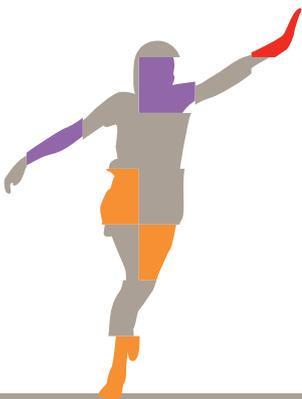
One of the unexpected findings was that friendships were not one of the key features for wellbeing which earlier research with young people had suggested.

The Children's Society reported that;

“

Family conflict emerges in this study as a major cause of childhood unhappiness, and so it is vital that families can get family mediation and counselling... to help them resolve and avoid conflicts. This report is a stark reminder that our actions as adults can have a profound impact on our children's wellbeing – and the importance of listening to what children are telling us.

The Society will continue to represent the issues that concern children and young people to a wider audience including government, policy makers and service providers.



4. *Children on rights and responsibilities: A report of children's views by the Children's Rights Director for England*¹³

Some 1888 children and young people responded to a questionnaire relating to children's rights and responsibilities. This included 792 children and young people who attended a conference convened by the Director's office, 850 who responded electronically, 192 did so via post, a further eight young people responded via a structured process using Widget symbols, and 46 children and young people responded during discussion groups in six different school settings.

The survey identified the current rights as defined within the *Human Rights Act*, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* and those that had been raised by children in residential settings and within out of home services or receiving additional support from social services.

This extensive undertaking demonstrated that children and young people were well able to articulate what they deemed were universal rights, yet were also able to recognise that rights go hand in glove with responsibilities. While there were no major variations from those in current legislation and with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, those responding to the questionnaire saw being treated equally and fairly as a significant and essential right for all.

Their top ten priorities follow.

1. The right to be treated equally and fairly.
2. Being protected from abuse.
3. Having an education.
4. Being helped to keep alive and well.
5. Not suffering discrimination.
6. Not being treated or punished in a cruel or demeaning way.
7. Children with disabilities being given special help.
8. Privacy and confidentiality of written and electronic communications.
9. The right not to be bullied.
10. The right to keep in touch with parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters.

¹³ Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) (2010) *Children on rights and responsibilities: A report of children's views by the Children's Rights Director for England*, Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, Manchester.

The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10

This section of the Annual Report outlines the major projects undertaken by the Council during the year. Further information is available from the Council's website at www.childrensa.sa.gov.au.

1. Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands visit

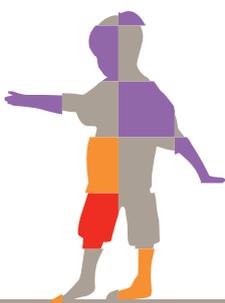
The Chair and Principal Consultant were invited to accompany Minister Rankine to the APY Lands in September 2009. The following observations were made.

- New housing construction was viewed and the Council was encouraged by the new Housing Agreement signed by the community and the Minister.
- Rental income received will be used to train members of the community in maintenance and building skills.
- Community members are participating in homemaker services and early childhood centres, although it was noted that services in some locations would benefit from additional staff and materials, and in some cases, relocation and redesign of the services offered.
- While these initiatives are welcomed and the work of many individuals acknowledged, the effects of extreme disadvantage, poor environmental conditions and chronic health issues remain overwhelming for communities, especially for infants, children and young people.

The Council made the following suggestions to the Minister concerning improving outcomes for the APY Lands communities.

- Services need to offer both practical training such as building houses, whilst also providing opportunities to address the grief and trauma suffered by individuals, and work towards healing.
- There is a need to acknowledge the legacy of apathy and despair which goes with the trauma of unresolved grief and loss – and these issues remain considerable barriers to improving the lives of those in the APY Lands' communities.
- Building trusting, long term relationships is crucial to improving outcomes for communities, and must happen in true partnership with the communities.

Council advice was also provided to SA Health.



2. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) – Eight priorities for children and families

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national non government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC's 8 Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families,¹⁴ was launched at the Adelaide SNAICC Members' Forum on 11 November 2009.

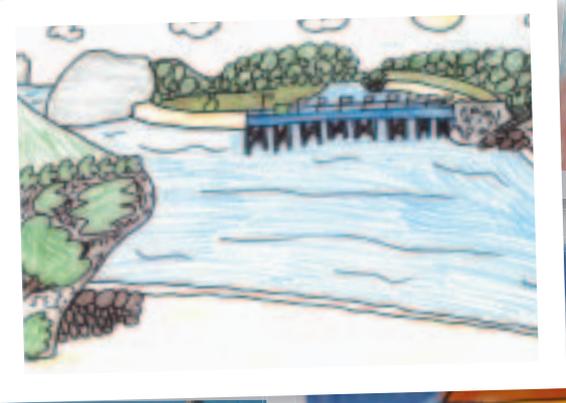
The priorities follow.

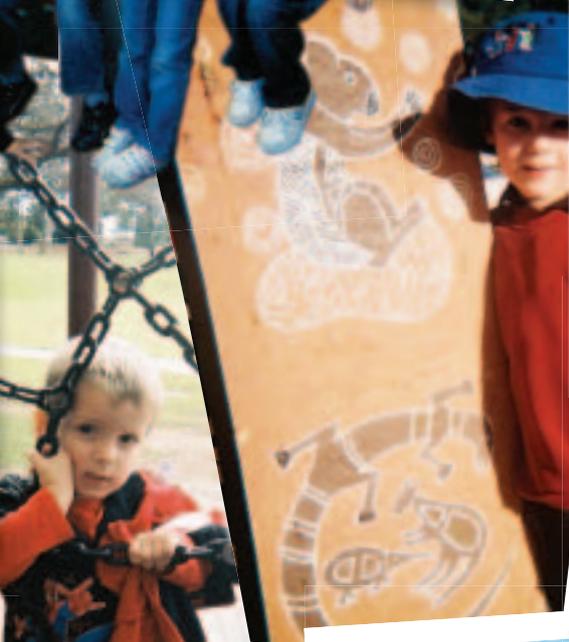
- Support families to care for children.
- Value and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Healing and reparations for the Stolen Generations.
- Self determination in child protection.
- Thrive by five with culture alive.
- Real results take real planning.
- Building capacity builds communities.
- Hope, wealth and prosperity for our children.

The Council is also committed to pursuing the eight priorities, each of equal importance, on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and aims to work in partnership with SNAICC and other Aboriginal organisations to this end in 2010–11.



¹⁴ Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) (2009) Eight priorities for children and families. SNAICC: Victoria. At www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/default.cfm?loadref=67 (accessed 27 October 2010)





The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10 (continued)

3. National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020

The Council provided advice during consultations concerning the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* and continues to monitor its implementation and consequences of its development for improving the lives of all children and young people. The Council is a member of the South Australian National Framework for Child Protection Partnership Group which is advising the government on the implementation of some of the strategies which will also involve the non government and community sectors.

