

# **Department of Education, Training and Employment**

## **FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **A declaration for South Australian public education and children's services**

Complex changes are taking place in our society as we approach the new century. As a system it is vital that we clarify our purpose and directions so that we can effectively prepare the next generation for a successful future.

This declaration is our commitment to that goal. It comes from a far reaching process of consultation involving staff, parents, community groups, government agencies, business, industry and tertiary institutions. Most importantly it reflects the voices of the many students who took part in futures forum discussions throughout the state.

The declaration builds on the existing strengths of our system. It poses challenges that need new strategies for responsive, flexible and high quality program delivery.

Through our work together, we will encourage young people to be optimistic about their lives and to value their place in the world. They have a challenging and exciting journey ahead of them. Our schools and children's services play a fundamental role in shaping that journey.

Let us do all that we can to enhance it!

I commend our declaration to you.

Denis Ralph  
Chief Executive

## INTRODUCTION

The prime purpose of public education and care is to develop all dimensions of the human intellect so that our children and students can help make Australia a more democratic, cohesive, socially responsible, culturally rich, ecologically sustainable and internationally competitive nation.

Together with families and the wider community, we have a responsibility to provide the foundations for students' intellectual, physical, social and moral development.

We have a shared responsibility with families, the community, business, industry and the tertiary sector to create a society which is capable of providing opportunities and employment for all its young people.

Our mission is to provide high quality learning, teaching and care within an integrated, responsive and supportive learning organisation which strives for continuous improvement in service and performance.

The declaration is based on a set of intrinsic and enduring values. These are:

trust	honesty
integrity	responsibility
equity	respect
caring	fairness
diligence	excellence.

Student learning is at the heart of everything we do. Our learning, teaching and care programs are underpinned by our commitment to the following principles:

- a constant focus on quality and standards
- equity and access
- accountability
- partnerships.

These principles are the foundation for all our actions.

We have a responsibility to all learners and the community to provide clear information about our services, and about the outcomes achieved. These services should be cost-effective, and accessible to the public.

DETE is committed to equity, excellence, participation and choice, while recognising that achieving equity of outcomes is a responsibility shared between the education system and society.

Partnerships that teachers and staff develop with learners, families and the community broaden and enrich our learning, teaching and care programs. Through these partnerships children and students are provided with opportunities to experience diverse perspectives and learn in a

range of contexts. Critical to these partnerships are the knowledge, expertise, participation and cooperation of all staff.

This declaration establishes five strategic directions for public education and care in South Australia to the Year 2010 - the year when most students starting school in 1997 will finish their secondary education. These directions will assist discussion among DETE staff, school councils and management committees, families, young people and the wider community. They will provide a basis for future planning at all levels of the system.

The strategic directions are:

- developing the individual and society
- achieving unity through diversity
- strengthening community
- creating a spirit of enterprise
- becoming global citizens.

The declaration is complemented by the DETE curriculum statement. Together they provide a guide for teachers and staff in planning, preparing and delivering relevant, broad, balanced and challenging learning programs to take the children and young people of South Australia confidently into the future.

The declaration reflects the needs of all children and students. It is inclusive of their gender, ages, beliefs, abilities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, socio-economic circumstances and geographic location. It acknowledges that education should provide everyone with the opportunity to achieve their best while taking responsibility for their own learning.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has a well-earned reputation for providing high quality education and care. This comes from having a responsive, innovative and rigorous curriculum which is learner-centred and outcomes-based. It also comes from the skill and dedication of our teachers and staff who work closely with parents, families and others involved in education and care. We have a unique, integrated system for education and children's services that allows for continuity of learning from birth to adulthood.

The declaration seeks to build on these existing strengths to achieve a society that enriches the lives of all young people and provides opportunities for them to have a productive and fulfilling future.

