

Listening to Children and Young People in Tasmania 2019

'... children and young people should be able to have more of a voice and be able to say our opinions on things that matter.' (CCYP Ambassador, 2019)

I acknowledge and pay my respects to the palawa people of lutruwita as the original and ongoing custodians of this land and for the more than 40,000 years they have cared for their country and their children.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to the children and young people of Tasmania, many of whom I have had the privilege of meeting and speaking with in 2019. Thank you for your time, participation and enthusiasm to share your views and ideas on how to make Tasmania an even better place for children and young people. As experts in your own lives, your views are of paramount importance to the future of Tasmania. I have listened very carefully to what you have told me during 2019. This report is one way of letting decision-makers know what I have heard from you so that they can make better decisions.

I would also like to acknowledge the many parents, carers, educators, support workers and organisations who have supported children and young people to meet with me and to have their voices heard. I understand that life is busy, and that you have many competing demands on your time. I greatly value your assistance.

My thanks and appreciation also goes to the many members of the Tasmanian Parliament, representatives of government and non-government agencies, schools and volunteers who have so generously supported and facilitated my engagement with children and young people around Tasmania. Your support of my work to listen to and promote the voices of children and young people in Tasmania is truly appreciated.

Finally, thank you to the dedicated staff of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, whose unwavering commitment to promoting the voices of the children and young people of Tasmania is exceptional.

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Any questions regarding this report, or the work of Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People more generally may be directed to the Commissioner via email to childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au or by telephoning +61 3 6166 1366.

For more information visit <https://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au>

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Message from the Commissioner

Imagine a Tasmania where our youngest citizens are empowered to actively contribute to decision-making processes that affect their lives now and into the future; where, as a matter of course, their views are sought, respected and influence the outcomes of those processes.

At its very essence, my job as Commissioner for Children and Young People is to promote the rights and wellbeing of all children and young people in Tasmania. An important part of my role is to speak with children and young people across the State so that I can understand what is important to them – this in turn enables me to bring their views and ideas to the attention of community leaders and key decision-makers.

During 2019, I had the privilege of engaging with hundreds of children and young people around Tasmania including through my statewide Listening Tour, the Out-of-Home Care Monitoring Program, my individual advocacy for children and young people in youth justice detention, and the establishment of the new CCYP Ambassador Program.

This report provides an opportunity for me to reflect on what I heard from children and young people during 2019, and to demonstrate how their views influenced my work and informed decision-making processes that affect their lives.

I also hope this report can play a second function: that of a resource tool for decision-makers and advocates. In this report, I provide a snapshot of the voices of the almost 200 children and young people involved in my CCYP Ambassador Program in 2019. These quotes shine a light on the matters that they believe need greater attention by decision-makers. These quotes have been grouped into seven key themes that emerged through the program. These themes relate to education and opportunities for children and young people, their safety, the natural environment and climate change, their access to basic services and supports, their mental health and the bullying many experience, their ability to participate in their communities and society, and their wish to be recognised as valued members of the Tasmanian community no matter who they are or where they come from.

It has been wonderful to meet so many insightful, compassionate and resilient young Tasmanians in my first year as Commissioner and to see the positive impact many of them are having in their communities.

As we respond to and recover from COVID-19, in 2020 I look forward to listening to Tasmanian children and young people and to sharing their views and insights, especially with key decision-makers in Tasmania.

Leanne McLean
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Legislative base

The Commissioner for Children and Young People is an independent statutory office established under Tasmania's [Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016](#) (the CCYP Act). Section 8 of the Act sets out the Commissioner's general functions which relevantly include:

- promoting and empowering the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions or the expressing of opinions on matters that may affect their lives; and
- encouraging organisations to create appropriate mechanisms for children and young people to participate in matters that affect them.

This report outlines how I have supported the right of children and young people to “have a say” about things that matter to them or affect their lives, and how the work I do is informed by the views and ideas of children and young people.



Children and young people have a right to be heard

In performing my functions as Commissioner, I am guided and informed by the rights and principles articulated in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). The CRC acknowledges that children are the “makers and shapers” of their own lives; they are not just the passive beneficiaries of our care, protection and guidance.

One of the four guiding principles of the CRC is that children have the right to express their views and to be heard in all matters affecting them, and for adults to give their views due weight in accordance with the child’s age and maturity.

This and the other rights under the CRC are all connected, they are all equally important and cannot be taken away from children.¹ The “right to be heard” is a gateway right; it is fundamental to the fulfilment of all other rights. By helping children and young people express their views and really listening to them, we acknowledge their valuable insights into the ways in which we can improve policies and practices that directly affect them, including at school, in the justice

system, in our policies on climate change, and in the organisations and agencies that provide services to them and their families. In this way, we are promoting the enjoyment of children’s rights such as the right to education, the right to leisure and play, the right to the highest attainable standard of health and the right to be protected from abuse and neglect, to name just a few. Seen this way, the “right to be heard” is both safeguarding and empowering for children and young people.²



¹ Child Rights Connect and Unicef (2019), *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - The Children’s Version*, <https://www.unicef.org/media/60981/file/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf>

² National Children’s Commissioner (2019), *Children’s Rights Report 2019 - In Their Own Right: Children’s Rights in Australia*, Australian Human Rights Commission: Sydney, 57.

How did children and young people have a say in 2019?

During 2019, children and young people from all walks of life and from across the State took the opportunity to let me know about the things that are important to them in ways which I hope were meaningful to them.³

Listening to children and young people in their communities

A state-wide Listening Tour enabled me to visit children and young people, and their parents, carers and service providers, in their communities. During the tour, I met with children at Neighbourhood Houses, Child and Family Centres, schools, and community organisations including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations which provide services to children and young people. These visits, many of which involved spending informal and quality time with children, were critical to gaining an understanding of local issues from local people.