4. Submission to the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide consultation

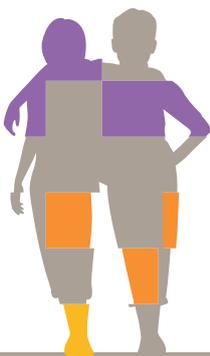
The Council prepared a submission in response to the draft *30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide* (the Plan), which looks to the future needs of the community in terms of a vision for the next three decades;

“

'...to position Adelaide as a city that is recognised worldwide as liveable, competitive and resilient to climate change while retaining those things we love such as open space, the ambience and charm of rural centres and a city that is vibrant and family friendly.'

The Council considered that, while recognising the need to be 'family-friendly', the draft Plan failed to focus adequately on children and young people, preferring instead to identify the demographic transition, which is already underway with an ageing population, as the main driver for change. The Council understands well this imperative, but thought that the draft Plan failed to address children and young people as specific population groups deserving of attention in their own right. Without their appropriate social, economic, developmental and environmental needs accommodated, the Council is concerned that we will be less likely to benefit children's development and wellbeing now, and to have an educated and well-functioning workforce in the future, able to support the aged and frail aged sectors of the South Australian population.

Acknowledgement was given to reference made in the draft Plan to children and young people, but the Council assessed it as narrowly focused on the need for physical activity, transport corridors to school and work,



and recreational facilities. Unfortunately, any consideration of the range of other needs that children and young people have for their development and wellbeing appeared to have been omitted.

The Council considered that the Plan's development offered an excellent opportunity for the South Australian Government to develop the Greater Adelaide region as a child and youth friendly city, and to incorporate the latest research and knowledge of what our youngest citizens require for their optimal development. In doing so, Adelaide would be justifiably recognised worldwide as an innovative and far-thinking community, and by all its citizens, as 'a great place to live'.

5. *Accessible version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child Friendly Language*

The Council negotiated with the Royal Society for the Blind for the production of accessible versions of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child Friendly Language*. These were developed in four formats:

- a Braille version, which can be ordered from the Council;
- a large print version;
- an audio version (MP3); and
- a plain text version (suitable for text readers when accessing the website).

The last three are available for download from the Council website at www.childrensa.sa.gov.au

6. *Information Sharing Guidelines for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families (ISG)*

The Council was briefed by Pam Simmons, the Guardian for Children and Young People and Donna Mayhew, Principal Advisor (Information Sharing) from the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, on the new *Information Sharing Guidelines*.

The Guidelines have been developed to assist in the sharing of information across government, and between government and non government agencies regarding children and young people in out of home care and at risk of being in care. There is national interest in the guidelines, and information sharing is also a key objective in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*. Agencies are implementing the guidelines and the Guardian's Office continues to promote their use, provide advice and review any issues which arise. The implementation of the guidelines will be evaluated in the future.

The Council commends this work as a key step in improving the delivery of timely and responsive services to children, young people and their families.



The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10 (continued)

7. 'What I'd Like You to Know about Me!' website

This website was designed for use by families of children and young people with disabilities, the young people themselves, or those working with these children and their families. It can assist families to record information about their child, which can be shared with those who provide care or services to their child, family and friends.

The resource has been developed with significant input from families of children and young people with disabilities and service providers who work with children; and includes ways that parents, carers, family members, the children and young people themselves and service providers can provide positive support to their child.

The Council assessed the website and identified the following as possible benefits:

- The website provides potential for information about the child and to highlight their achievements.
- The website could be provided as a useful tool for information sharing concerning children and young people under Guardianship as they are able to submit information which they consider is important for people to know.

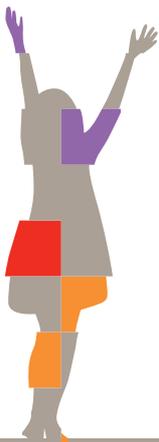
- The site has the potential to provide a means of creating a virtual storybook or life history.
- The site provides a consistent tool which does not rely on a carer to create.

While recognising the potential benefits, the Council also acknowledged that it would not be suitable for all children and young people living with disability.

8. Progressing Child and Youth Friendly Communities

In 2008–09, the Council for the Care of Children adopted the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) initiative 'Child Friendly Cities' as a major project over the next two years. A child and youth friendly city is one whose physical and social make-up accommodates and nourishes the needs of children and young people. The Council's goal is to help South Australia become the first child and youth friendly state within Australia, following work undertaken in this area in other parts of Australia and internationally. As part of the state reform agenda the South Australian Government also committed, in 2009, to developing a child friendly State.

In October 2009 with the Guardian for Children and Young People,



the Council prepared advice to the Chief Executive, Department of Education and Children's Services for the Inter-Ministerial Committee: Child Development on what is desirable for a child and youth friendly State. The Council used the framework established under UNICEF's *Building Child Friendly Cities: A Framework for Action*, and made the following suggestions.

A child-friendly city is the embodiment of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* at the local level, which, in practice, means that children's rights are reflected in policies, laws, programmes and budgets. In a child friendly city, children are active agents; their voices and opinions are taken into consideration and influence decision-making processes.

UNICEF's building blocks of a 'Child Friendly Cities' approach are:

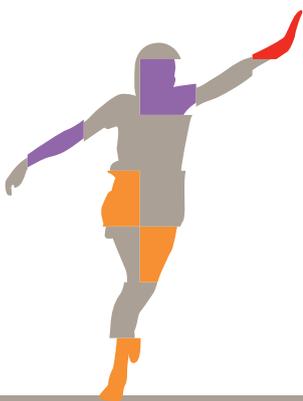
- Children's participation: promoting children's active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes;
- A child-friendly legal framework: ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children;
- A city-wide Children's Rights Strategy: developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a child friendly city, based on the Convention;
- A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism: developing permanent structures in government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspectives;
- Child impact assessment and evaluation: ensuring that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children – in advance, during and after implementation;
- A children's budget: ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children;
- A regular State of the City's Children Report: ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights;
- Making children's rights known: ensuring awareness of children's rights among adults and children; and
- Independent advocacy for children: supporting non governmental organisations and developing independent human rights institutions – children's ombudspersons or commissioners for children – to promote children's rights.

The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10 (continued)

The Council offered a range of ways to proceed, for consideration by government:

1. Consider increasing the age range beyond the current focus of 0 – 8 years, from conception to end of primary school or up to 18 years. There are neuroscientific findings which suggest that middle childhood and adolescence are also significant periods of brain development, and that important gains can be made by intervening appropriately at these stages.
2. Ensure the participation of children and young people from the start – for authenticity, confidence, and relevance – and to demonstrate how their participation can be successfully enacted.
3. Be broad and inclusive, and involve the community, business and the non government sectors as well as State and local governments. The focus should be children (now and in the future), families and their communities.
4. Focus on prevention and early intervention, and invest early in children's lives, by taking a developmental approach to wellbeing and the delivery of effective responses. These should include early childhood education and parental support for high-need families.
5. Target action to reduce inequalities in the outcomes for the most vulnerable children in South Australia. Priority populations should be those who are significantly disadvantaged, and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living in low income and jobless households, children with disabilities, children who are carers, children in state care, and refugee children.

