



Submission

20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy

Introduction

YACSA is the peak body in South Australia representing the interests of young people, youth workers, organisations and networks throughout the non-government youth sector. Policy positions are independent and not aligned with any political party or movement. YACSA supports the fundamental right of all young people to participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life, particularly the decision-making processes that impact them.

YACSA is pleased to have the opportunity to provide a response to the 20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy as we acknowledge the important role that effective infrastructure has in connecting people to health services, nutritious food, education, energy, clean water and transport. Young people in particular require reliable, affordable and safe transport options to assist them to be connected to their communities, education, work and health services.

YACSA regularly canvasses our young members and other young people to gather their experiences in a range of areas and issues related to infrastructure are perpetually raised. The accessibility of transport and access to appropriate health and mental health services, particularly in outer metropolitan and rural and remote locations are two frequently raised issues that impact significantly on young people. This submission will be driven by the experiences of young people as we provide a broad response to the consultation.

Social determinants of health

It is important to recognise the importance of the physical environment and physical infrastructure on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities¹. Young people frequently report barriers to regular access to health care, mental health care, dental and optometries. Young people also regularly report that access to transport, including running and maintaining a car and access to affordable and reliable public transport is also becoming increasingly difficult within the context of the rising cost of living².

An individual's residential environment and physical infrastructure has a significant impact on health equity through its influence on access, community connectedness, personal behaviour and safety. When communities have ready and equitable access to goods and services, appropriate and affordable housing, transport infrastructure and public land use that encourages both social and recreational interaction, physical and psychological wellbeing can thrive³.

Young people and public spaces

Accessible public spaces for young people are an important means of feeling connected to their communities, meeting with and socialising with friends, engaging with their peer group/s, and engaging in sports and leisure activities⁴. The difference between how young people use public space compared to

¹ R. Cannon, The Social Determinants of Health, SACOSS Information Paper, December 2008.

² Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Submission to the Extent of Income Inequality in Australia Inquiry, viewed online, 26 March 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/529>, 2014.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australia's health 2016. Australia's health series no. 15. Cat. no. AUS 199. Canberra: AIHW. 2016.

⁴ K. Salmon. Space invaders? Young people and public space. Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc, 2005.

older people is that many young people don't have the economic means or eligibility (such as age) to access some forms of entertainment, venues and other social environments⁵.

Young people regularly call for a greater number of free, safe and easily accessible public spaces to engage in sport, recreation and artistic expression. This extends beyond merely providing skate parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities and calls for public land to include spaces where young people can feel safe, exercise their right to use public space and feel included and connected to the communities they live in⁶.

Responses to the discussion paper questions

What strategies should be adopted to ensure Adelaide maintains its liveability as it grows?

To ensure that Adelaide maintains its "liveability" as the city grows, adequate infrastructure must be put in place to enable young people and other disadvantaged groups to access basic goods and services.

Young people from rural and remote locations regularly report that the lack of regular and affordable public transport impacts social, sporting and educational commitments and limits their ability to access employment opportunities particularly if they are outside of town boundaries. But "transport disadvantage"^{7 8} is not limited to rural and remote locations with the cost of fares making regular access for young people unaffordable even in areas with an abundance of public transport. Recently announced increases in public transport fares, registration and licencing will continue to make public transport and running and maintaining a car prohibitive for many young people⁹.

YACSA urges government to provide more affordable, safe and accessible public transport options particularly in outer metropolitan, rural and regional areas to enable young people to access study, employment, recreation and vital health services.

How can technology and data be embraced to improve quality of life?

Just as traditional infrastructure such as roads, power and water allow us to live, connect, study, work and play, digital infrastructure is key to a range of industries, jobs, education and recreation¹⁰. As such, it is critical that South Australians have access to fast, efficient and affordable mobile and broadband services to connect to the world around them. Young people in particular, have integrated the internet into their everyday lives and use online spaces to generate their own content, build participatory and collaborative spaces for self-expression, create businesses and build online communities through social media¹¹.