A key message I heard through the Listening Tour was that we must do better at improving the wellbeing of our children and young people; we owe it to them to support them to grow to be happy, healthy and productive adults

so that Tasmania can prosper into the future. This informed my [February 2020 report](#) on the importance of investing in the wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania. Conversations with children and young people and those who support them also informed speeches and presentations given on a range of matters relevant to the wellbeing of children and young people including a [presentation](#) at the Tasmanian Youth Mental Health Forum facilitated by the Mental Health Council of Tasmania in partnership with Primary Health Tasmania and the Tasmanian Department of Health.

³ A Participation Policy and Practice Advice provides overarching policy and practice guidance on how I engage with children and young people to promote their participation. <https://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/CCYP-Participation-Policy-and-Practice-Advice-VERSION-2.0-25-March-2019-FINAL.pdf>.

Listening to children and young people in out-of-home care

As part of the CCYP Out-of-Home (OOHC) Monitoring Program, I explored various ways of seeking the views and opinions of children and young people in OOHC, including through existing consultative mechanisms. In 2019, engagement activities focused on promoting awareness among children and young people in OOHC of the Monitoring Program and its aims, and meeting with children and young people with a care experience. Activities included the following:

- **Fact Sheet**

Young people from the CREATE Foundation (Tas) helped to develop a child and youth friendly [fact sheet](#) about the CCYP Out-of-Home Care Monitoring Program. The fact sheet makes it clear that I care about what is happening for children and young people in OOHC and that I am interested to know what is working well for them, as well as what can be improved.

- **Youth Round Table**

In April 2019, young people from the CREATE Foundation (Tas) Youth Round Table expressed their views to me on what it means to “be healthy”, and on what is working or needs improving in the OOHC system to help children and young people to be healthy. Outcomes from this consultation were included in my [OOHC Monitoring Program report](#), released in October 2019, and informed recommendations made in that report.

- **Meetings with children and young people in OOHC**

In May and June 2019, I met informally with several children and young people in non-family-based care, with the support of three non-government OOHC providers. In October 2019, I also met with young people in OOHC or those with recent experience of OOHC, to seek their advice on how to continue to conduct the OOHC Monitoring Program.

Listening to young people in youth justice detention

Children and young people who are detained under the *Youth Justice Act 1997* can ask me to be their advocate. I make personal visits to Ashley Youth Detention Centre in Deloraine approximately every three weeks and spend time with the young people who are detained there.

In 2019, conversations with children and young people at AYDC have helped to inform my work to promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in the youth justice system. For example:

- Young people at AYDC provided invaluable feedback on the redesign and updating of resources which explain their rights in youth justice detention and inform them of options for raising concerns or complaints. This engagement process helped to ensure the updated resources are accessible to and suitable for their audience.
- Views expressed by young people to me about the importance of feeling safe in custodial settings helped to inform my [May 2019 Advice](#) to the Tasmanian Government on searches of children and young people held in custody in Tasmania.
- Views expressed by young people in detention have informed my advocacy on the need for a therapeutic approach to youth justice in Tasmania.



Listening to CCYP Ambassadors

In April 2019, almost 200 children and young people became the inaugural CCYP Ambassadors. These children and young people had the opportunity to express their views on how things could be improved for children and young people in Tasmania. During 2019, CCYP Ambassadors met at three rounds of regional meetings in Devonport/Burnie, Launceston and Hobart. Many CCYP Ambassadors also completed out-of-session projects on what is important to them and their community, and on why children's rights matter.

CCYP Ambassadors attended a statewide event in Launceston attended by political leaders and representatives from Tasmanian Government departments and non-government organisations.

In the first year of the program, CCYP Ambassadors:

- Shared their views and ideas on issues of importance to them and their communities.
- Informed the ongoing design and implementation of the CCYP Ambassador Program.
- Discussed and expressed their views on policies and legislation which affect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania.
- Informed the design and ongoing development of a secure online community for CCYP Ambassadors. This online community is being developed in collaboration with arts and social change organisation Big hART and young women involved in Big hART's Project O in Wynyard. Once launched, the online community will enable CCYP Ambassadors to engage in discussions with me, complementing our face-to-face regional meetings.
- Learnt about children and young people's rights.
- Spoke directly with political leaders, including the leaders of Tasmania's three major political parties, and representatives from Tasmanian Government Departments and other decision-makers, to share their views, opinions and priorities for children and young people in Tasmania.
- Had their views and opinions incorporated into submissions, letters and other advocacy.

What CCYP Ambassadors told me during 2019

Each CCYP Ambassador brings their own unique perspectives, views and ideas to the program. Through interactive discussions, projects, and other activities, CCYP Ambassadors have helped me to understand what is important to children and young people in Tasmania. They have told me about what is working well for young Tasmanians, what needs to be improved, and importantly, how things could be done better.

Early in 2019, seven key themes emerged as areas of significant importance for CCYP Ambassadors and which they would like to see given greater consideration by decision makers:

- Education and opportunities
- Equity and diversity
- Climate change and the environment
- Bullying and mental health
- Participation and recognition of children and young people
- Safety
- Access to necessities, services and supports

A word about Ambassadors' quotes and projects.

The following sections provide direct quotes from CCYP Ambassadors to illustrate each of the seven key themes they identified. Also included are examples of the projects undertaken by the Ambassadors as part of the program. These sections also highlight how the views of CCYP Ambassadors have contributed to decision-making processes that affect them.

Ambassadors' comments have been quoted verbatim to accurately reflect the individuals' voices. However, some editing of spelling and punctuation has been made, on the advice of Ambassadors, to ensure accessibility.

Opinions expressed in the quotes and projects are those of the individual Ambassador.

Key theme:

Education and Opportunities

Education and opportunities were key themes raised during discussions with CCYP Ambassadors in 2019. Although many CCYP Ambassadors were happy with their experience at school, CCYP Ambassadors also expressed their views and ideas on how their experience could be improved.





Support for students

There should be free breakfasts - most important meal of the day.

Support for students who speak English as a second language.

Career counselling for years 10, 11 and 12.

The ability for students to trust their teachers or for more counsellors.

More care about mental health in schools.