For example, introduce greater targeting of intensive services in the antenatal period towards high-need pregnant women and their partners, and of infants at higher risk of poor outcomes within the overall framework of the universal health system. Earlier assessment of a family's needs allows better engagement and trust-building with very over-burdened families before the birth of the infant. Identify new strategies to engage fathers, especially those who are young and disadvantaged.
6. Consider developing a Children's Plan/Strategy¹⁵ for South Australia that outlines over-arching policy goals and the broad means of achieving them, is cross-sectoral, evidence-based, and sits within or alongside *South Australia's Strategic Plan*. Within the Plan, create clear, achievable targets for child wellbeing outcomes and regularly collect high-quality information on children's wellbeing that is nationally and internationally comparable.



7. Consider establishing a body such as a Ministry for Children and/or Office for Children (or Children and Young People), or a Children's Commissioner to lead and monitor action at a population level. Build child-focused organisational arrangements to oversee services and programmes, and pooled funding for children and young people in an area, underpinned by a duty to cooperate, to focus on improving outcomes for children and young people.
8. Continue to experiment with policies and programmes for children, rigorously evaluate them to see whether they enhance child wellbeing, and reallocate money from programmes that do not work to those that do. This approach will ensure resources allocated to children progressively enhance child wellbeing.
9. Use a rights-based approach and apply the principles of non-discrimination, care and protection, best interests of the child, and active participation by children and young people.

The Council also advised that a 'Child Friendly City' should guarantee the right of every young citizen to:

- influence decisions about their city;
- express their opinion on the city they want;
- participate in family, community and social life;
- receive basic services such as healthcare, education and shelter;
- drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation;
- be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse;
- walk safely in the streets on their own;
- meet friends and play;
- have green spaces for plants and animals;
- live in an unpolluted environment;
- participate in cultural and social events; and
- be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.

¹⁵ For example, Ireland has The National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives (Ireland, 2000); New Zealand has New Zealand's Agenda for Children (New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, 2002); and, most recently, the United Kingdom has developed the Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10 (continued)

Therefore, a child and youth friendly community is one where there are safe spaces and places for children and young people to play, navigate and explore, engage in group activities, and access services and facilities such as sporting clubs, libraries, and health services that support children and families. Children need interesting, challenging places that enable them to explore and use their imaginations. A child and youth friendly neighbourhood fosters a sense of pride and belonging and engenders a yearning by children and young people to become a part of that community as adults.

On 14 May 2010, the Council hosted a forum for approximately ninety people at the Art Gallery of South Australia entitled 'Moving towards South Australia as a Child and Youth Friendly State'. The purpose of the forum was to ignite interest in this initiative, inform potential partners of this work and encourage them to join with the Council to progress the 'Child and Youth Friendly Community' agenda in South Australia.

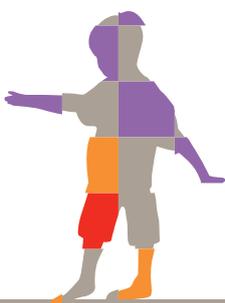
The Council invited two leading proponents of child friendly cities to address the forum. Professor Brendan Gleeson, Director of the Urban Research Program at Griffith University School of Environmental Planning, has written on homelessness, urban planning, public transport and disability. He is co-author of *Australian Urban Planning: new challenges, new agendas* and

co-author/editor of *Creating Child Friendly Cities: reinstating kids in the city*.

Associate Professor Geoffrey Woolcock, an urban sociologist also based at Griffith University, is particularly interested in both indicators of social sustainability and the factors that contribute to child and youth friendly communities. His work with large scale public and private sector organisations concentrates on developing measures of communities' strengths, alongside national and international efforts to measure wellbeing led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, opened the forum, and key points from her address follow.

- The wellbeing and development of South Australia's children is a priority of the State Government.
- Enabling South Australia's children to develop to their full potential is as important economically as it is socially.
- The Government sees this as both an individual responsibility as well as a collective one. It goes to the very heart of what being a community is all about and it is about every aspect of life:
 - how we deliver health services;
 - the delivery of our early childhood services and parenting support;



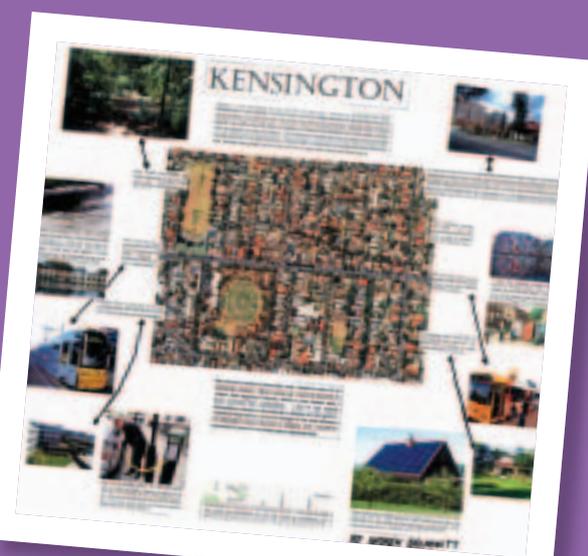
- the quality of our education system;
- the design of our houses and every aspect of the planning of our communities; and
- whether or not children and young people are welcome.

In addition to these speakers, there were two presentations from young people and a wide-ranging panel discussion.

Following on from the forum, the Council for the Care of Children continues to consider ways to undertake further work in this area including the following strategies.

- Receiving examples of child and youth friendly initiatives in South Australia to encourage debate and build capacity of organisations to be child and youth friendly.
- Exploring ways of enabling children and young people to participate more actively within their communities, particularly in the planning, design and use of services provided for their needs.
- Examining opportunities to provide communities with the capacity to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and children and young people living with disability.
- Focusing on ways of increasing the active participation in the community of children and young people with disabilities; children and young people in the care and protection system and children and young people who have caring responsibilities, especially those caring for a family member/parent with a mental illness, within their communities.
- Considering the development of a child and youth wellbeing survey for South Australia which asks children and young people about their positive wellbeing, and also explores issues that may impact negatively on their wellbeing such as mental health problems, caring responsibilities, bullying, hopes and fears, and safety.

All presentations and copies of the full report of the forum, *Moving Towards South Australia as a Child and Youth Friendly State* can be found on the Council for the Care of Children website at www.childrensa.sa.gov.au.



The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10 (continued)

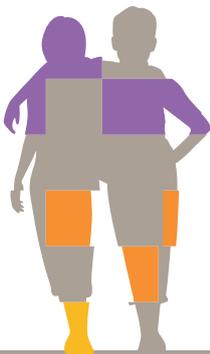
9. Working with vulnerable families

In the 2008–09 Annual Report, the Council outlined work it had undertaken with regard to 'best practice' approaches to supporting multiply disadvantaged young fathers to care for their children. In 2009–10, the Council has continued this work by examining ways that vulnerable families with multiple disadvantages can be better supported in South Australia to ensure improved outcomes for both themselves and their children.

The Council has been examining research and program models which provide effective family support to those parents who are the most in need in our community, and which offer such services as early in pregnancy as possible. The Council believes that, to be effective, programs should be based on ecological models, where the determinants of child and family wellbeing are viewed in terms of interactive systems of material, social, cultural, behavioural and

emotional influences rather than single risk factors. Programs must therefore address simultaneously the psychological and emotional needs of the parents (especially their sense of mastery and competence); the parental behaviours that influence maternal, fetal and infant development; and the situational stressors (such as a lack of housing, safety and adequate income) and social supports that can either interfere with or promote the adaptation to pregnancy, birth and the early development of a child.