However, the ability to engage in the online environment is impacted by age, level of income and where you live and while overall digital inclusion is improving across the country, the gap between the digitally included and excluded is widening. This includes a substantial digital divide between richer and poorer people, between older and younger people, and those who are employed or unemployed¹². For example, there are still communities in rural and remote areas that do not have access to regular internet services and while

⁵ Council for the Care of Children and Youth Affairs Council of South Australia. Young Citizen's Jury Survey Analysis. 2013.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Transport disadvantage" refers to ongoing difficulties associated with access to transport. This can mean difficulties associated with maintaining private transport (e.g., financial stress related to initial cost of purchase, as well ongoing costs such as petrol, insurance) and difficulties in accessing and affording public transport.

⁸ K. Rosier. M. McDonald. The relationship between transport and disadvantage in Australia. The Australian Institute of Family Studies, Viewed online: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4.pdf>, 2011.

⁹ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia. State Budget 2019 Snapshot. Viewed online 23 July 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/665> 2019.

¹⁰ Australian Government. Australia's Tech Future: Delivering a strong, safe and inclusive digital economy. Viewed Online, 24 July 2019. <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/australias-tech-future.pdf>

¹¹ M. Blanchard. A. Hosie. J. Burns. Embracing technologies to improve wellbeing for young people: An Australian view of evidence and policy implications, 2013.

¹² Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Cook, K, Louie, YM & Holcombe-James, I, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, 2018, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2018, RMIT University, Melbourne, for Telstra.

there has been fluctuation in the digital gap between the country and the city across the states and territories since 2014, the gap has widened in South Australia¹³.

Greater access to affordable and reliable internet will enable young people (and the rest of the community) to better embrace digital technologies and their application in health and health care, education, information dissemination, business, community connectivity and recreation. YACSA also urges government to ensure greater and more reliable access to free Wi-Fi in public areas, particularly in areas of disadvantage, to assist those on low incomes to connect to digital environments.

What strategies should the Government adopt to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place so our regions can thrive?

YACSA believes that individuals and communities are best placed to identify gaps in infrastructure and future growth areas. As young people are particularly impacted by and reliant on local infrastructure including transport, recreational facilities, education and access to health care, they should be continuously involved in the structure and decision-making processes of government. This regular engagement or participation¹⁴ would provide valuable insights into the infrastructure needs of communities and regions and inform community-based solutions¹⁵. Engagement processes can be undertaken across a continuum, use a variety of mechanisms and can be informal or formal. However, to be effective, it should be continuous, representative and meaningful.

Engaging with young people will mean that any infrastructure targets, developments or changes to policy will be appropriate, relevant, supported and responsive to their needs¹⁶.

How will changing delivery models in education and training impact infrastructure requirements?

With increased uptake of technology and remote access in public schools in South Australia, improved internet access and cloud technology is essential to enable this to occur. The State Government is currently working towards connecting most of the State's public schools to high speed fibre optics¹⁷ but with continual advances in technology that will impact on the way education is delivered (with simultaneous demands on internet speeds and data) government will need to keep pace with trends and developments and provide this critical infrastructure.

Similarly, to enable greater access to the VET system both now and in the future, impacts on infrastructure must be addressed as part of the strategy. Young people already experience a range of challenges when accessing or completing VET courses but geographical remoteness, a lack of choice of VET providers and a lack of flexible learning options are major barriers to undertaking VET courses¹⁸. Young people living in rural and remote locations who wish to study VET also face unique challenges due to isolation, a lack of available physical training options and access to reliable internet¹⁹.

¹³ Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Cook, K, Louie, YM & Holcombe-James, I, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, 2018, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2018, RMIT University, Melbourne, for Telstra.

¹⁴ There is a difference between engagement and participation based on the influence and power that young people have in decision making processes. For example, if young people's opinions are sought and incorporate into a decision-making process, that would be "engagement". Participation is based on developing partnerships with young people to enable them to contribute to and influence the results of decision-making processes.