More support before transitions.

More funding should be given to schools with more disadvantaged children.

Less students per class.

The cost of university education is too high and is making it hard for all young people to attend.

There needs to be more support for people with mental issues that are less obvious.

Someone for students to talk to, specifically for that purpose of having their voice heard.

More respect for other students that are from another country.

Curriculum

Creative subject support (Why is English or maths deemed more important??)

Teach more primary school kids about jobs.

More modern curriculum/diversity in options and subjects.

More opportunities for students to do particular activities that students are interested in.

More educational classes for children higher up in their class.

Better education on other cultures.

Children's literacy is very important, in my opinion. Many children arrive at school with poor reading skills, often due to their parents not investing the time and energy in this area. ... Parents need to understand that learning to read early impacts a child's future educational and employment prospects.

I believe that education is the foundation of our society, but currently, our foundation is crumbling. Yes, we are learning about algebra in maths and cells in science but when my teacher asked my class 'who knows we have a federal election coming up?' not one person answered her...We are not being taught about the world issues that we are constantly facing, climate change, politics, terrorism. These are all things that we need to be aware of and we need to be actively involved in our society. ... We need to know how to vote. We need to know how to be a part of our community and contribute to our society. If we have these basic life skills, we could go on to achieve truly great things.

I love learning, and think I am a good learner. I hope to finish Year 12, then go to university. But I know that many young people don't enjoy their learning and our present system of schooling. One thing that definitely could be improved is our school system to provide more flexibility and engagement to those students that don't love learning and school as much as me. It would help those young people finish Year 12 and have better opportunities in the future.

Students need to improve on cultural education like Aboriginal education in schools.

Teaching

Teaching for needs of individuals not the average.

Having enough teachers for specific subjects at my school. During NAPLAN we had a mass shortage of teachers and none of our subs knew enough about the subject to actually help us.

Teachers pay should increase and more people would become teachers.

Teachers should have to commit to a class for the full year. It is disruptive to our learning when they leave right at the end of the year.

Why do relief teachers get paid more?

Teachers should not be scared to talk about certain things (which they are).

Opportunities

More opportunities in remote and rural areas (e.g. music, sports).

More playgrounds or better playgrounds.

Inclusion and opportunities towards disabled people.

Although there are volunteer work opportunities, volunteers are typically adults.

Access to more sporting teams.

More job opportunities for young people (part time/full time).

More opportunities for doing fun and interesting things for low cost and easy to access. I believe this would fill in time for youth crime and enhance their learning and skills. This would also get them out and about, seeing new things and doing new experiences, something I always find fun.

Project example:

[Sophie Wemyss - Education and Opportunities](#)





Children and young people having a say on what happens at school

Mobile phones in schools

Following the announcement of the “Off and Away All Day” policy on mobile phones in Tasmanian Government schools, I consulted with CCYP Ambassadors about their views on the new policy. While their opinions on the mobile phone ban varied, CCYP Ambassadors broadly agreed that there should be further consultation by schools with students about the implementation of the policy. Some CCYP Ambassadors were frustrated that the results of a survey of students on the use of mobile phones were not made available to them and were concerned that their feedback was not considered in the decision to implement the new policy.

I subsequently wrote to the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP, to convey the views of CCYP Ambassadors and to recommend that there be further consultation with students in the implementation of the new policy. In his reply, the Minister advised that students’ views were considered in the decision-making process and that schools will be encouraged to further engage with students in the implementation of the new policy. Schools will be given a summary of the results of the student survey so that they can be shared with their school community. Students’ views will also be sought as part of the review of the policy in 2021.

Review of the Melbourne Declaration

CCYP Ambassadors were invited by Tasmania’s Department of Education to have a say on the future of education as part of the review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. CCYP Ambassadors were invited to attend forums in Devonport and Hobart. I also wrote to the Minister for Education to share what I had heard from CCYP Ambassadors about their experiences of education in Tasmania and their vision for its future. In his reply to my letter, the Minister advised that CCYP Ambassadors’ observations and comments were provided to the Tasmanian youth representatives who attended the National Youth Workshop to help provide a full perspective of the experience of young people in Tasmania.

Key theme:

Equity and Diversity

In 2019, CCYP Ambassadors expressed their views, ideas and vision for a fairer and more equitable experience for all children and young people in Tasmania.





I think that children and young people should be accepted for who they are, whether it's their gender, sexuality or their personality in general. I'm not sure if it is common in Tasmania, but I do know that my school doesn't teach younger students about sexuality and when someone does 'come out' there is a lot of controversial discussions amongst students uneducated on the subject thinking it's 'disgusting'. Children and young people also get judged based on general personality and gender. So, I think that Tasmania should be a non-judgemental state to everyone, but especially children and young people.

We could be more accepting toward different cultures, religion, sex, disabilities, etc.

Closing the gap between opportunities and access for Indigenous Australians (education and healthcare) and non-Indigenous Australians.

I think the LGBTQ+ community needs to be a thing that kids need to be exposed to earlier. This may help them if they may identify as one of these things and they will know it is alright.

I would like to improve the rights of children with disability. To help them be accepted and not treated differently, and to be given the help they need to have equal rights.

I believe that we need better education around LGBTQ+ issues, especially in schools. I think that by teaching all students about acceptance and normalising our community, we can decrease the amount of bullying and intolerance.

People at my school don't really care about what you look like, they look more at their personality.

Less labelling "black/white, smart/stupid, tall/short, gay/lesbian.

Helping children to be more culturally aware. When people grow up a lot of them want to move to a new home or travel the world. But they need to be prepared for what they will encounter... if I don't know about the laws/rules/people/things that are in that country, you never know what could happen, we might be thrown in jail!

More education about Muslims and refugees so that there is less racism.