The Council believes that there are insufficient specialised prevention and early intervention services to address the complex needs of these families in South Australia, and without which some infants and young children will enter the child protection system, and for whom, earlier effective intervention may have prevented harm from occurring.



Professor Phillip Slee in *Families at Risk: the effects of chronic and multiple disadvantage*, observes that;



...in order to achieve improved outcomes for families at risk, a paradigm shift is required so that unequal outcomes for families and children are seen as social injustices, rather than as products of individual dysfunction or deficit.¹⁶

He cites the following principles as important in redressing inequalities effectively. Broadly speaking, the design of service responses should:

- be universal and comprehensive;
- be holistic by responding to the barriers and opportunities to health and wellbeing;
- focus on prevention, early intervention and social connection;
- build capacity in the most disadvantaged localities and populations; and
- entail continuous and coordinated commitment in all sectors and at all levels.

Dr Fraser Mustard, in his time as Thinker in Residence in South Australia, highlighted the importance of establishing a sound relationship with parents and other carers and purported that it was particularly beneficial to establish a helping relationship prior to the birth of a child, including assistance through pregnancy support services. Services need to be available and accessible during pregnancy, rather than only available once a child is born.

¹⁶ Slee, P. (2006) *Families at Risk: The Effects of Chronic and Multiple Disadvantage*. Adelaide: Shannon Research Press.

The Council's contribution to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in 2009–10 (continued)

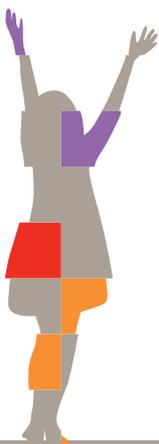
He outlined some of the barriers to families accepting support which included mental ill health; domestic violence; low self esteem; poor literacy levels; and transport difficulties. Recognition of a parent's particular circumstances, and solutions based on a 'strengths approach' were prerequisites for successful engagement. He asserted that being overly directive and inflexible in our responses to families was least effective.

Dr Mustard emphasised a number of important organisational features that need to be in place in order to nurture a positive relationship between the organisation/worker and child/family. These included:

- warm and friendly settings;
- a culture of caring within the organisation;
- professional supervision of staff and support, including opportunities for debriefing for complex situations;
- a high ratio of workers to families, in order to promote relationship building over a long period; and
- accessible services for those with disabilities.

A range of research and practice reports focusing on early intervention also outline the importance of taking strengths-based approaches to family support, enhancing protective factors for children and families to build resilience, giving encouragement for positive parenting, and, in some cases, providing long term intervention and support to improve parenting, child development and wellbeing and enhancing parents' life skills. Ultimately, early intervention and prevention provide cost benefits in later years in terms of reduced crime, greater community stability and capacity, reduced prevalence of mental health problems, family violence and drug and alcohol abuse, and better employment outcomes for parents.

The Council has been consulting with representatives from a wide range of government and community based agencies who are also concerned at the need for more services for very high-need families, and will continue this work in the coming year.



We acknowledge that a range of new services which support young children and their families have been provided through programs funded by both the South Australian and Australian Governments. In particular, we note the potential benefit of integrated service provision through the creation and funding of Children's Centres, and the Australian Government's *Communities for Children* program.

Whilst the importance and effectiveness of the provision of services within these programs is recognised, there remains a need for more services which provide early advice, therapeutic support and practical help to high need families with multiple disadvantages ante-natally and through the early childhood period. The Council for the Care of Children will continue to work with both government and non government service providers to establish ways that service provision needs can be effectively addressed to ensure all children, young people and their families have access to the full range of opportunities to lead fulfilling lives. To this end, the Council has appreciated the opportunity to attend the meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee: Child Development in 2009 as an observer, and to provide advice and comment via the Minister for Families and Communities to that forum.



Behind the scenes

While the Council for the Care of Children meets regularly over the year, its members are committed to the health and wellbeing of children and young people in South Australia on a daily basis through their professional and personal lives. Their passion for those who are the foundation of our future generations stems from personal experience, service delivery, policy development both within the community and government sectors, research initiatives and advocating for better outcomes for the children and young people within our communities across South Australia.

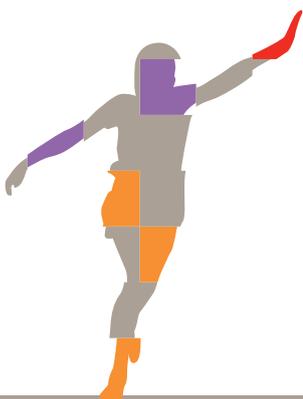
Some of the activities that Council members have been involved in include the following projects.

1. *Through the Looking Glass* – an initiative of the Lady Gowrie Child Centres

Through the Looking Glass (TtLG) is an innovative attachment-based parenting program based in child care centres. The project is a collaborative early intervention strategy involving health, education and welfare services, which utilises the universality of child care settings to intervene with families where there is an identified compromised attachment relationship between the primary carer (mother) and her child/children. The program works mainly with mothers to help them to understand how to strengthen their relationship with their child. It is suitable for families where children are easily distressed and unsettled, where the parent is experiencing anxiety about the relationship or where families are concerned about their child's behaviour. TtLG is uniquely located within early childhood services whereby early childhood staff are able to continue offering focused support for the family after the completion of the project.

In the TtLG program, both the clinician and the child care educator work in partnership with each other and the family. The program directly works with small numbers of families (up to seven) in each group and focuses on their particular struggles that are directly impacting on their parenting, and on developing strong attachment relationships with their child/children.

The TtLG program is noticeably different from the many parenting programs which cater for larger numbers by delivering generic parenting information; it has a specific focus on attachment and addresses issues specific to the family. More than 9 in 10 mothers who participated in the project reported being more confident in responding to their child's needs, felt better able to cope as a parent, felt closer to their child and acquired more understanding of their child's attachment and exploration needs.



2. Transitioning from Care – CREATE Foundation

The CREATE Foundation is the peak body representing the voice of all children and young people in out of home care. It can be a daunting challenge, as well as one full of promise, for young people moving out of such services. CREATE has raised concerns about the service system's lack of support to young people to assist them to make the successful transition without an appropriate plan or scant preparation for the inevitable move.

In early 2010 at the CREATE National Youth Advisory Council Summit, delegates developed an action plan that aims to assist young people to successfully move from a protected environment to one that promotes self determination and provides opportunities for them to lead a dynamic life. In order for the plan to be effective, it requires commitment from governments and those regulated to provide such care and support.

The key issues and messages were:

- transitioning from care – this should begin by the time the young person is 15 years of age and continue to their mid twenties;
- education – is recognised as one of the chief ingredients to a well rounded and successful life and requires support and affirmative action from government departments and service providers;
- participation in decision making – raising young people's awareness and interest in their case plans via youth advisory groups, meetings and forums;
- contact with birth family – young people supported to explore the option of having greater contact with their birth families and how this can occur should they desire such an action; and
- quality contact with social workers – positive and more frequent contact with case workers is needed and young people's achievements should be recognised and recorded.

