

Youth Participation and Political Engagement

Young people make significant contributions to society. Their issues and interests are important and they have the most to gain when it comes to most policy reforms. AYAC is committed to seeing young people have access to mechanisms that allow them to be directly engaged in decisions about issues that affect their rights and interests, and on which they have opinions.

When it comes to youth participation and political engagement, young people are energetic and active. While the membership of young people in political parties and trade unions has declined, young people are creating their own space for political participation and activism outside of mainstream spaces. There is a growing movement of youth led organisations who are engaging young people in social action and social enterprise, some of which have more members than Australia's major political parties.

AYAC believes that...

- Youth participation in Australia's public policy debates is vital to the future of our democracy and young people need to be supported to make their important contribution.
- Genuine public policy debates are essential if young people are to be political engaged on issues of concern.
- Governments and political organisations should engage young people more meaningfully in all formal political processes and design consultation mechanisms that are suited to young people.
- Empowering youth participation practice involves simplifying policy development processes and clearly articulating opportunities for young people to contribute at all levels.
- Special consultation strategies should be created that support marginalised young people to participate in public policy making.
- The voting age should be lowered to 16, and voting should be voluntary from the age of 15.
- First-time voter enrolment should be conducted on Election Day rather than the day the writs are issued.
- Online enrolment and enrolment alterations are the best way to ensure young people meet their voting obligations.
- There should be greater investment in programs and education that support young people's understanding of political processes.



Further information:

[Youthled.org.au](https://youthled.org.au) – a hub for Australia's youth-led organisations to communicate and share resources.

[Left Right Think-Tank](#) - a non-partisan youth think-tank that aims to involve young people in public policy.

[Australian Youth Forum](#) – an online space through which the Federal Government engages with young Australians.

[GetUp!](#) - an Australian activist group that campaigns on issues important to its members.

[Young Liberal Movement](#)

[Young Labor](#)

[Young Greens](#)

[Young Nationals](#)