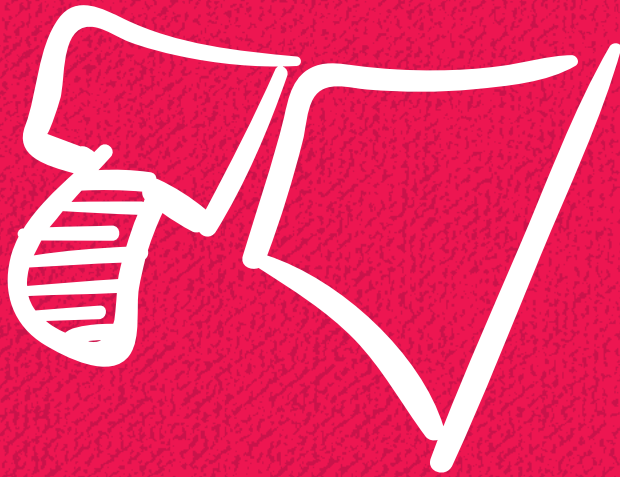
Children aren't always seen as equals. We are just as human as adults and in some ways are just as wise and passionate.

I would like to improve people's acceptance of all different cultures.

I would like to make a more engaged community where people are celebrating their backgrounds, cultures and abilities more without embarrassment or feeling like people are judging them.

As a strong supporter of female and LGBTQ+ rights, I feel that children and young people must learn the importance of diversity and acceptance. So many teenagers these days believe in equality, but still some struggle to understand this. When gay marriage was passed in government, many adults believed that their child/ren would be 'forced to role-play in homosexual relationships'. This is not true. Gay marriage being passed meant that all sexualities would be treated equally. Any movement that improves the life of minorities is demonised, this is not right. Children deserve to grow up in a community that is accepting of everyone, regardless of gender, sexuality, race or religion... I want the next generation to have no clue what sexism, racism and homophobia is. I feel strongly that girls have the same rights and opportunities as boys in Tasmania, this year I am playing my first year of women's AFL for under 14s and I love it. I would be very disappointed if I didn't have this opportunity. At my school last year, for 5/6 sport in term 2, girls were allowed to play football but in term 3 they didn't let girls play because they thought the tackling was 'too dangerous'.

Project example:
[Abbey Maddock - Equity and Diversity](#)



Children and young people's views on kindness and respect helped inform my submission on the Religious Discrimination Bill

In my January 2020 [submission](#) to the draft Religious Discrimination Bill 2019, I highlighted the following messages that I had heard from CCYP Ambassadors and asked that they be taken into account in considering the issues in the draft Bill.

I think it is important that older people set a good example for younger people so they can learn to be good citizens. People should act kindly and caring towards each other but only some people do. Young people could think of ways to help older people act more respectfully and responsibly.

I think that to make Australia a better place everyone should respect each other. We could show them some actions about respect and how to respect each other and being kind and encouraging.

I think that children need to be kinder to each other. There is a lot of bullying going on and this is putting pressure on children. It makes them unhappy. I think that we need to change the way children look after each other and in this way I think that we can help each other become happier and healthier.

Key theme:

Climate Change and the Environment

CCYP Ambassadors are clearly concerned about climate change and the natural environment and are passionate about improving awareness and finding solutions at a community and global level to collectively address this issue.





...I know that in just a few, short years, this world will be in our hands. It is very important that the Government takes into account what we would like done with our world. One major issue is climate change. This if not acted on immediately, could potentially be the end of our future. The Tasmanian Government needs to educate people about this issue. They need to make their decisions with climate change in the backs of their minds. They need to lead people in the right direction because, together, we can make a huge difference. This all needs to happen before it is too late. I, personally, do not want to be handed such a big problem. It should not fall upon the people of the future's shoulders, it should fall on those of the present. If that means we need to finish what they started, that's okay, but this should not be all up to the next generation.

We have a beautiful state but there is so much rubbish on our playgrounds, beaches and parks. Our state really needs to be cleaned up and restored. If everyone would just pick up two pieces of rubbish per day, this would make Tassie a much better place. I would also like young people to be more politically motivated so we can stand on our own two feet and show those politicians that we are proactive kids and care about the world we are about to inherit.

Education of people about the importance of our environment. If we don't act now in less than 100 years over half the earth's species would be extinct. This would be a great tragedy for the world and future generations.

I am passionate about pollution because of my personal experience of being sick. I do not want to be sick again and I do not want other people to be sick. I know that if we continue to pollute our world lots of people and animals will get sick and possibly die. I believe that we all need to take action by standing up and cleaning our world. I am also very passionate about climate change and would like to investigate ways that young people can help.

I think if we can educate people from a young age how important it is to care for our environment we can make Tasmania (and the world) a more sustainable place to live.

Governments, and people are starting to recognise that climate change is highly important.

Politicians doing what they say and not ignoring.

More bans on things like plastic straws and bags.

People are killing the planet by throwing away plastic into our environment and killing our animals. STOP IT!

Big corporations need to reduce – and ultimately stop – their production of carbon emissions – and stop putting the blame on everyday people who use straws, etc.

I think that plastic is terrible. It takes around 100 years to break down and can pollute the air and harm us very much do you know where this goes to? Well all this goes to land fill and can pollute the water and suffocate the trees and turtles and other sea creatures. Also, animals like turtles eat jelly fish and they think plastic bags can look like jellyfish and choke and die.

Using plastic containers is best for your lunch box.

Our green team has organised 'Nude Food' day which means no plastic in lunch boxes.

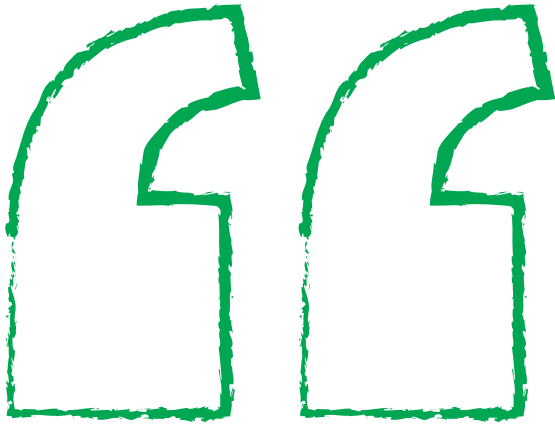
More emphasis on cafes and fast food restaurants to use reusable/recyclable cups and straws.