Behind the scenes (continued)

3. Hearth/home – University of South Australia – Art, Architecture and Design

This project involved third year architecture students who were assigned to develop appropriate housing for youth (16 – 24 years) at risk of homelessness across three prescribed sites. A multilevel partnership between, the School of Architecture, CREATE Foundation, DASH Metro Housing, Ladder (philanthropic sector of AFL football) and Housing SA helped to guide and inform the 2009 project. The Service to Youth Council also became involved in the project in 2010. It is an ongoing process that began in 2009, was expanded in 2010, with further work to be undertaken in 2011.

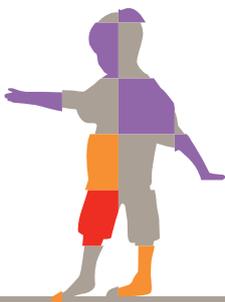
The motivation for the project is that:



...promoting socially inclusive design plants the seeds for creating an architecture profession which is responsive to the social needs of society.

The majority of young people at risk of homelessness come out of the child protection system at a time when they are no longer eligible for those services. Already vulnerable due to their life experiences, their ability to make the transition to an independent life can be a challenging time. Without adequate, stable and appropriate shelter, quality of life is further compromised and it is the recognition of this fact by the University of South Australia, School of Architecture and the subsequent Hearth/home project that makes it particularly significant.

In 2009, over a 12 week period, 80 architectural students not only learned about the issues of young people at risk of homelessness but also began to develop housing designs that met their unique needs. In December 2009, these plans were exhibited in a public forum and delivered to the member organisations involved in the project. The plans are now a permanent fixture in their foyers. They have also allowed for a greater understanding of appropriate housing design by social housing developers and can be considered a blueprint for future developments.



4. *Imagine if* – a SACOSS forum

This forum was held in April 2010 and brought together advocates who were working either in, or alongside, the child protection system in South Australia, with a view to re-imagining the system as working optimally for all those who are affected by it.

Presentations relating to the current system were followed by a brainstorming session about how, in an ideal world, things might be different. Speakers offered their perspectives as a child, a parent, a foster carer/parent, a service provider, a mandated notifier and a young person who either was still, or had been, in the care system. The forum was aimed not at dwelling on current failings of the system, but rather on exploring the possibilities of an ideal system by taking an optimistic perspective.

One such presentation was delivered by a Council member representing a young mother's experience of the child protection system on her life as it might be in April 2015.

This young woman's earliest experiences were of hardship and a fragmented family; a violent father eventually leaving a mother coping with six young children. Her story described despair and loss, a mother's suicide and the breakup of the family, of foster care, patchy education and pervasive sadness which coloured her world. She described her early marriage, a pregnancy, a premature birth and the death of her first baby and the end of her marriage. A spiral of drinking and poor choice in partners eventuated in another pregnancy, more violence and further abandonment. Alcohol became her constant and only consistent companion. Eventually in her eighth month of pregnancy she was hospitalised.



Behind the scenes (continued)

From this point, she described a series of support systems that showed concern yet made no judgements, of clear and firm support that assisted her to view herself as a worthwhile human being despite the mistakes and decisions she had made in the past. Supportive people and structures were put in place that understood her situation and helped build on her strengths; recognising there was no 'quick fix' but work and positive reinforcement could lead to a better life. With each day, taking small steps and with a safety net of support groups, both formal and informal, not only was she in control of her life, she was also becoming a role model that her newborn daughter could emulate. *Imagine if the child protection system in 2010 was able to achieve this for all the many parents and children who are its clients...*

5. Supported Residential Facilities Advisory Committee

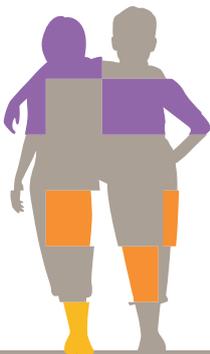
During 2009–10, the Supported Residential Facilities Advisory Committee (SRFAC) successfully sought funding from the Federal Government Stimulus Package for the construction of 12, two-bedroom properties for women with a mental illness aged 19 – 40 years, currently living in supported residential facilities.

This housing is accompanied by support packages provided by Mental Health Services (SA Health). These houses are targeting women only, as they are a minority within the Supported Residential Facilities sector and vulnerable because of their past histories of abuse; moreover, there has historically been very little movement out of these facilities for such women.

6. South Australian Government initiatives that align with the work of the Council for the Care of Children

As part of its role, the Council for the Care of Children is responsible for providing advice to the Minister for Families and Communities on priorities for research. The Council notes that, in 2009–10, the South Australian Government has been involved in a range of research projects and initiatives which aim to improve the lives of children and young people in South Australia.

The knowledge gained from the research and evaluation activities contributes to our knowledge of what works best and helps shape approaches to working with South Australian children and young people, and their families. Some of the research concerning children and young people completed in 2009–10 is included here.



**a. Department for Families
and Communities**

*Children with high and
complex needs: 'Complexity
Assessment Tool'*

This project developed an instrument for the prospective screening of children entering care. The tool supports consistent and thorough assessment of the needs of children to assist in placement planning and the provision of appropriate resources. It is now being implemented across Families SA: Lead researcher: Associate Professor Paul Delfabbro, University of Adelaide.

Evaluation of Rapid Response

The Rapid Response strategy was developed to assist young people under the Guardianship of the Minister access their full entitlements in relation to health care, housing, education, welfare, disability services and employment. In 2009–10, the Research Unit, Business Affairs completed Phase Two of the evaluation of the strategy, reviewing the critical factors which influence the implementation and impact of Rapid Response.

Results indicated strong support for the principles of Rapid Response and improved awareness across government of the special circumstances and needs of children and young people under Care and Protection Orders. This information is now used much more consistently and widely in assessment and planning. Systems have been established or improved to enable better identification of when children are under Guardianship Orders. Collaborative practices have been extended with improved practices relating to the exchange of information, cross-agency planning and joint working, although 'working together' remains a complex and challenging area. Improving access to services for children under Orders has achieved mixed results particularly in those agencies where a clinical assessment of need determines resource allocation. Findings indicate the importance of ongoing support to agencies in the implementation and conduct of Rapid Response, including training, resources and information. *The Bulletin – Evaluation of Rapid Response* is available at: www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=O-y2lyWBpts%3D&tabid=811

Behind the scenes (continued)

Working with refugee families

This project explored the extent to which newly arrived groups are coming into contact with the child protection system; the drivers for these incidents; the lessons from practice models from Australia and overseas; and culturally competent and effective child protection, family intervention and community development strategies.

The project involved Families SA case file analysis and consultations with refugee communities, documenting their experiences and perceptions of parenting, family support and child protection issues.

The principal finding from this research was the critical significance of culturally competent child protection practice when working with refugee families. This includes the development of a child protection workforce that is well prepared and confident to address the needs of refugee families who come into contact with the child protection system. Equally important, culturally competent child protection practice requires establishing and maintaining good relationships with refugee communities based on two way communication and collaboration: Researchers: Dr Fiona Arney, Kerry Lewig

and Mary Salveron, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia.

