Commissioner for Children and Young People

Information for candidates

**Position description:** The commissioner promotes and advocates for the rights, interests and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia at a systemic level and ensures that South Australia, as a part of the Commonwealth, enacts its international obligations in respect of children and young people.

**Classification:** The classification is consistent with South Australian Executive Service (SAES) Level 2. More information about the SAES2 classification can be found at publicsector.sa.gov.au.

**Salary:** The SAES 2 salary range is $211,810 - $353,017.

**Location:** Adelaide

**Position reports to:** The commissioner is an independent statutory officer and is accountable to the South Australian Parliament, reporting through the Minister for Education and Child Development

**Term:** Contract position for 5 years

**Overview**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People is a new position, established under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*. This legislation was introduced to the South Australian Parliament in response to recommendation 245 of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission:

*Establish the statutory office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People and provide the commissioner with the functions and powers referred to in this report.*

Although the establishment of the position has come about in the context of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, the appointment of a children’s commissioner has been on the agenda of the South Australian Government for some time to improve the social inclusion and outcomes of all children and young people including by participating in decisions that affect their lives.

In addition to establishing the new role of Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Act continues the existing role of the Guardian for Children and Young People and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee, and creates a new Child Development Council.

The Act will be subject to a staggered commencement with limited provisions commencing operations as they relate to the recruitment and appointment of the commissioner and discrete other provisions unrelated to this. It is anticipated that commencement of the substantive provisions in the Act will occur in consultation with the commissioner once appointed and with other affected agencies.


Further information about the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee is available at: http://www.cdsirc.sa.gov.au/pages/default/

**About the role**

**International context:**

Your role is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Australia is a signatory and sets out fundamental human rights for children and young people. As South Australia’s inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People, you will promote and advocate for the rights and interests of all children and young people in South Australia. The ability to listen and communicate effectively with children and young people is a critical aspect of your role.

South Australia has developed Australia’s first framework for giving effect to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level, endorsed by UNICEF Australia for use across Australia with 6 Community Goals: education, health, safety, active participation, belonging, play and leisure.


**Local context:**

A recent focus in the South Australian community has been on making improvements to how government and the community can work together to ensure the safety and protection of children and there will be a high level of interest from the community about your role and exercise of powers under the Act. You will be required to demonstrate strong leadership, sound judgement and a personal style that engenders trust and respect.

Your role will focus broadly on the health, education, developmental and wellbeing interests and requirements of South Australian children and young people, thereby improving their safety and outcomes.

You will have an active presence in the community and be visible and accessible to the extent that all children and young people across South Australia will feel confident in your willingness to advocate on their behalf regarding issues of importance to them to give them ‘voice’ and influence.

You will involve children and young people in your own work and advocate for their involvement in all decision making that affects them, giving particular consideration to the needs and voices of vulnerable and at risk children and young people, including those whose ability to make their views known is limited for any reason.

You will also be responsible for educating children and young people as well as adults in the South Australian community, about the rights, needs and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Council for the Care of Children sought the views of over 1,650 children and young people in South Australia aged 4 to 18 years regarding the role and characteristics of the commissioner. The findings of the engagement with children and young people can be found at http://www.childrensa.sa.gov.au and will inform the selection panel’s consideration of the characteristics and qualities of importance in the commissioner.

**Selection criteria**

As Commissioner for Children and Young People, you will be responsible for the following key outcomes:

- Promote and monitor the overall wellbeing and outcomes of all children and young people in South Australia.
- Promote and advocate for the rights and interests of all children and young people in South Australia.
- Promote participation by children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives.
• Establish and conduct inquiries into matters related to the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people at a systematic level.

• Advise and make recommendations to ministers, state authorities and other bodies on matters related to the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people to relevant legislation, policies, practices and services.

• Exercise the powers of a commission in the conduct of inquiries as outlined in the Act.

• Consult with a broad range of children and young people and involve them in the activities and initiatives arising from the office of the commissioner to maximise engagement and participation.

• Gain insight and contribution from experts in relevant fields.

• Provide age appropriate and accessible information to children and young people.

• Undertake or commission research into topics related to the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people at a systemic level.

• Prepare and publish reports and research findings on matters related to the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people at a systemic level.

• Hold ministers, state authorities and other bodies accountable for the implementation of recommendations made by the commissioner pursuant to the provisions of the Act.

To be successful in the role, applicants will need to demonstrate the following essential attributes:

• Exceptional ability to meaningfully connect and interact with children and young people and to respectfully communicate with them and accurately capture and represent their views.

• Understanding of current issues affecting the needs of children and young people, ethics and public administration.

• Knowledge of the social and economic environment in South Australia and an understanding of the macro level policy issues affecting children and young people.

• Knowledge and experience of advocating for and engaging with children and young people of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

• An ability to analyse complex issues objectively to arrive at impartial conclusions supported by relevant and reliable evidence.

• Highly developed interpersonal and negotiation skills and demonstrated success in achieving changes through collaboration and exercising influencing skills with various stakeholders.

• Demonstrated knowledge and commitment to promoting and creating a safe and inclusive work environment; and the legislative requirements of Equal Opportunity and Work Health and Safety legislation.

• Demonstrated understanding of how to apply a rights framework in the protection and promotion of citizens’ rights.

Additional information on the selection criteria for this position can be found in the role description. Applicants should address the core competencies with regard for the above key outcomes and essential attributes.

Eligibility/conditions

• The views of children and young people will inform assessment of the commissioner’s performance in the role.

• Out of hours work will be required.

• Inter and intra-state travel will be required.
• Required to gain a Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Child-related employment screening prior to being employed, which is required to be renewed every three years before expiry.

• The incumbent will be required to undertake RAN - Responding to Abuse and Neglect Training every three years.

• Australian residency or a current works permit is required (it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide evidence of a current work permit).

How to apply

Applications should consist of:

• a covering letter

• details of relevant skills and experience in terms of the specified selection criteria (see role description)

• a curriculum vitae setting out relevant personal particulars, employment history, qualifications and experience.

The preferred method of submission of applications is by email in Word format to:

Mr Rick Persse  
Chief Executive  
Department for Education and Child Development  
Level 9, 31 Flinders Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000  
Email: rick.persse@sa.gov.au

Applications close at 5pm ACDT on Friday 9 December 2016.

Recruitment process

Children and young people will be actively involved in the selection process.

The panel will determine the most appropriate method/s to use for selection. If shortlisted, you will be notified by email of the method/s to be used for any particular selection process. You will be advised of the composition of the Panel, as well as any special requirements for the selection process.

During any interview/presentation you will have an opportunity to explain or clarify information given in your application and provide further evidence of your suitability for the role.

Notification

Once the successful applicant has accepted the nomination for the advertised role, other applicants will be notified by the Panel Chair that an outcome has been achieved. Notification will be via email.

Further information

For further information about the role, please contact:

Ms Julieann Riedstra  
Acting Chief Executive  
Department for Education and Child Development  
Phone: 8226 1273  
Email: julieann.riedstra@sa.gov.au