Tasmania needs to switch to electric cars!

People using public transport more often.

We need to stop making coal mines and start making other things like more wind farms, solar power cars (fuel pollutes), solar power farms, growing trees not cutting them, and way more recycling.

Reducing meat and dairy consumption as much as possible, because the meat and dairy industries produce LARGE levels of carbon emissions.



Plant more trees.

We need the attitude of older generations to change and for them to listen!

Making punishments harsher for littering.

Rewards for people who help with climate change and recognition.

Taking a better approach rather than protests. They get violent sometimes.

By banning the production of fossil fuels across the world to find alternative materials to use.

At school, we have a green team who recycle and re-use our recycling.

Schools need to make their students more aware of climate strikes.

Educating more schools about waste so that people understand. We are running out of time!

The age range of the people who are at the [climate] protests and strikes aren't able to vote yet and make a difference. We need a way for people to hear our voice.

Reducing the cost of reusable products so more people would be more open to buying those products.

People realising that saying "it costs too much to prevent climate change" isn't a valid excuse because money is only a CONCEPT!

I think we should do what Sweden is doing at the moment, which is burning their rubbish for energy. And other countries are now selling their rubbish to Sweden this would fix the energy issue, and climate change.

Stop farming in large quantities and find better ways and more efficient ways to produce food farming and food production is fuelling climate change!

Change habits from recycling into reusing and having a voice to discuss how we can change our behaviours and not thrown out reusable items. Too much is thrown out.

Project Examples:

[Mishca Linden - Global Climate Change](#)

[Kaiki Massom - Climate Change and the Environment](#)



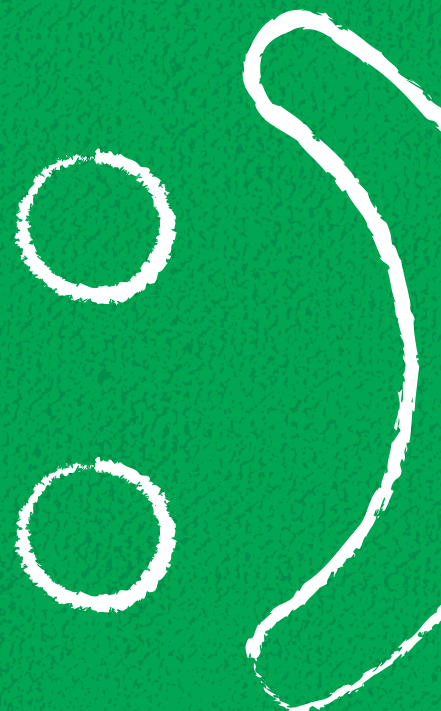


Children and young people are helping to identify priorities for action on climate change

During the CCYP Ambassador Statewide Event, CCYP Ambassadors participated in workshops with representatives from the Tasmanian Climate Change Office in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Specific ideas and recommendations made by CCYP Ambassadors included that the Tasmanian Government should communicate more effectively about what action is being taken to respond to climate change, and that it should listen to young people's ideas and improve representation of younger people in decision-making.

Feedback provided by CCYP Ambassadors was collated and provided to the then Minister for the Environment, Parks and Heritage, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, and will help identify priorities and shape actions to address these priorities in Tasmania's next Climate Change Action Plan.



Key theme:

Participation and Recognition of Children and Young People

CCYP Ambassadors want children and young people to be recognised as valued and contributing members of the Tasmanian community. They emphasised the benefits that flow when their right to have a say is upheld.





Children/young people should feel more included and welcome.

One thing I believe could be changed is the perception of teenagers in our community. The media often has a focus on negative stories about teenagers. These negative stories are a minority of the teenagers in Tasmania and gives the public a negative perception of teenagers as a collective. This creates many negative stereotypes which creates the public to distrust teenagers. Many teenagers are constantly doing positive things in their communities which very rarely make mainstream media. If more stories were focused on positive actions made by teenagers, it could change the way the public views young people in Tasmania and will inspire other children and teenagers to follow in pursuit.

Recognition could be improved. Children aren't recognised for what they do in the community, whether it be participate in a team, help adults with jobs, etc.

People need to learn to understand and listen to children. This could be done by allowing kids to get more involved and be given opportunities and then be encouraged to speak up.

Adults need to change their views and assumptions of young people.

I think that children and young people should be able to have more of a voice and be able to say our opinions on things that matter.

I think Tasmania needs to consider the perspective of young people and do more to prepare us for the world outside of school and home, and prepare us for real scenarios, for example: teach us how to do taxes, teach us actual laws or more real things that could happen to us.

Well, we definitely need the right to vote, the voting age should be 16 but just not compulsory until we are 18. I am sick of adults deciding our future, adults who are not even completely educated on what it will be like for us if they vote for who they vote for. We need adults to listen to us. We need our own little United Nations, United Tasmania haha representatives from each part presenting our ideas to a panel of adults so maybe they will listen to us.

... I think that the government isn't taking the ideas of younger people into consideration, children and young people think differently to adults. If an issue arises, the government should listen to some young people to see what their ideas are. It should be for all issues that the government faces or issues that may affect the world that the younger generation.

The recognition and the respect of children and young people with disabilities having their voices heard. When decision makers implement an act that impacts on the future of children and young people with disabilities to ensure that their voices are heard.

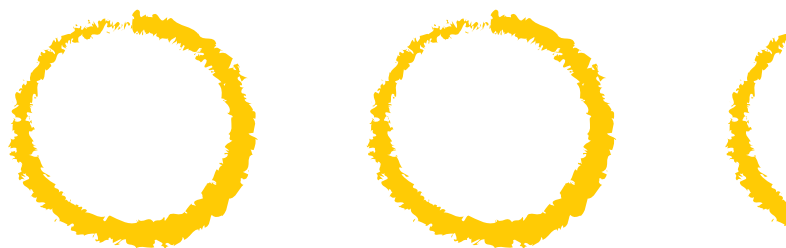
I think that giving young people a say in issues that concern them will greatly benefit our communities. Youth have so many ideas on how to improve this world and as we will one day be leading this world, I think that it is incredibly important to learn how to manage the problems facing this nation. Youth will be the ones facing the consequence of today's decisions so we should be a part of them.