## **DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY**

South Australians want a society that is well-educated, optimistic, forward-looking and enterprising so that we can take advantage of emerging opportunities and meet the challenges that arise as we move into the twenty-first century. The capacity to build relationships, to develop as individuals, and to learn are all essential to achieving these goals. Public education and care in South Australia, with its emphasis on learning as a life-long journey beginning at birth, has a crucial role in realising the state's vision.

The rapidly changing nature of society is drawing new attention to the purpose and processes of education and care. While education is a continuing process of developing knowledge and skills, it is also about personal development and building positive relationships among individuals, groups and nations. Education helps people to understand themselves, others and the world and to develop the values that enable us to live together.

In education as in every other aspect of our lives, traditional disciplines are no longer as relevant in meeting the challenges of the modern world. Interactive technology is transforming the notion of experiential learning. Information and communication technologies allow people to participate in groups far beyond their traditional range of interaction. It is possible for individuals to organise many aspects of their lives electronically, without direct human contact. As educators we recognise that dynamic changes to the patterns of family, work and social life mean that people of all ages need to interact in new, diverse and increasingly challenging situations. In a world of constant and profound change, the capacity to develop resilience can be achieved through positive interpersonal and group relationships, through individual self esteem, self-reliance and strength of character.

Through public education in South Australia, young people are becoming both autonomous and interdependent learners, achieving personal and group goals through individual and collaborative effort. Our cooperative learning approaches ensure that teachers, families, communities and learners work together to achieve individual growth and informed and responsible social involvement on a local, national and global scale. Through our partnerships with families and carers we affirm the essential importance of the early years in establishing the foundation for emotional well-being and life-long learning, and we acknowledge the importance of parents and families as the most significant and enduring influence on the child.

The quality of relationships is crucial to successful learning. Teachers in South Australia's public education and children's services develop curriculum programs and learning environments in which children and young people learn to care for and respect others, to feel secure and to experience positive relationships in order to learn trust. They foster in children the courage to express their concerns and to deal openly with dissent while being able to discuss and debate issues in constructive ways. In shaping and sustaining their world, our students will be confident and forthright individuals, with courage and integrity. They will have a strong sense of identity and a commitment to developing their potential and achieving success, for their own growth, and for the benefit of local and global communities.

Our core values of trust, integrity, equity, caring, diligence, honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, and excellence will provide a foundation for all our learning, teaching and care programs.

Our students will have access to a broad, balanced and intellectually rigorous curriculum in safe, orderly yet stimulating environments in which opportunities for quality teaching and learning are maximised.

Above all, our students must have the motivation and skills to engage in lifelong learning and be able to approach the future with optimism, purpose and the capacity to contribute to the development of their society.

**For public education and care the challenge is to:**

- *recognise, nurture and build upon the needs, interests and experiences of all individuals so they become autonomous and interdependent learners*
- *provide services based on respect for the individual and on the importance of personal identity and self-esteem and which meet an increasing diversity of individual and family needs*
- *support further the crucial role of parents, carers and teachers in children's intellectual, physical, social and moral development*
- *promote and support a culture of success by acknowledging diligence, talent and the achievement of excellence*
- *maintain our focus on the early years to support children's development and ensure that students achieve literacy and numeracy skills as well as other competencies and attitudes essential for successful lifelong learning*
- *focus on the use of technology to amplify, extend and transform learning*
- *provide opportunities for students to develop aesthetic appreciation and understand the ways in which artistic and creative endeavours contribute to society*
- *establish standards, monitor, account for and seek continuous improvement in the performance of our learners and of our organisation*
- *monitor curriculum at classroom level to ensure breadth, appropriateness and quality.*

## **ACHIEVING UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY**

Diversity is a hallmark of contemporary Australian life. It is part of our collective identity and our combined social and cultural heritage. In South Australia we have worked to promote a view of diversity that is based on openness, honest expression, respect for others and the Australian ethos of a 'fair go' for all. We have worked to establish a democratic, socially just and multicultural society which recognises the fundamental right to be different and values diversity as a strength, bringing with it different experiences, ways of seeing, thinking and acting.

