

SNAPSHOT

THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO CHILDREN



What SA Children say about Jobs, Skills, and the Future

- ✓ Get a good job
- ✓ Help others
- ✓ Keep learning

Across government, business, and community planning and decision making, the views, perspectives and experiences of primary school aged children need to be considered.

This Snapshot is designed to support capacity for this to occur.

The data is drawn directly from consultation undertaken with South Australian children in 2020 and 2021.

It is designed to inform decision makers, researchers, policy makers, and others who have an interest in understanding what children aged 8–12 years think and need.

Children are growing up, learning, and navigating relationships in a hyperconnected, fast-paced world. Their diverse and complex lives have been shaped by vast technological, cultural, political, and environmental change, while the decisions being made by leaders, decision makers and policy developers affect children and young people's daily lives.

As critical stakeholders and citizens, children and young people have a right to inform the development, design, and implementation of legislation, policies, programs, and services that have a direct or indirect impact on them now, and in the future.

Children are asking adults to take a sharper focus on their rights, interests, and wellbeing, and to integrate these into economic, social, and environmental policy.



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We want children and young people to see that change is possible and that adults can be effective in addressing the issues they've told us they see as most important.

Children want more of a voice and to be taken seriously – in the classroom, in their homes, in the community, and at government level. Being heard is key to them making their own lives better and improving their whole communities. By listening, empathising, and validating their experiences, we will be building enduring relationships that are grounded in trust.

In 2020, a total of 8,379 postcards from 219 Public, Catholic and Independent schools across metropolitan Adelaide and South Australian regional centres, and rural and remote communities, were received via the Commissioner's Student Postcard initiative. This snapshot report provides a summary of what they said worries them most.

The top dream jobs

The top six **dream jobs** for South Australian children aged 8–12 years were in the following areas:

- 1 Sports
- 2 Animals
- 3 Education and teaching
- 4 Art, design, and creativity
- 5 Health
- 6 STEM.

Children wrote about becoming police officers, firefighters, and paramedics so they could help people feel safe, especially after disasters such as bushfires.

Some wanted to build things, be creative and fix problems to make people happy. Some saw themselves as designers, artists or architects, builders, tradies, or mechanics. Others had dreams about making discoveries and solving problems in the way astronauts and detectives do, or doing something to 'be remembered' for such as 'finding a cure for spider bites'.

“**Do something great and important so [that] when I die I am remembered by it.**”
– 11 year old, female (Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island)

“**Either become the 2nd woman prime minister or become a deisel machanic in the army.**” – 12 year old, female (Adelaide Hills)

Many children aspire to working with technology, reflecting how much they enjoy playing, learning, and connecting online. Being a YouTuber, particularly a 'gaming Youtuber', was the most popular choice, alongside working as coders, game developers or animators, social media influencers, or 'anything with computers'.

It was common for children to write about being a YouTuber 'on the side' of other jobs. Some described how being a YouTuber would 'make kids entertained' while others wanted to be a 'charity streamer' who 'raises money for charity'.

Many children wrote about wanting to have a positive impact on other people, animals, and the environment as scientists and vets, as teachers and SSOs in schools, or as doctors and nurses, psychologists, dentists, or surgeons in healthcare. They also wanted to help their own families by working for them in a family business, or on a farm, or by making money some other way to help.

“**Be a charity streamer wich is a youtube gamer who raises money for charity.**” – 9 year old, female (Metropolitan Adelaide)

“**Be a youtuber, to help others laugh and not commit suicide.**” – 12 year old, male (Barossa, Light and Lower North)



Further study post school

While some children wanted to go to university, others wanted to start working as soon as possible. Some children, particularly those who were still figuring out what jobs appealed to them, highlighted what they were good at. Many more wrote about wanting to get better at the things they love, like reading and sport.

Some are worried that to make enough money to pursue their 'real passion' they would have to work in a job that didn't appeal to them. Learning new skills and doing well at school and beyond, frequently came up as something children wanted to do to get their dream job, or into their preferred university course.

While a similar proportion of boys and girls wanted to go on to further study after school, girls mentioned wanting to be a parent or 'mum' in the future more than twice as many times as boys. Boys were less likely to specifically mention being 'dads', but both boys and girls made general references to having a happy and healthy family.

“ ‘Be a dentist. I actually don't like it, but I need a job [that] can make money for me and then I would make [a] game or movie. I want to make anime in the future.’
– 12 year old, male (Metropolitan Adelaide)

“ ‘Be a kid pscholygist and give kids help they deserve.’ – 11 year old, female (Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island)

Aspirations for the future

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most significant differences between boys and girls became evident in their aspirations for the future. In terms of specific job aspirations, there was a clear split by gender according to traditionally male-dominated industries and female-dominated industries. Gendered differences, stereotypes and expectations were also reflected in children's broader aspirations around their future family and working lives, with girls more likely to write about 'being mums' and wanting to 'prove' that women can be successful, and boys more likely to want to be athletes, farmers, tradies and builders, engineers, YouTubers or gamers, police officers and firefighters. Although a higher proportion of boys wanted to be YouTubers and gamers, being a YouTuber also came in the top ten job aspirations for girls.

A significantly higher proportion of girls than boys wanted to be teachers, and girls were more likely to have dream jobs involving animals, as well as being artists, nurses and psychologists or counsellors. While science and marine biology were popular among girls, they were significantly less likely than boys to want to be engineers.

There was a real sense among young girls, particularly those aged 11 and 12 years, that they want to do certain things to 'prove' that women can 'do anything' and 'be successful'.

“ ‘Create my own business to prove to people I can, and that other woman can do anything.’ – 12 year old, female (Metropolitan Adelaide)



WHAT SA CHILDREN SAY ABOUT JOBS, SKILLS, AND THE FUTURE

All children wrote about wanting to help their family, and their mum and dad. Boys were more likely to look up to their dads, with this reflected in their job aspirations to be a builder, mechanic, tradie, miner, or farmer 'like my dad'.

Girls also wrote about who inspired them, and while this was sometimes family members, their role models were more likely to be famous women in sport, politics, music, or media.

“**‘Be a tradie like my dad.’** – 9 year old, male (Limestone Coast)

“**‘Be a engener to follow in my dads footsteps.’** – 10 year old, male (Adelaide Hills)

“**‘Be a nurse or a jockey like Michelle Payne.’** – 11 year old, female (Limestone Coast)

Children in metropolitan areas are more interested in pursuing jobs with a university qualification than their country or regional counterparts. Careers such as teacher, doctor, vet, scientist and engineer, all ranked within the top 10 jobs ‘city kids’ would like to do.

Work in ‘the Arts’ was also more popular with children in the city. Jobs in manual labour and the trades were the standout areas of interest for Country SA children. Most responses within this category were in relation to farm work, and ranged from working on and owning farms, to shearing and working on cattle stations. Responses for various trades such as mechanic, builder, electrician, and more generally just being a ‘tradie’ were also popular. Business owner / family business was a popular job choice for children living in Country SA, with responses in this group ranging from opening a business of their own, to taking over the family business and working within it when they’re old enough. These responses reflect a desire to stay and contribute to their family and community through their future career choices and that children believed that being a business owner can be a good job with decent earning capacity that does not require children to leave their communities for university study.

For more information on *The Things That Matter To Children* see other snapshots in this series:

- **What SA Children say about School**
- **What Worries SA Children Most**

For more information on the *Job Aspirations of South Australian Children aged 8–12 years* visit:

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