A copy of the Research Report and Bulletin can be found at: www.dfc.sa.gov.au/research/

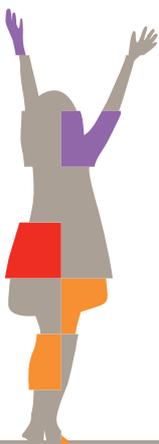
b. SA Health

National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development aims to deliver better access to antenatal care, teenage reproductive and sexual health services, child and maternal health services and integrated child and family services which focus on quality early learning, child care and parent and family support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children.

Key achievements by SA Health agencies under this National Partnership during 2009–10 include:

- the delivery of sexual health education programs targeting Aboriginal young people by Shine SA;
- the provision of 260 sexual health screenings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women and their partners by the Aboriginal Health Council of SA; and
- the expansion of the Aboriginal Family Birthing Program.



Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting

Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting aim to bring together care, education, health, community development activities and family services for children from birth to eight years of age and their families.

Key achievements during 2009–10 included:

- the implementation of the allied health program providing a range of primary prevention and early intervention programs including speech and occupational therapy in Children's Centres;
- the development of a series of reports including *Best Practice Guidelines for Occupational Therapy Service Delivery in Children's Centres* in partnership with the University of South Australia;
- the delivery of the *You Make the Difference* Hanen group program for parents to assist their child's language development at the Parks, Hackham West, Elizabeth Grove and Murray Bridge Children's Centres;
- the provision of various health promotion programs and materials on topics including parenting, healthy eating, physical activity and dental health;
- the provision of child and family health services such as child health checks and services offered by maternal health nurses, in conjunction with Children's Centres; and
- the implementation of the SA Health *Health and Wellbeing Framework for Children's Centres* across all Children's Centres, as well as the appointment of three health promotion officers working specifically with Aboriginal families in the Christies Beach, Port Augusta and Kaurna Plains areas.



Behind the scenes (continued)

Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry: Allegations of sexual abuse and death from criminal conduct report and Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Commission of Inquiry: A report into sexual abuse

The Government of South Australia continues to implement its response to the recommendations of the Mullighan *Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry: Allegations of sexual abuse and death from criminal conduct report and Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Commission of Inquiry: A report into sexual abuse.*

Key achievements by SA Health during 2009–10 include:

- the review and ongoing implementation of the self protective training program run by The Second Story;
- the establishment of a pilot program that provides assertive specialised therapeutic services for children and young people in care with difficult and complex needs;
- the provision of mental health services to children and young people on the APY Lands including some children and young people who have been sexually abused;

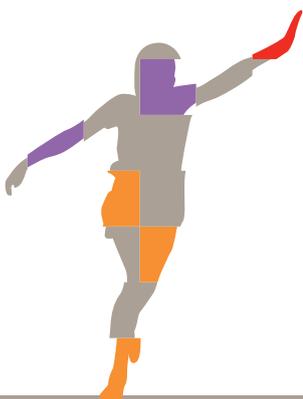
- the introduction of a model for expanding the forensic assessment and therapeutic services in Amata on the APY Lands developed by the Children's Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Child Protection Service (CPS); and
- the amendment to the *Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004* to allow children and young people to make a complaint directly to the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner.

Rapid Response Service Initiatives for Children and Young People under Guardianship of the Minister

The South Australian Government continues to provide a, coordinated and prioritised approach to the health, education and wellbeing of children and young people under Guardianship of the Minister through the Rapid Response framework.

Key achievements during 2009–10 included:

- the employment of six senior clinicians to provide intensive home and school-based therapeutic services to children and young people under Guardianship of the Minister, and their carers;



- the establishment of direct referral pathway for children and young people under Guardianship of the Minister from northern metropolitan Families SA Offices to the CAMHS Child Protection Program; and
- the implementation in Country Health SA of prioritised health standards for children and young people under Guardianship of the Minister, including the development of operational protocols for both Acute and Community Health services.

The Council will monitor the progress of this program and seek regular feedback from children and young people in care from the CREATE Foundation.

c. **Department of Education and Children's Services**

The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), the Department for Families and Communities and SA Health endorsed an interagency protocol to support children and young people who fail to attend school on a regular basis and where concerns exist regarding their safety and wellbeing. Information on this protocol can be found in: *Attendance Interagency processes for high risk children: chronic school non-attenders*.¹⁷

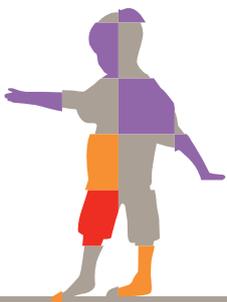
Professor Donna Cross from the Edith Cowan University undertook research into the seriousness of covert bullying including cyber bullying in metropolitan and rural Australia. The Australian prevalence study of bullying in schools report showed that South Australia has:

- the lowest rate of all forms of bullying across Australia (22% of the 1 156 South Australian students surveyed compared to 27% of the 7 418 Australian students surveyed stated they had been bullied every few weeks)
 - the lowest rate of covert bullying in State schools in the nation (11% compared to 17%).
- \$100 000 of cyber safety grants were provided to 45 government and non government schools to support innovative ideas to keep students safe from cyber bullying. All schools will complete their projects by the end of 2011 and provide a final report on the outcomes of work undertaken.
- DECS provided *Cyber-Safety: Keeping Children Safe in a Connected World* to all DECS principals in order to guide them in this emerging area.

¹⁷ www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/InteragencyProcessesforHi.pdf

Behind the scenes (continued)

- A Coalition to decrease bullying, harassment & violence in South Australian schools comprises representatives from the South Australian Police (SAPOL), government and non government schools and national and international experts. This Coalition supports research and training across the sectors as well as coordinating the initiatives to reduce bullying harassment and violence at state and national levels. The Coalition's strategy to tackle cyber bullying included the development and distribution of 150 000 parent pamphlets on cyber bullying, e-crime and the protection of children. 125 000 updated pamphlets have been provided for schools to distribute to their parents: *Cyber bullying, e-crime and the protection of children and young people: Advice for families*.¹⁸
- DECS has been working with regional offices to support the education of parents, teachers and students around the state to be cyber smart by providing 5 parent forums where Australian Communication and Media Authorities (ACMA) Cybersmart Outreach Program, DECS and the University of South Australia are working collaboratively to provide the most accurate information.
- The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing statement,¹⁹ developed in 2010, provides clear guidelines regarding the roles and responsibilities of DECS staff in relation to student mental health.
- SMART Programs (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma):
 - DECS, with the Australian Childhood Foundation, continued to provide training on Strategies for Managing Abuse-Related Trauma (SMART). The 2009–10 program included sessions in advanced SMART training which had an Early Years and an Adolescent component and Helping Conversations sessions targeted to school counsellors;
 - In 2009–10, the SMART Program was delivered to 1 028 educators in schools and preschools;
 - The online training package was completed by 869 individuals; and
 - SMART training was introduced to all DECS staff through mandatory Responding to abuse and neglect education and care update training 2009–11.