By recognising and building on diversity, we have the potential to ensure the advancement, resilience and continuing vitality of our society in broad social and economic terms. We have the potential for greater mutual understanding and cultural enrichment, for enhancement of our intellectual and creative capacities, and for effective participation at the local and global level. Above all, we have the potential to create a collective capacity for change and for productive and continuing dialogue about what we want our future to be.

In Australia today we recognise the fundamental importance of unity and the need to build a progressive, cohesive and harmonious society through a commitment to overarching shared values. At the same time we foster and promote the maintenance of core aspects of culture such as language, family tradition or spiritual beliefs.

This goal of unity in diversity is exemplified in our recognition of the need for reconciliation among all Australians. Reconciliation will come about when a deeper understanding is reached of the history of Aboriginal people, their deep spiritual connection with the land, and how their dislocation from it has affected them so profoundly. The learning and teaching partnership with families and the community is paramount in achieving reconciliation.

Public education and care play a crucial role in encouraging and supporting the development of mutual understanding and respect for diversity among children, students, staff, families and the broader sections of our society. We have a prime responsibility to address inequities in the distribution of resources in our society and to ensure that the full benefits of learning, teaching and care programs are available to all, irrespective of gender, age, beliefs, ability, cultural and linguistic background, socio-economic circumstances or geographic location. We have an individual and collective responsibility to confront prejudice and eliminate discrimination in all its forms.

Our learning, teaching and care programs must provide all children and students with opportunities to achieve their personal best, maximise their potential, make positive contributions to society and influence change. Our work and learning environments must be free from harassment and conducive to healthy, productive relationships for quality learning, teaching and care.

Throughout our system we have a responsibility to develop and implement equity standards to guide service delivery and present a broad picture of how well we are meeting our obligations in relation to the desired outcomes of education and care.

**For public education and care the challenge is to :**

- *fulfil our individual and collective responsibility to confront prejudice, eliminate discrimination and address the implications of gender and race relations, socio-economic circumstances, location, ability and cultural and linguistic diversity in learning, teaching and care*
- *promote unity within our society and support and use the diversity that students bring to learning, as well as the diversity that exists more broadly in our organisation and the communities we serve*
- *target resources and support where necessary to allow all children and students to achieve full benefit from our services*
- *extend our partnerships with families, carers, teachers and staff, community organisations and interagency support services to address the intellectual, social, emotional and physical needs of students*
- *provide programs and opportunities which will assist children and students to develop their special interests and talents*
- *collect, analyse and report on a range of quantitative and qualitative data using the results to examine and modify our structures and programs to ensure that they are equitable and successful in achieving agreed objectives.*

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

Public education and care services have always had a significant place in our community. By working in partnership with families, school councils, management committees and community members to plan and implement programs, our centres, services and schools have strengthened community relationships and contributed to the development of a shared commitment to the future.

Community membership brings with it a sense of identity, common purpose, shared interest, mutual responsibility and obligation to others. As a state and as a system we must seek to support the continuing strength and vitality of our communities if we are to be a dynamic, progressive and democratic society in the future. We must seek to ensure that students maintain a strong focus on and commitment to their local community as a meaningful and worthwhile social, economic and political entity. We can do this by promoting an understanding of civics and supporting active citizenship through our curriculum.

The strengthening of local communities and their links with public education and care is the subject of renewed focus around the world as we prepare to enter the twenty-first century. Societies today are facing a number of paradoxes. On the one hand we find ourselves in a world of increasing global connections and interdependence. On the other, many people are finding themselves increasingly isolated as family structures and living patterns change and as the time and motivation to engage in community activities diminishes. As a system we must therefore strengthen our existing relationships and make meaningful connections with local communities.

Not all communities have the same needs and aspirations. Each community has the right, within legislative frameworks and accountability requirements, to the kind of education and care that will best meet their particular needs. In the future, increased decision-making and management of services at the local level will enable communities to be more active and creative in meeting their own needs and ensuring that the opportunities and potential that exist within the community are fully realised.

