

# LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TASMANIA 2018 REPORT



**CCYP**  
Commissioner for Children  
and Young People Tasmania

## TASMANIA'S COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Commissioner for Children and Young People is established under the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016*. The Commissioner's functions, which are set out in section 8 of the Act, include:

- promoting children and young people's participation in decision-making; and
- encouraging organisations to establish mechanisms for children's participation in matters which affect them.

These functions are based on the Articles and principles contained in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* which guides the work of the Commissioner. The Convention recognises that children and young people have the right to have a say in all matters that affect them and for their views to be taken into account. This "right to be heard" is essential to promoting and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people.

The Act also requires the Commissioner to establish a Children and Young People Consultative Council. This is an important way for the Commissioner to hear the voices of children and young people from across Tasmania.

## THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL IN 2018

In 2018, the Children and Young People Consultative Council was constituted by three regional groups of children and young people aged 9 to 17 from diverse backgrounds and locations around the State.



Regional meetings were held in Devonport, Launceston and Hobart in March, June and December. Members came together as one large group at an all-day event in Campbell Town in October. During their meetings, Council members:

- raised a number of issues of importance or concern to them and their peers;
- discussed the changes they would like to see to improve things for children and young people in Tasmania; and
- provided advice on key issues to inform the Commissioner's advocacy work on behalf of children and young people.

Region	Members
South	23
North	7
North West	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>

## WHAT DID CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS SAY IN 2018?

The summary of themes below highlights the key messages and views expressed by Council members during 2018:

### Children and young people's participation:

Council members talked about the importance of providing opportunities for children and young people to express their views and to influence decisions that affect them. Council members expressed their commitment to becoming informed, active, empowered and engaged citizens. They also spoke about their interest in having access to child and young person friendly information to help them understand democratic processes and information about how they can truly influence decision making processes (e.g. child and young person friendly Parliament of Tasmania website).



**Access to services and support:** Many Council members said that improved access to programs, services and supports would enable children and young people to more actively participate in their communities. For example, Council members talked a lot about the need for improvements to public transport systems to meet the needs of children and young people. They identified a number of challenges related to the availability, timeliness and overcrowding of buses. Council members also said they would like improved access to financial assistance to allow them to participate in organised sport and recreation, increased recreational spaces for children and young people, access to low cost or free driving lessons, and more information about the services and supports that are available to children and young people when and if they need them.

**Education and employment:** Council members talked a lot about their experiences at school. Discussions often focussed on the positive supports available in Tasmanian schools to educate and prepare students for future employment and participation in society. Council members emphasised the importance of schools adopting a flexible approach to supporting and meeting students' needs and interests (e.g. flexible teaching approaches, specialised teachers and availability of subjects relevant to the interests and possible career paths of students). Council members mentioned that the expansion of high schools to year 12 was a good step forward in supporting flexible student engagement.

Council members were keenly aware of the need to develop skills that are applicable and transferrable to changing working environments to prepare them for future employment. Council members consistently expressed interest in having more work experience opportunities as well as life skills education to prepare them for the transition to adulthood (e.g. how to pay bills, register for a tax file number, enrol to vote, develop a resume or obtain a driver's licence as well as information about volunteering opportunities, university options and potential career paths).

**Bullying and mental health:** Bullying, including cyber-bullying, frequently emerged as an area of significant ongoing concern for Council members. Council members said that the current support systems and methods to address and respond to bullying are not working as well as they could be. Some Council members called for increased accountability for those who bully but also acknowledged the critical importance of understanding the underlying causes of bullying behaviours and providing the necessary supports

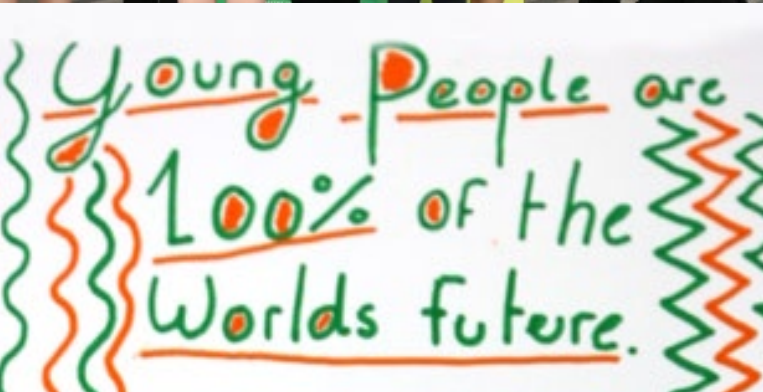
to the children and young people involved and their families. Access to social work and psychological support in schools was raised as a matter of importance.

## WHAT INFLUENCE DID CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS HAVE IN 2018?

In 2018, Council members:

- informed the preparation of correspondence from the Commissioner for Children and Young People to Tasmanian political leaders about matters of importance to children and young people in Tasmania;
- worked with Big hART and Project O to produce a short film on the importance of including children and young people in decision making;
- engaged in a panel discussion with Tasmanian political leaders at an all-day event in Campbell Town. This discussion provided a valuable opportunity for politicians to hear directly from Tasmanian children and young people about matters that are important to them;
- participated in interviews with local media outlets about their priorities for change;
- informed the development of a webpage on the Commissioner's website about children and young people's participation in decision-making;
- provided advice about options for the Commissioner's ongoing engagement with children and young people in Tasmania; and
- informed the Commissioner's advocacy on topics including bullying and cyberbullying.





## MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

I would like to thank the members of the 2018 Children and Young People Consultative Council for their time, active participation and dedication to contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people in Tasmania. I also acknowledge the many parents and carers who supported their child's involvement with the Council. My thanks and appreciation also to former Interim Commissioner David Clements who facilitated much of the Council's work in 2018 and strongly advocated for the views of children and young people to be sought out and given the recognition they deserve.

In December 2018, I had the opportunity to meet 2018 Council members and speak with them about their experiences and the issues impacting them. It is abundantly clear from my discussions with Council members that children and young people are concerned by multiple and complex issues. The ideas, knowledge and opinions so generously shared by Council members demonstrate to me just how critical the views of our youngest citizens are to creating a bright future for Tasmania.

I also had the opportunity to discuss with Council members how we might enhance the voice of children and young people in the future. I very much look forward to continuing this discussion in 2019 and working together to increase the role children and young people have in shaping our society and future. I look forward to continuing to speak with children and young people across Tasmania about their experiences, priorities and aspirations during 2019.

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Commissioner for Children and Young People

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