¹⁵ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Government of South Australia, Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people, viewed online 10 May 2019 <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/318>

¹⁶ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Government of South Australia, Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people, viewed online 10 May 2019 <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/318>

¹⁷ Department for Education. SWiFT: Schools With internet Fibre Technology. Viewed online 24 July 2019.

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/upgrades-and-new-schools/improved-internet>

¹⁸ Vocational Education and Training in NSW: Report into access and outcomes for young people experiencing disadvantage. Youth Action, Uniting, & Mission Australia <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2018/02/apo-nid133576-1164866.pdf>

¹⁹ L. Nechvoglod. F. Beddie. Hard to reach learners: what works in reaching and keeping them? ACDEF, Melbourne. 2010.

With the proposed adoption of increasing online delivery and simulation technology, greater access to affordable and reliable internet will be necessary to ensure equitable access to new VET training models. This is most important in geographical areas already impacted by the digital divide and for young people facing digital exclusion due to a lack of access to technology and limited income.

However, ensuring faster and more accessible internet and public Wi-Fi is only one part of the solution. Similarly to VET students, university students living in rural and remote areas have limited access to on-site tertiary study options and support. As such, creating physical spaces that provide the opportunity for interaction with other students (particularly for social learners), the use of technology and face-to-face support will be valuable for some young people. The Uni Hub Spencer Gulf²⁰, is one model that provides a physical space for students to study a range of university courses in their geographical area without the need to relocate to a metropolitan area. This model could be replicated across the VET and university sector in rural and remote locations to provide young people with options for tertiary study in their regions.

YACSA urges government to facilitate increased access to both physical and online study options, particularly in rural and remote locations, that enables greater inclusion of young people and other disadvantaged groups.

What complementary infrastructure can be built to support better health outcomes across the population?

While young people are often considered to experience good health, particularly when compared to other population groups, many health issues and health-altering behaviours begin in adolescence, and many of these behaviours have the potential to affect the rest of a young person's life. Young people's health and wellbeing issues are often complex and intersectional and the health problems they experience are diverse and far-reaching. As such, regular access to appropriate health and mental health services are vital for early diagnosis and treatment of health issues.

Young people have told us that they already face significant barriers to accessing health services ranging from transport issues, to a lack of health literacy to simply not being able to afford health services when weighed against the other basics of life^{21 22 23}. Young people living in rural and remote areas face even greater barriers to health services and have experienced a reduction in youth-specific services, such as supported accommodation services, health services (including mental health, sexual health and drug and alcohol services) and generalist youth services. For many communities, the only youth-specific services available are delivered periodically through the outreach activities of an external regional or metropolitan agency. Mental health issues for young people living rurally are often exacerbated by geographical isolation, service shortages and cost²⁴.

To address these issues within the context of infrastructure, YACSA advocates for greater levels of investment in the provision of appropriate and easily accessible health and mental health services across both metropolitan and rural and remote locations²⁵. Addressing transport disadvantage will also contribute positively to young people accessing preventative health services particularly in rural and remote locations and ensuring access to reliable internet will potentially allow young people to access future e-health services and health related information.

²⁰ UniHub Spencer Gulf. About Us. Viewed Online, 29 July 2019, <https://unihubsg.org/aboutus/>, 2019.

²¹ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Submission to the Extent of Income Inequality in Australia Inquiry, viewed online, 26 March 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/529>, 2014.

²² Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Select Committee on Poverty in South Australia, viewed online, 26 March 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/617>, 2018.

²³ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Submission to the Health Inquiry, viewed online, 26 March 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/530>, 2014.

²⁴ C. Kelly, A.F. Jorm, A. Wright, "Improving mental health literacy as a strategy to facilitate early intervention for mental disorders", MJA, Vol. 187, No. 7, October 2007, pp. S26-S30.

²⁵ Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Inquiry into the Accessibility and Quality of Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Australia Submission, viewed online, 26 March 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/612>, 2018.



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