The concept of community itself is also changing. Community has not always been geographically defined. It has included the coming together of people with shared ideas, interests and experiences, most often on the basis of commonly-held spiritual, cultural or political beliefs. Advances in information technology are redefining the concept of community in new and exciting ways. Global communication networks are enabling us to transcend existing geographical, social, cultural and linguistic boundaries, interacting with others around the world as a normal part of our everyday lives. Through public education and care, we can promote and support different understandings of the concept of community and encourage students to appreciate the need for interdependence and global unity.

### **For public education and care, the challenge is to:**

- *promote and support the important role that children's services and schools have in contributing to the overall life and vitality of communities*
- *support children's services and schools in recognising and using the potential resources that exist within communities for learning, teaching and care*
- *provide flexible and supportive learning environments in which students can become active and informed citizens at the local, state, national and international level*

- *provide education and care services that are responsive to emerging local community and regional development needs within agreed frameworks of accountability*
- *promote and support a shared responsibility and obligation for the providing public education and care through integrated approaches to service delivery in collaboration with community organisations, government agencies, business, industry and the tertiary sector*
- *promote and support the development of centres and schools as resources for learning both in the local community and beyond the boundaries of 'the neighbourhood'.*

## **CREATING A SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE**

South Australia's young people want a future that provides them with employment and the opportunity to make a positive contribution to society. They want to be able to balance work, study, leisure and cultural pursuits to develop and maintain a healthy and productive lifestyle.

The increasing globalisation of the world's economies, the pace of technological development and major social and political change in many countries are radically altering the shape of business and industry, employment opportunities and the way people live.

In Australia and overseas, business and industry are striving to become more innovative and competitive while new industries and employment opportunities are being created in diverse and highly specialised fields. Organisations are finding alternative ways of operating. There is a trend towards smaller, networked and self-managing units with the capacity for rapid innovation and change.

Traditional patterns of work are also changing with an increase in part-time employment, self-employment and contract work. People are realising that they are likely to have multiple career pathways during their lives and that there may be periods when they are not in paid work. Increasingly, they are recognising the need to be multi-skilled, adaptable and enterprising in order to create their own employment opportunities and lead purposeful, productive and self-fulfilling lives. Public education and care services must be flexible and responsive to the needs of families, children and students in this rapidly changing environment.

For South Australia to have a skilled, flexible and creative workforce in the future, our students will need to be well-educated, creative, innovative, self-motivated, self-organising and able to work collaboratively. They will need to be confident, at ease in dealing with risk and uncertainty, and see change both as a challenge and an opportunity. They will especially need to think critically and have the capacity to be self-directed and interdependent learners.

Our future well-being as a society is closely linked to our effectiveness in terms of competitive economic advantage. It is also linked to our ability to take individual and collective action to ensure the continuing health and vitality of our communities and achieve a measure of balance in our work and personal lives.

Productive activity and a sense of fulfilment are realised through both paid and unpaid employment. We can all make important contributions to society in various ways. Community and volunteer work, participation in clubs and other interest groups, and involvement in activities such as sport, music, dance, theatre and art enhance our social and cultural heritage and contribute to the common good.

Public activities of this type are important not just because of what they produce, but because of the sense of community that they promote. They allow us to look beyond self-interest, by stimulating a sense of group responsibility, reciprocity and interdependence. It is through this concept of work and community contribution that we make the essential link between the ideas of enterprise and entrepreneurship, civics and citizenship.

In our centres and schools, children and students learn to be enterprising by being involved in all aspects of intellectual and practical activity, exercising their curiosity and imagination, using their talents, energy and creativity, taking risks, showing initiative, and following ideas through into action. They learn to communicate, negotiate, resolve conflict, plan, solve problems, use technology, make decisions, and work collaboratively in teams. They learn skills for living and

are encouraged to see learning as a self-directed activity that will benefit them throughout their lives.

