

# At-risk young in need of help

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THOUSANDS of severely disadvantaged young people at risk of dropping out of school should be allocated case workers, a parliamentary inquiry has heard.

Service to Youth Council manager Gillian Anderson told members of a committee inquiring into the new high school certificate that unknown numbers of teenagers aged less than 16, the age of compulsion, were not at school.

"It would be easy to consider that because SA's economy is booming and that opportunities for employment abound during this skills and labour shortage, youth would be prospering too," she said. "Unfortunately that's not the case."

About 4000 young people known to the organisation were "just the tip of the iceberg" of young people not attending and not enrolled in schools, she said.

"We are discovering there is a lot of young people who aren't attending and aren't enrolled, who are under the age of com-

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SERVICE TO YOUTH COUNCIL  
MANAGER GILLIAN ANDERSON

pulsion." The not-for-profit group works with people aged 12 to 25 at risk of homelessness with a history of family problems including sexual and physical abuse, generational unemployment and criminal offending.

The new high school certificate plans to test basic skills for Year 9 students and will require Year 10 students to develop a "personal learning plan" to map their future goals.

"The most disadvantaged young people aren't making it to Year 10 - they are not there by that time," Ms Anderson said.

Many of them had levels of literacy and numeracy - and even speaking skills - that posed barriers to continuing with their school work, Ms Anderson said.

A successful program in the northern suburbs where social workers "case manage" young people in schools should be extended to all areas, she said.

Intensive tuition in literacy and numeracy with specialist teachers was also required.

"It is really important to support and assist young people going on to university but there is this whole untapped group of young people - who knows what their potential is?" she said.

"They are young people disadvantaged by their own circumstance and if we have an opportunity to address it, why wouldn't we?"

The first of nine seminars for teachers on implementing the new South Australian Certificate of Education was held yesterday at West Lakes.

The first students will graduate with the revamped qualification in 2011.