

LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TASMANIA 2017



CCYP
Commissioner for Children
and Young People Tasmania

Every year, I bring together children and young people across Tasmania as members of my Children and Young People Advisory Councils. In 2017, I set up Councils in the south, north and north-west regions.

My work as the Commissioner for Children and Young People is guided by the rights contained in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, with a specific role to promote and empower children and young people to share their views and opinions. These opinions then inform the direction and scope of my work.

WHAT DO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ADVISORY COUNCILS DO?

The Councils are made up of children and young people between the ages of 8 and 18 from a diverse range of backgrounds. Members meet with me to:

- share their experiences and ideas about issues that matter to them and what they hope for in the future;
- participate in developing ideas and suggestions on issues to inform my advocacy work;
- provide me with advice about the services that are available and should be available to children and young people in Tasmania.

To ensure the best interests of children and young people are safeguarded and promoted, all of the consultations that I held were conducted in accordance with child safe guidelines for the participation of children, including obtaining consent, voluntary participation, and the de-identification of personal information. The framework for the consultations includes posing open-ended questions, and genuinely inquiring and engaging with children's views, to obtain an accurate representation.

Equity for anyone less fortunate than me! Because in Tasmania, I have been so lucky! :☆:

WHO WERE THIS YEAR'S MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCILS?

There were 34 members of the Children and Young People Advisory Councils across Tasmania in 2017. The members ranged in age from 8 to 17 years old.

Location	Total
South	15
North	6
North-West	13
TOTAL	34

In addition to the Advisory Councils, I also met with young people across Tasmania, in a range of forums.

WHAT DID CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAY?

The summary below captures all of the issues that children and young people raised during the Council meetings. The main themes below encompass the areas which were most spoken about by children and young people.

Education: Schools are at the centre of many children's lives in Tasmania, and throughout the consultations they described many positive experiences of school and the work of their teachers, principals and school administrators. They would however like education to better meet their needs and interests, including the ability to choose their preferred subjects earlier. They also thought that education could be more relevant to future employment opportunities, particularly for those living in rural and remote areas.

Regarding the curriculum, children and young people would like more of a focus on innovation and entrepreneurialism, improved mental health/drug and alcohol education, resources on addressing bullying, and the inclusion of essential life skills. Finally there was general appreciation and support for the current expansion of high schools to Year 12, and for this initiative to be expanded.

Equality, Equity & Respect: Overwhelmingly children and young people raised equality, equity and respect as being important to a 'good society'. Particular reference was made during discussions on this theme to "being yourself", gender equity, disability, cultural diversity and acceptance of those coming from other countries, children in foster care, homelessness, and LGBTIQ+ issues including marriage equality. There was also concern about using respectful language so as not to cause offence to others, and the need to respect individual differences and views.

The Natural Environment: A range of national and local environmental issues were raised by the children and young people. In particular there were concerns about coal mining, fossil fuel extraction, and sustainable farming practices. They also spoke about the need to value and maintain Tasmania's natural resources, and to prioritise the expansion of the tourism industry over additional forestry and mining investment. There was also a need to address the amount of plastic being used and how to promote the message of reduce, reuse and recycle.

Voices of children and young people: Children and young people would like more of a say on issues that affect them, and place high importance on having the ability and opportunity to influence adult decision-making. In particular, they would like more of a say about decisions made at their own schools (either through student representative councils, school associations or other forums) and decisions made by their local councils. They want their views to be sought, listened to, and acted upon.



Access: Children and young people from across Tasmania consistently raised the need for better access to programs and services, especially in rural and remote areas. In particular, they would like improved access to safe and reliable transport options, health and mental health services, and entertainment and sporting activities.

I also spoke with children and young people about the key people and institutions in their lives which support them. These included parents and carers, teachers, principals, the Department of Education, Child Safety Services, social workers, community sector organisations, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, local and state government, and the Premier of Tasmania.

As a part of the consultations, the children and young people were invited to write to an influential person or organisation with a message about something they would like to see changed and the action they would like that person or organisation to take. Many of these messages contained genuine requests for change, and raised issues of local, state and national importance.

THERE NEEDS TO
BE MORE MENTAL
HEALTH AWAREN-
ESS + SUPPORT



WHAT WILL I DO?

All of the views of the Advisory Councils have been summarised and forwarded in official correspondence to the Premier of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Minister for Education, including the messages written directly from the children and young people.

CONCLUSION

The meetings I undertook with children and young people in 2017 revealed the breadth of issues that concern children and young people in Tasmania. The responses demonstrate a strong interest in making their own and other young people's lives better, and provide ideas to encourage a society which is more supportive and compassionate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of my Children and Young People Advisory Councils for their time and active participation in the meetings during 2017.

I am confident that our future is in very good hands, based on the consultations and conversations I have had with Tasmanian children and young people over the last year. We can be proud of our next generation, who are already demonstrating great leadership and vision.

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Commissioner for Children and Young People

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