¹⁸ www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/files/pages/Cyber%20safety/Cyber_Bullying_2010.pdf

- *Responding to Problem Sexual Behaviour in Children and Young People* was distributed to all government and non government schools. The guidelines assist education and care sites to respond to incidents of problem sexual behaviour by children and young people. The guidelines are written for staff working in child care, family day care, out of school hour's care, preschool and school settings in DECS, Catholic Education and schools from the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia.

d. Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division

Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry: Allegations of sexual abuse and death from criminal conduct report and Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Commission of Inquiry: A report into sexual abuse.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division (DPC-AARD) oversees the Government's response to the Inquiry recommendations.

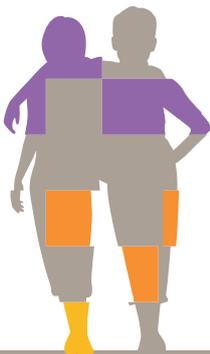
During 2009–10, there were 33 new houses constructed on the APY Lands and 34 houses upgraded. Houses were allocated to families in greatest need, focusing on the safety of children and reduction in overcrowding. The South Australia Police (SAPOL) built three new police stations at Mimili, Amata and Pukatja/Ernabella and has 19 permanent sworn officers on the APY Lands. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has a Lands-based clinician. The Department for Families and Communities (DFC) has two Child Protection workers and six Lands-based worker positions dedicated to improving child safety, and extra funding has been provided to address family violence. An e-notification system was put in place and protocols for investigating child abuse and/or neglect on the Lands have been developed and are in use. The *Children's Protection Act 1993* has been amended to provide that it is an offence to prevent, obstruct or interfere with a person discharging or attempting to discharge the obligation of mandatory reporting, and all staff working on the APY Lands receive training in child safe environments.

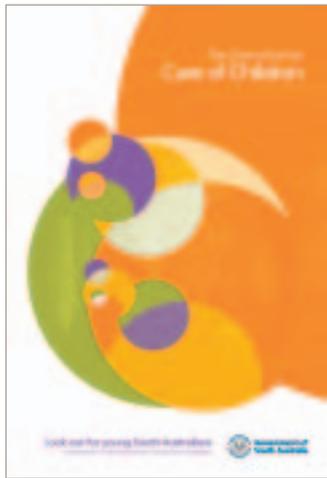
19 www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced2/files/pages/Student_Mental_Health_Stat.pdf

Our commitment to children and young people in 2010–11

This section of the Annual Report provides the broad directions for the Council into the future. The following strategic areas of work were agreed at the Council's planning session early in 2010–11.

1. The Council will help South Australia become a child and youth friendly state within Australia, following work undertaken in this area in other parts of Australia and internationally. As part of the state reform agenda, the South Australian Government is committed to developing South Australia as a child friendly state adapting the framework established under the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Building Child Friendly Cities: A Framework for Action*.
2. The Council will advocate for services for over-burdened, highly disadvantaged families of infants with an emphasis on ante-natal and ongoing support, and assess the provision of services currently with a view to ensuring that there are no critical gaps in service provision for those most in need. These families are currently unable to access needed support because of a lack of appropriate services.
3. The Council will work towards engaging with policy and decision makers as a pivotal partner in strategic matters concerning children and young people in South Australia, particularly with regard to providing early comment on the development of government policies and programs relevant to children and young people. To this end, the Council will also work on raising its profile in advocating for children's rights and interests with agencies and the community.





4. The Council will promote the use of *Looking out for Young South Australians: A framework for improving the lives of young South Australians* with service providers and policy developers particularly with regard to discussions concerning South Australia as a child and youth friendly state.
5. The Council will continue to respond and provide feedback to relevant bodies and government departments, both state and federal, regarding issues concerning children and young people, policy development, the development of standards and other relevant consultation processes. The aim of this engagement is to maximise the use of the expertise of the Council members in strategic decisions at state and national level concerning policies and programs for children and young people.



About the Council

This final section of the Council's Annual Report for 2009–10 provides summary information about the Council's operations.

1. Our history

The Council for the Care of Children was established in early 2006 pursuant to amendments to the *Children's Protection Act 1993*. While funded by government, and administratively supported by the Department for Families and Communities, the Council's functions and responsibilities extend to all South Australian children and young people, and across all communities and sectors that impact on children and young people.

In its first year, the Council maintained a closer eye on child protection issues. In the following years, the Council has slowly broadened its activities to meet its legal mandate.

2. Council members

The following community members were appointed to the Council by the Governor of South Australia, until 14 February 2011:

Dr Diana Hetzel as Chair
Ms Kaye Colmer

The following community members were appointed to the Council by the Governor, until 30 June 2010:

Ms Jane Chapman
Ms Mellita Kimber
Mrs Jayne Lehmann
Ms Emily Rozee
Mr Simon Schrapel

Associate Professor Daryle Rigney served on the Council until December 2009, and Dr Fiona Arney served on the Council until February 2010.

Pursuant to Part 7(B) Section 52(2) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, the Minister for Families and Communities has designated the following departments as members of the Council in 2009–10:

Department for Families and Communities:

Chief Executive: Ms Joslene Mazel

Also represented by:

Ms Sue Barr, Director, Business Affairs; and

Ms Nancy Rogers, Manager, Research, Media & Communication, Business Affairs

Department of Health:

Chief Executive: Dr Tony Sherbon

Also represented by:

Ms Dana Shen, Project Leader, Action Team and Early Childhood and Child Protection Portfolios, Statewide Services Strategy; and

Mr Daniel Cox, Director Service Modernisation, Statewide Services Strategy

Department of Education and Children's Services:

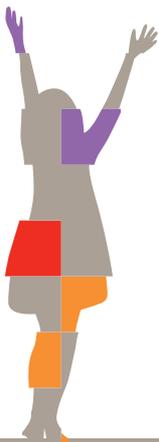
Chief Executive: Mr Chris Robinson

Also represented by:

Ms Janine Harvey, Assistant Director Child and Student Wellbeing, School and Regional Operations

Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, Department of the Premier and Cabinet:

Executive Director: Ms Nerida Saunders



3. Council meetings

Members' attendance to Council meetings is detailed below.

Attendance at Council Meetings 2009 –10							
Name	2009		2010				14/5 Child & Youth Friendly Communities Forum
	30/10	18/12	26/2	26/3	30/4	28/5	
Fiona ARNEY	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	–
Jane CHAPMAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kaye COLMER	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	A
Diana HETZEL (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mellita KIMBER	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Jayne LEHMANN	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓
Daryle RIGNEY	A	A	–	–	–	–	–
Emily ROZEE	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simon SCHRAPEL	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	A
Joslene MAZEL	Nancy Rogers for CE	A	Sue Barr for CE	Sue Barr for CE	A	Sue Barr for CE	Sue Barr for CE
Chris ROBINSON	Janine Harvey for CE	A	Janine Harvey for CE	Janine Harvey for CE	✓	Janine Harvey for CE	Janine Harvey for CE
Nerida SAUNDERS	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Tony SHERBON	Dana Shen for CE	Dana Shen for CE	A	Daniel Cox for CE	Daniel Cox for CE	Daniel Cox for CE	Daniel Cox for CE
TOTAL attendances	8	8	7	8	7	7	7

A = Apologies

About the Council (continued)

4. Establishment in legislation

The Council for the Care of Children is established in Part 7B of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*. The Act provides details of the Council's establishment and arrangements, including appointments, functions, and procedures.