**For public education and care, the challenge is to**

- *promote and support flexible ways of delivering curriculum and services to meet the changing needs of learners and the work-related needs of families*
- *support all students to develop skills for living and for adult life*
- *provide programs which enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities to identify and attain their career objectives and ensure flexible pathways to further learning and the world of work*
- *foster the development of effective work habits and attitudes, and flexibility in dealing with change in the workplace and in the wider community*
- *develop strategic alliances with community organisations, government, regional development authorities, small business, industry and the tertiary sector to promote and support flexible learning arrangements and create employment opportunities for all*
- *strengthen our capacity to provide leadership in education and care through advocacy, research, interaction and exchange between centres, schools and the wider community at local, national and international levels*
- *promote and support, across our organisation, a balanced and sustainable approach to study, work, family and everyday life.*

## **BECOMING GLOBAL CITIZENS**

South Australia's young people want Australia to be part of an environmentally responsible, fair and cooperative global community. They want a viable future, with opportunities for quality employment, ecologically sustainable development, more equitable use of world resources, and the protection of human rights. They want a world free from violent conflict. The challenge for us as educators is to demonstrate leadership in seeking new pathways towards such a future, by developing new ways of thinking and acting, and by making decisions which respect the humanity of all the world's citizens and which acknowledge the wisdom of protecting the environment.

In developing a positive sense of themselves as active members of a global community, young people first will have a strong sense of themselves as contributors to the common good. They will have a deep understanding of their cultural, political and social heritage, of the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship, the strength and security it offers, and the possible internal and external challenges it may attract. They will know about Australia's location and its social and economic role in the region and in the world. Civics and citizenship education will be important programs in all our schools.

Australia's cultural and linguistic diversity provides an ideal environment in which our students can develop the skills and cross-cultural understandings which are the basis of a global perspective. Having a global perspective means understanding the social, political and economic structures of other regions, the interrelatedness of these structures and their effect on the way we live in Australia. It means critically assessing our own and other world views and understanding the impact which different perspectives have on global issues such as environmental stewardship, trade alliances and population growth. A global perspective can be strengthened by knowing about other people and other places, and by knowing other languages.

Teachers and staff in South Australian schools and centres develop programs and provide environments conducive to collaborative effort which is fundamental to achieving a global perspective. At the same time they foster the development of individual potential so that young people will have the intellectual rigour and creative capacity to recognise opportunities and meet the challenge of being both competitive and cooperative.

Through programs in our schools and centres, our young people are learning that we must find new and sustainable ways of protecting the environment and managing the world's resources. As well as developing practical and analytic environmental skills, they will understand the interrelatedness of environmental and economic principles, and of scientific, ethical, spiritual and aesthetic concerns. They will understand the concept of contested knowledge and develop the ability to assess and use information from a variety of sources. They will have high order communication, research and analytical skills and a commitment to persistence, accomplishment and achieving excellence. They will be divergent, curious thinkers.

We must ensure that young people face the future with confidence that their concerns have been heard and that by being informed and taking responsible collaborative action they can make a difference to their world.

**The challenge for public education and care is to:**

- *provide opportunities for students to develop civic values and have an appreciation of local, regional, national and international issues so they become informed voters and citizens*
- *create learning and teaching environments that reflect ecologically sustainable practices and that enable all students to be environmentally active and committed global citizens*
- *create opportunities for developing qualities such as confidence, leadership, integrity and courage and provide environments in which future leaders can flourish*
- *support children's and students' understanding of other cultures through the learning of languages*
- *make use of the exciting opportunities and different perspectives that emerging technologies will offer*
- *foster new optimism about the future, and teach students so that they have the knowledge, aptitudes and understandings which will allow them to take purposeful action for the benefit of all.*

**Conclusion**

The declaration provides the basis for us all to work towards a society which recognises and affirms the infinite variety of human potential within it.

It is another step in achieving broad agreement about the way forward. It is part of a continuing process of review and reflection, of refining and clarifying our unity of purpose in bringing high quality public education and children's services to the South Australian community.