

# **‘To be Able to See a Future’: Hope and the Utopian Imagination of Marginalised Youth**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper we consider how marginalised young people see their transition to the future. What does social innovation mean in relation to marginalised young people – those young people who have been excluded from mainstream schooling, who may be in contact with the juvenile justice system, who have a family life that differs significantly from the norm, or no family life at all? What innovative approaches can we take to dealing with the complex issues of marginalised young people and their hopes and fears for the future? In this paper, which draws upon an ongoing research project at the University of South Australia, we argue that we cannot truly bring about effective social innovation for this group unless we have a broad understanding of the complexity of their hopes and fears for the future.

We suggest that the idea of hope may be useful for enriching the field of social innovation with respect to marginalised young people. These young people need to become engaged or re-engaged with education and learning with the aim that they may enter into economically and socially productive lives. New ideas that help meet this need, we argue, can be developed by an interdisciplinary research methodology that draws from both a social science and creative approach to understanding the hopes of each young person. Through this interdisciplinary theoretical lens we can see that hope is not limited to notions of what we might call ‘the good life’, but is complex and is often a matter of ‘difficult hope’.