I strongly believe the value of youth opinion should develop far further. Children are the future adults and leaders of the world, in which will one day shape the nation. It will soon be our job to save the Earth and provide our nation's wealth.

We need to get a powerful person who believes kids are not always wrong so this person influences lots of other people and it changes many peoples' ideas.

Project example:

[Dylan Kinder - Participation and Recognition of Children and Young People](#)





Commissioner for Children and Young People Award for Student Voice

In September 2019, I was delighted to announce Cosgrove High School as the recipient of the inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People's Award for Student Voice.

The CCYP Award for Student Voice is awarded to a school, team, or individual who demonstrates excellence and innovation in including the views of children and young people in decisions being made about them, including in their schools and about their education.

During 2019, the team at Cosgrove High School purposefully provided opportunities for students to participate in decisions about their school and their education - from actively encouraging and supporting involvement in the CCYP Ambassador Program, to embedding opportunities for students to contribute to the future design of the school's physical environment, school culture and school improvement.

The CCYP Award for Student Voice will become a feature of the Department of Education's annual awards process, the Together We Inspire Awards, from 2020.

CCYP Ambassadors recognised at Human Rights Week event

During 2019, Equal Opportunity Tasmania invited CCYP Ambassadors to create and enter a written or recorded work reflecting on the theme "Why human rights matter to you". Several entries were selected by the judging panel to be presented at a special event at Government House hosted by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner, AC, Governor of Tasmania to celebrate Human Rights Week.

The CCYP Ambassador Program also received an award from Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Sarah Bolt on behalf of Equal Opportunity Tasmania for assisting to promote kindness and respect.

The CCYP Ambassadors who attended this event had the opportunity to speak with several key decision-makers about children's rights and their involvement in the CCYP Ambassador Program.

Key theme:

Safety

CCYP Ambassadors highlighted safety as a key area of importance for children and young people in Tasmania. CCYP Ambassadors are concerned about both individual and community safety and have lots of ideas for creating a safer Tasmania.





More basic street awareness lessons for young children.

Punishments for cyberbullying being followed through with to discourage it.

More help for people in abusive homes and relationships like women's shelters/group homes.

Taking a better approach rather than protests. They get violent sometimes.

I think kids should feel more safe walking home from school and walking places and riding.

Safe places for kids to hang out.

More opportunities for young people to move out at an earlier age (only if home is not safe).

Social places such as skateparks, pools, etc, there is no supervision, and these days, there are higher crime rates, and it isn't as safe. There are also people that don't use helmets, or safety gear...

There should be security or a police officer at a skatepark or social place, to ensure that everyone using the facilities is having fun and being safe, and those who aren't are punished.

Enforce drug and alcohol education so that younger kids don't start bad habits.

Homelessness needs to change so they have a home to go to.

Trying to help people with anxiety problems which will help improve their safety.

There is a lot of trouble where children are being abused by adults. The problem starts in the childhood of the abuser. If they aren't taught at an early age what's wrong and what's right, they can go onto adulthood committing crimes that they didn't know was the wrong thing to do. It all comes from the parenting of the child now so we can protect the children of the future!

Extra funds and support needs to be available to victims of domestic violence, abuse and other important urgent issues.

I feel somewhat unsafe at school, given that there have been multiple stabbings and it hasn't quite been addressed. One of the students who brought a knife is still a student. What if I'm the next victim?

There is not enough being actually done about things like domestic violence and abuse.

Better support for children who are hurt or abused at home.

Lighting in public parks.

Having more programs which recognise kids and their kids.

Softer materials in airbags.

More security during school drop off and pick up times.

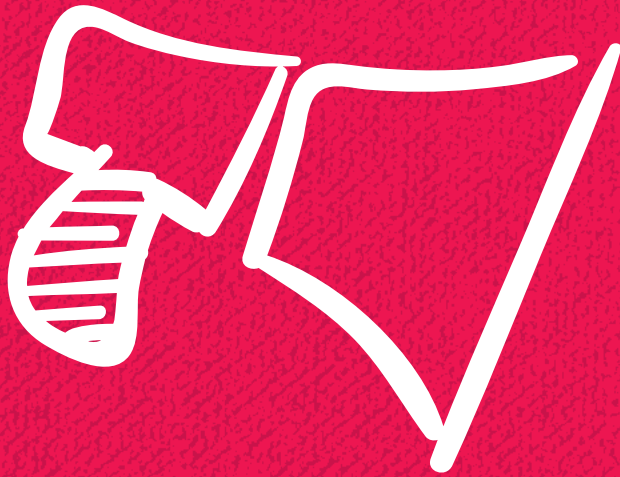
More ways for young people to voice problems in families with safety and free after school programs.

Better funding for foster care and more carers.

Better consequences for bullies.

The one thing that I could change to improve Tasmania would be to ensure that young people are safe. This might include traffic issues around schools and other places young people visit, safe places for children to walk and play and also to make sure that children know how to keep themselves safe.

I want to improve the safety of the community and this to then flow into the rest of Tasmania. I live and go to school in an area where there are a lot of drugs easily available to young people and children and I can see this is a huge safety risk to people I go to school with and my closer friend groups. I want to keep young people safe. I see this is hugely impacting on education and young people's ability to gain work or finish school. Some people even come to school under the influence of drugs. This is a risk to themselves but also other innocent people and that's not fair on anyone.