5. Strategic and organisational planning

The Council for the Care of Children Independent Review

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet Circular *PC022 – Improving the Effectiveness of Government Boards and Committees* recommends that statutory boards with complex roles and responsibilities such as the Council for the Care of Children, be reviewed regularly.

As the Council has been operational since February 2006, it was decided that an independent review be conducted in the first half of 2010. The purpose of the review was to acquire knowledge about the past performance of the Council for the Care of Children, identify ways of enhancing its effectiveness and develop recommendations that would set the strategic directions for the Council in the short and medium term.

In May 2010, the Council appointed an external consultant to assess the effectiveness of the Council from its inception and to make recommendations for improvement by building on identified successes, learning from shortcomings

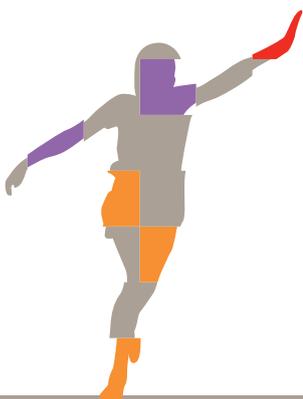
and challenges and developing a blueprint to guide its future endeavours.

Those people who took part in the review were both past and present Council members, the Secretariat staff and other stakeholders who had worked with the Council, such as the Executive Officer for the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee and the Guardian for Children and Young People.

The review posed recommendations for the Council to consider as a mechanism for a way forward that was both sustainable and achievable and all recommendations were directly developed from contributors' thoughts and ideas, and an examination of the work of the Council.

There was universal agreement that the process of the review allowed for exploring ways that the Council continue to work effectively in meeting its obligations. There was also unanimous optimism about the Council's future and the belief the Council had even greater relevance in 2009–10 than at any other time since its inception.

While common themes emerged about the Council's past performance and current status, there were a variety of ideas about its future directions. The fusion of the ideas and opinions served to develop the Review recommendations which will form the foundation of the Council's Strategic Plan and operation in 2010–11 and 2011–12.



Strategic Plan

The Council has a Strategic Plan and Action Plans which are regularly reviewed. The Council's Strategic Plan for 2009–10 was developed following the Council's planning day in July 2009, and outlined the following priorities.

1. The Council will continue to work with the sector to develop processes and programs for working effectively with vulnerable families using a strengths based approach focusing on prevention and, when necessary, long term support from a range of services.
2. The Council will continue to work with government and non government agencies and service providers to advance the vision of South Australia as a child and youth friendly state.
3. The Council will raise awareness of children and young people's rights through its website, by promoting the evidence from neuroscientific research on child and adolescent development and its implications for policy and services, and by ensuring that information on children's rights is accessible to children with low vision.
4. The Council will review the operations of the *Family and Community Services Act 1972* as they relate to children and young people by exploring the best ways to strengthen communities and by examining the Act's competency requirements for foster carers.
5. The Council will continue to respond and provide feedback to relevant bodies and government departments, both state and federal, regarding issues concerning children and young people, policy development, the development of standards and other relevant consultation processes.

About the Council (continued)

6. Executive Support

Pursuant to the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, the Minister for Families and Communities is obliged to provide the Council with the staff and other resources that it reasonably needs to carry out its functions.

The Council's office is located in the Department for Families and Communities and is supported administratively by that department.

The Council is currently assisted by a Principal Consultant and an Information & Administrative Officer.

7. Management of human resources

Positions

Principal Consultant	AS08
Information and Administrative Officer	AS03

Performance development

The Principal Consultant oversees the Information and Administrative Officer's professional development.

8. Freedom of information

There has been one request under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* to this office during 2009–10.

Under the provisions of the *Children's Protection Act 1993* information about individual matters disclosed to the Council is not liable to disclosure under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*.

9. Contracts and Consultants

During 2009–10, the Council has continued to use the services of Corporate Profile to produce the published version of its annual report and to design and assist with the establishment of our website.

Lis Burtnik from LB Consulting was engaged to conduct the independent review of the Council.

10. Occupational health, safety and injury management

In 2009–10, there were no incidents resulting in workplace injury.

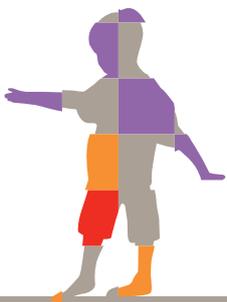
11. Energy management

The Council for the Care of Children participates in the Department for Families and Communities' energy efficiency and waste reduction program. In compliance with this program all waste paper is recycled, rubbish is sorted for recycling and power standby features are engaged.

12. Financial Issues

Revenue

The source of revenue for the Council is an allocation made for the child protection reform program and administered through the Department for Families and Communities. The Council received \$240 303 in 2009–10 to cover members' remuneration, secretariat costs and project work.



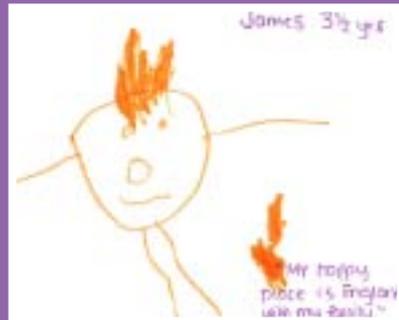
Expenditure

Financial services are provided by the Department for Families and Communities. The financial operations of the Council are consolidated into and audited through the department. Full financial reports are therefore not provided as part of this annual report. A financial summary of expenditure is provided below.

Financial summary of expenditure			
Item	Actual	Budget	Variation
Salaries and wages	\$110 906.70	\$180 403	\$69 496.30*
Goods and services	\$40 083.07	\$59 900	\$19 816.93
Total	\$150 989.77	\$240 303.00	\$89 313.23

Note: This includes total sitting fees of \$5 206.65

* Unspent salary funds: the Principal Consultant took leave of absence from October 2009, and her position remained vacant until March 2010 when it was filled on a temporary contract basis.



Acknowledgments:

From May 2010 the Council for the Care of Children worked with a range of early childhood services, out of school hours care services and schools.

The teachers in these services discussed the children's communities with them, what they liked and what they disliked. The children were given disposable cameras to take photos of places they liked, or they were able to paint or draw pictures or make models.

Each of the services approached the project in their own unique way. On the pages of this report are some of the photographs, illustrations, and models made by the children in response to the question, 'What do you like about your community?'

The Council would like to thank the following services for their contributions to its work on child and youth friendly communities: Halifax Street Children's Centre and Pre-school; Happy Valley Stepping Stones; Hewett Stepping Stones; Houghton Primary School; Kidman Park Stepping Stones; Miltaburra Children's Centre; Northfield Stepping Stones; Port Augusta West Primary School; Port Lincoln Special School; Tea Tree Gully Stepping Stones; Two Wells Stepping Stones and Out of School Hours Care.

The **Council** for the
Care of Children

Looking out for children



Government of
South Australia

