

ACT MINISTER'S YOUTH COUNCIL



ABOUT THE ACT MINISTER'S YOUTH COUNCIL

The Minister's Youth Council is part of the Australian Capital Territory Government's Youth InterACT initiative, which aims to assist young people to participate in and provide advice in relation to the issues affecting young people. A key aspect of the Council's work is to provide the Minister for Children and Youth with direct and well-informed advice on matters relating to young people.

The Minister's Youth Council comprises 12 - 15 young people aged between 12 and 25 years (inclusive) at the time of their appointment. Membership of the Council reflects the diversity of young people residing in the ACT, including a gender balance, and representation from Indigenous and culturally linguistically diverse backgrounds. Council members are appointed as individuals, not as representatives of a particular constituency or network.

Objectives:

- To give young people the opportunity to take a leading role in participation and consultation activities on issues that affect their lives.
- To act as a conduit to the Minister on the views of young people.
- To raise awareness of the aspirations, needs and concerns of young people within government and the community.
- To facilitate interaction between young people, the ACT Government and the wider community.

INQUIRY INTO CIVICS AND ELECTORAL EDUCATION

ACT Minister's Youth Council Submission

We as the ACT Minister's Youth Council (MYC) believe that this enquiry into civics and electoral education is vital to the empowerment of young people. The current programs in place in schools are not adequately educating our young citizens on the electoral processes and democratic systems that make this country work. We agree with the committee's mission statement and want to encourage and inform young people to participate in electoral education. The following comments are a collation of our council member's responses and are focused under four main themes derived from the committee's terms of reference.

Adequacy

- In general there needs to be more education regarding electoral and parliamentary processes in schools.
- There should be a greater focus on the quality of this education in the secondary schooling years, especially when students are nearing the voting age, or making the transition to voters.
- The current education provided to primary school age children, e.g. mock governments/ youth parliaments, should be continued and expanded on in the later years of school. There needs to be more consistency through all levels of schooling on this topic.

Access

- There needs to be more funding available to the AEC to promote electoral awareness. Although some schools are able to visit the AEC centre here in Canberra, there should be information and resource packages available to those who are unable to make it.
- More forums need to be provided for young people to discuss and learn about politics, the electoral processes and current issues. E.g. Debating.
- Young people should also be provided with more opportunities to engage with politicians to discuss policies and issues.

Status

- Further to the introduced education on electoral and parliamentary processes, there should be more promotion on Australian political and social history. This would help people to understand what has helped to shape our country and our political status. E.g. when voting came in, when it became compulsory, when women got the vote and how it was won, aboriginal voting, constitutional crisis 1975, where we got the voting system from etc...
- Promote the issue that the government is considering younger Australians voting.

Implementation

- There should be incentives for schools that have an active participation in civics and electoral education. E.g. incentives (Australia wide) for those who visit Parliament house, the War Memorial and the AEC Education centre.
- State governments should be involved in joint partnerships with the federal government to promote more electoral awareness in schools through the relevant curricula.
- Student, teachers and AEC representatives should all be involved in the design of these civics and electoral programs to ensure that a clear understanding of concepts and an unbiased view.