Children and young people communicating their views about safety to decision-makers

Representatives from the Road Safety Branch of the Department of State Growth attended the CCYP Ambassador statewide event to hear from CCYP Ambassadors about 'what road safety means to them, what makes them feel unsafe on and around the road and their ideas for road safety'. CCYP Ambassadors wrote their thoughts and ideas about road safety on a poster at the event. The poster was subsequently displayed in the Department of State Growth office so members of different teams could read the responses directly from CCYP Ambassadors. The poster and summary of the feedback provided will also be used as a reference point by the Department of State Growth when looking at further opportunities to engage children and young people on topics of road safety across the work of the Branch.

During the statewide event, CCYP Ambassadors also painted and decorated almost 50 re-purposed umbrellas as part of a creative engagement activity led by Tasmanian artists Simon Spain and Bec Stevens. These 'umbrella messages' convey the views of children and young people about their safety in their communities to political leaders and policy-makers. The umbrellas were installed in a special exhibition at the foyer of the Executive Building in Hobart to celebrate World Children's Day and the 30th anniversary of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The exhibition of umbrella messages will travel around Tasmania during 2020.

The Road Safety Branch asked Commissioner for Children and Young People Ambassadors....

what does road safety mean to you?

- Getting from A to B safely
- Following road rules
- Being aware of what is happening even if you have right of way
- Not having to worry about if you are safe or what others are doing
- Being safe, responsible, confident, careful, and respectful on the roads
- Wearing safety gear while riding a bike
- Not taking chances on the roads, eg using a phone or drink driving

what makes you feel unsafe on or around the road?

- Crashes and near misses involving cars or bikes
- Drivers that are impatient, yell or are rude to other road users
- Drivers not paying attention, being on their phone or drink driving
- Drivers not following road rules and not giving way
- People in cars approaching you if you are walking

what could people say or do if they feel unsafe on or around the road?

- Look out for others
- Let people know where you are going
- Ask the person driving to focus on the road, slow down or stop
- Wear protective gear when riding a bike such as a helmet, reflective gear
- Be a good role model around roads by walking and riding safely

Key theme:

Access to Necessities, Services and Supports

CCYP Ambassadors identified the pressing need for improved access to support services, housing, public transport, financial support and material basics for children, young people and their families and carers. CCYP Ambassadors highlighted their willingness be part of the solution to improve the circumstances for many children, young people and their families in Tasmania.





younger people who cannot afford to pay lots of rent.

I think that one thing that could be changed to improve Tasmania as a better place for young people, is the amount of support services around the state, especially in more remote, and rural places. Another thing is raising awareness of initiatives that are trying to make young children's lives better.

More accessible public transport for rural areas in order to help kids access more resources.

I think kids not having much and not having the proper essentials going to school with, it's just unfair because kids didn't sign up for that life they need to be treated with care because you can't give back a childhood. Kids aren't coming to school with the right equipment or the nice shoes or even a bag! Even at home kids are being mistreated even if it is not their fault! Everyone deserves the right to be equal.

At school some kids would come without food and the teachers would have to make them food so they didn't go hungry. I think kids shouldn't go without food it's not fair and we should do something to fix this.

I think that one thing to be improved in Tasmania is to make our hospitals better for the children with brain tumours and leukaemia so we can find more cures for the poor young people of our society.

I believe that Tasmania would be a better place for children if all playgrounds, social amenities i.e. McDonalds playground, any other public parks could have wheelchair access.

I think that all children should be able to express themselves through either music, dancing, drama, etc. But not all parents can pay for it. So I think that all schools should have a solid music/drama program or that lessons can be done for free.

More foster homes.

Provide more things for young people to do and be involved in so they have things to do. Out of school activities that don't cost much so groups of kids can get together.

What I think is lacking is the option of after school and weekend activities that do not cost the parent a fortune. For example, all the dancing, swimming classes are like 200-300 dollars a term. I think it would be easy to get free or maybe cheaper classes like little creative classes - maybe they go for a 1 day thing even. There is another problem that I have come to face, which is the playgrounds, some are very good but others only have swings and a slide and gets boring really easily. So what I believe is the activities in Tasmania need a lot of improvement.

I think one thing that could be improved is the amount of homeless people in Tasmania and how they are treated. Maybe one day a year, we could hold a market for homeless people and get children to come and help to get them used to helping people in need. This might get them wanting to have a job in the future that is to do with helping people.

I would like to see more free community activities, bike tracks and playgrounds for children who like being active.

The one change I would make for Tasmanian children would be government - funded sport clubs. This is vitally important for Tasmanian children because of increased rates of obesity.

Many kids these days spend most of their free time gaming and being inactive, a lot of the time this is because of the financial state of their parents. If sport clubs were government funded they wouldn't need to have joining fees meaning sport would be accessible to all children.

More things/activities for disabled people at schools.

Supporting young parents more.

Access to helplines for children who might not have access to devices. A way to do this would be to put more local help centres in neighbourhoods.

Quality housing.

Supporting young adults with housing.

More funds need to go towards young people who could be in trouble at home, or if they don't have a home. They need regular and extra help.

A website for young people to get food so that they can become healthy and happy.

Assistance during hard times (e.g. Huon Bushfires).

Access to services in rural communities.

More buses and cheaper buses.

Schools doing breakfast clubs and having spare clothes at school.

Project examples:

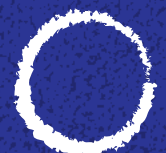
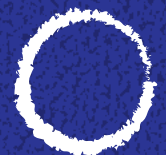
[Ashton Hill - Access to Necessities, Services and Support](#)

[Lilla McDonald - Access to Necessities, Services and Support](#)



Young people are agents of change in their community

As part of my Listening Tour, I had the pleasure of meeting with members of the Jordan River Learning Federation College Students' Community Youth Voice Group. This group of grades 11 and 12 students advise their school leadership team and other decision-makers on matters of importance to them and their community. From my discussions with these inspiring young community leaders it is abundantly clear that safety on and around public transport is an area of significant concern for the children and young people in their community and that young people want to be part of the solution. During 2020, I will be facilitating opportunities for these young people to communicate their concerns and ideas for change directly to relevant decision-makers.



Key theme:

Bullying and Mental Health

Bullying and supports for mental health and wellbeing emerged as areas of ongoing concern for CCYP Ambassadors and were seen as intrinsically linked. CCYP Ambassadors conveyed strong messages that current support systems and strategies for addressing and responding to bullying and/or mental health concerns are not working as well as they could be. They also had suggestions for how things could be improved.





Sometimes people just don't understand what people are going through.

Parents getting more help because parents' mental health affects child's mental health.

Being able to talk to anyone, anytime about mental health without being judged.

There could be workshops for parents so they can learn more about it and help their children.

More counsellors at schools.

Stop alienating people for being different and make an effort to get to know them.

Adults need to understand social media better.

We need to understand it more, especially teachers.

Approaching mental health differently (helping and supporting).

Stigma around mental health – too many people aren't ready to talk about the issues.

If a child is getting bullied, sometimes they don't tell an adult. When they do tell an adult, sometimes the adults don't care.

Get more people in our community to talk to children.

Having checkups and asking the question "are you okay" and "how are you".

Make sure that people know about programs they can go to.

Make mental health services cheaper and more accessible.

Know the difference between being rude, being mean and bullying.

I really want everyone to feel safe and happy so that they can focus on developing themselves. A big way that we can do this is to raise awareness about bullying, the long term impact that this has on people and how to stop it.

More awareness of suicide in young people. My friend, even though she didn't do it, kept saying she would which really hurt me that she would talk about doing something like that.

THE CIRCLE! The circle is a bad thing, which is somebody being bullied, not getting help from friends which makes them easier to bully, starting the circle again! STOP THE CIRCLE!

Stopping bullying on buses.

Regulations in support for young people with mental health issues. Not releasing people straight away from mental health units if not assessed. MORE support access in general.

The bully could be the one who needs support mentally.

When adults get involved they say "just ignore it", but some adults don't understand when something does happen adults don't do enough to make us safe. Safety affects our focus and our mental health and that can lead to self hurt and others.

Teen mental health facility.

More programs towards bullying.

Listening to people's stories and why it happens. Also knowing that it's okay to talk.

A lot of bullying happens on buses and we need to have a system so that doesn't happen.

System to lodge complaints.

People need to be more accepting of mental illnesses that aren't as obvious as anger issues.

Better consequences for bullies.

...I say we should have better punishment instead of detention or suspension. I think we should take more action on things that are not just physically but mentally damaging.

I think there could be better punishments put in place for bullying. Making the community a safer place like at bus malls and shopping centres.

I think that children need to be kinder to each other. There is a lot of bullying going on and this is putting pressure on children. It makes them unhappy. I think that we need to change the way children look after each other and in this way I think that we can help each other become happier and healthier.

I strongly believe that mental health is an ongoing problem for children in this day and age. I have a greater understanding of mental health issues because I've been through some of these times and I would like to help other kids to go through this easier. Mental health is a problem now with not just older ages but the younger community as well. I think the media has put unrealistic expectations for people at these ages and if they don't reach it they feel doubt, worry and fear. I feel that everyone has the right to feel good in themselves and if they do feel doubt they should have a place to go and people to talk to without being anxious and holding back the truth. I think that a Youth Mental Health Forum would be a good idea to help fix this problem.

I believe that not just young people but all people need to be educated on the dangers of emotional and mental health. If all of our youth know how to handle their emotions, where to get help and why they feel the way they do Tasmania would be a better place for children and young people.

I am extremely passionate about mental health for young people. I believe that we need to find better systems for supporting young people and their families to feel connected to each other and to their communities.

I think that more emotional help is really important. Some kids have things in their lives that are really sad and I think we need to get more people knowing about it and then more people can help. I would like to see this change happen in Tasmania. We also need to fundraise because there are a lot of kids who really need emotional help with their home lives and they aren't getting it.

[I]n today's society it's really easy for us as youth to feel really isolated and cut off from our communities, this can lead to marginalisation of youth in our community. Without access to appropriate mental well-being programmes and community based mentoring, it means that these individuals are more likely to have less drive or desire to be self sufficient in the future, meaning that they will always feel removed or unwanted by society. We need to reach out and make all people - of all genders, races, backgrounds and ability level feel as though they belong to something which is our wonderful and diverse community.

I'm someone that has been bullied a lot and I feel that there is too much of it happening and it is starting to become normal to be bullied and its not ok for people to be bullied. I would like to help get the message out that bullying is not ok in a work environment or education/learning environment. Soon younger people will get a job and then they will find out that bullying is not ok and they thought it was ok because there wasn't much fuss or importance in bullying at school.

Project example:

[Dieter Linden - Bullying and Mental Health](#)





Children and young people's views are helping to inform whole-of-community approach to bullying

Members of the former Interim Commissioner's Children and Young People Consultative Council consistently raised bullying as an issue of major concern during their meetings in 2018. Some of the major themes arising from Council members' discussions were outlined in a [submission](#) to the draft Criminal Code Amendment (Bullying) Bill 2019.

During the October 2019 CCYP Ambassador Program statewide event, CCYP Ambassadors met with representatives from the Department of Education and the Department of Premier and Cabinet to talk about what would make a difference in addressing bullying and cyberbullying, both in and outside of school. The views expressed by CCYP Ambassadors during the meeting are helping to inform the development of a whole-of-community approach to stopping and preventing bullying.

Where to from here?

As this report demonstrates, children and young people around Tasmania have insightful and often sophisticated thoughts, ideas and suggestions for improvement on a broad range of topics that affect them and their communities. They want to be respected as experts in their own lives, and for their views and ideas to be considered in decisions that affect them now and into the future. Too often, children and young people are not considered as key stakeholders when decisions are being made that affect their lives. We all need to pay more attention to what children have to say.

During 2020, speaking with children and young people, their families, carers and organisations who support them will remain one of my key priorities as Commissioner. I will also continue to advocate for greater awareness of children's rights, and to create further opportunities for children and young people in Tasmania to have a say on matters that affect them.

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