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Office of the Advocate for Children & Young People

*Annual Report
1 July 2021 –
30 June 2022*

acyp.
Office of the Advocate for
Children & Young People

The Hon Matthew Mason-Cox MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Hon Jonathan O'Dea MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

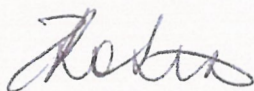
Dear Mr President and Mr Speaker

In accordance with Section 32 of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act) I am pleased to present the Advocate for Children and Young People's Annual Report for 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

The report includes: a description of the Advocate's activities during the year in relation to each of the Advocate's functions; an evaluation of the response of relevant authorities to the recommendations of the Advocate; any recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administrative action, that the Advocate considers should be made as a result of the exercise of the Advocate's functions and; a description of any request made by the Advocate to conduct a special inquiry that was not approved by the Minister and a statement of the reasons given by the Minister for not approving that request.

As provided by Section 35 of the Act, I ask that you now make this report publicly available at the determined time.

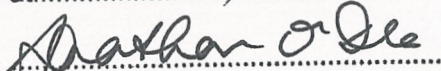
Yours sincerely



Zoë Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People
24 October 2022

Received by me and authorised
to be made public forthwith on

24 October 2022.....
at 10:03 am.....


Speaker



Advocate for Children
and Young People

The Hon Matthew Mason-Cox MLC
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Yours sincerely

Zoë Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People
24 October 2022

Received by me and authorised
to be made public forthwith on

Monday 24 October 2020

at 10.00am

Acting President

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We would also like to acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community.

The Advocate advises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers, this report may contain images of people who may have passed away.

*Cover artwork by Lua Pellegrini,
Chairperson of the YAC 2021-2022.*

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Advocate's Foreword



It is that time again, time to share in our Annual Report outlining the work of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. This last year saw children and young people return to school, which also meant that ACYP got back to running face to face consultations with children and young people. In this last year, ACYP engaged with more than 10,400 children and young people across New South Wales.

We continued to work with vulnerable children and young people. Within this year, we wrapped up our consultation project with children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC), with a report launched in the next reporting period. I want to thank the children and young people who participated in this work for being so honest and open with us.

I want to acknowledge the young men and women in youth justice who allow me to sit with them, break bread with them and learn from them. This year ACYP sponsored the young men in Cobham Youth Justice Centre in their participation in oz-tag football matches.

I want to thank everyone who participated in the work we have done this last year. Whether it is in schools, in community organisations or in business, we always appreciate the insights that are shared with us and the faith children and young people put in the process of participation.

This year we launched the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*. Over 44,000 children and young people have contributed to that work. I want to thank the government agencies, community organisations and businesses who also worked with us, and will continue to work with us, around this plan. We are proud that a beautiful government plan exists and contains the words Love, Hope and Joy.

I also acknowledge the work of the NSW Youth Advisory Council in providing advice to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and to myself as Advocate. Thank you for all the work you did, particularly your work around consent education and the work with the curriculum reform team.

The ACYP team has grown and has expanded its footprint in New South Wales. We continue to work across government and support members of the community and business. The passion and commitment of the ACYP team is clear in all the work that has been delivered. I cannot thank them enough.

I want to thank the Ministers, government agencies and the NGOs who support our work and serve children and young people. We have worked across government, business and communities who have been incredibly supportive of our work. We know that each year there is work to be done, but we are so thrilled at the progress we have seen in agencies including young people in policy development and design. We have also seen the growth in youth advisory councils across New South Wales, which ensure the current and future generations are heard.

Enjoy this annual report. We look forward to working with you all in the coming years.



Zoë Robinson
**Advocate for Children
and Young People**

About the Office

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) is established under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act).

The Advocate is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People.

The work of the Advocate is governed by the following principles, as described in Part 3 Section 14 of the Act:



a. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people are the paramount considerations.



b. The views of children and young people are to be given serious consideration and taken into account.



c. A co-operative relationship between children and young people and their families and communities is important for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people.

The functions of the Advocate as set out in Part 3 Section 15 of the Act are:

a. To advocate for and promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24 years.

b. To promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives and to encourage government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children and young people appropriate to their age and maturity.

c. To conduct special inquiries into issues affecting children and young people.

d. To make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people.

e. To conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people.

f. To promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people.

g. To prepare, in consultation with the Minister, a three-year strategic plan for children and young people in the State.



In exercising functions under the Act, the Advocate must do the following:



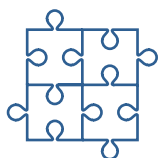
- a.** Focus on systemic issues affecting children and young people.



- b.** Give priority to the interests and needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.



- c.** Consult with children and young people from a broad range of backgrounds and age groups throughout the State.



- d.** Work co-operatively with other organisations that provide services to or represent the interests of children and young people.



- e.** Work co-operatively with the Council.

The Act requires the Advocate to prepare an Annual Report to Parliament on the Advocate's activities during that year in relation to each of the Advocate's functions.

Consultations

As per their enabling legislation, a core function of the work undertaken by the Advocate is to ‘promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives.’ In undertaking this work, the Advocate engages in consultation directly with children and young people. The Advocate’s participation work is underpinned by the child rights principles inscribed within the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

In practice this means that the Advocate’s methodology adopts a child rights approach, with questions and consultations being designed and conducted in such a way to allow the participants to answer openly, which provides them the greatest opportunity to share their views and experiences.

These insights are integral to informing the reports, submissions and projects the Advocate produces.

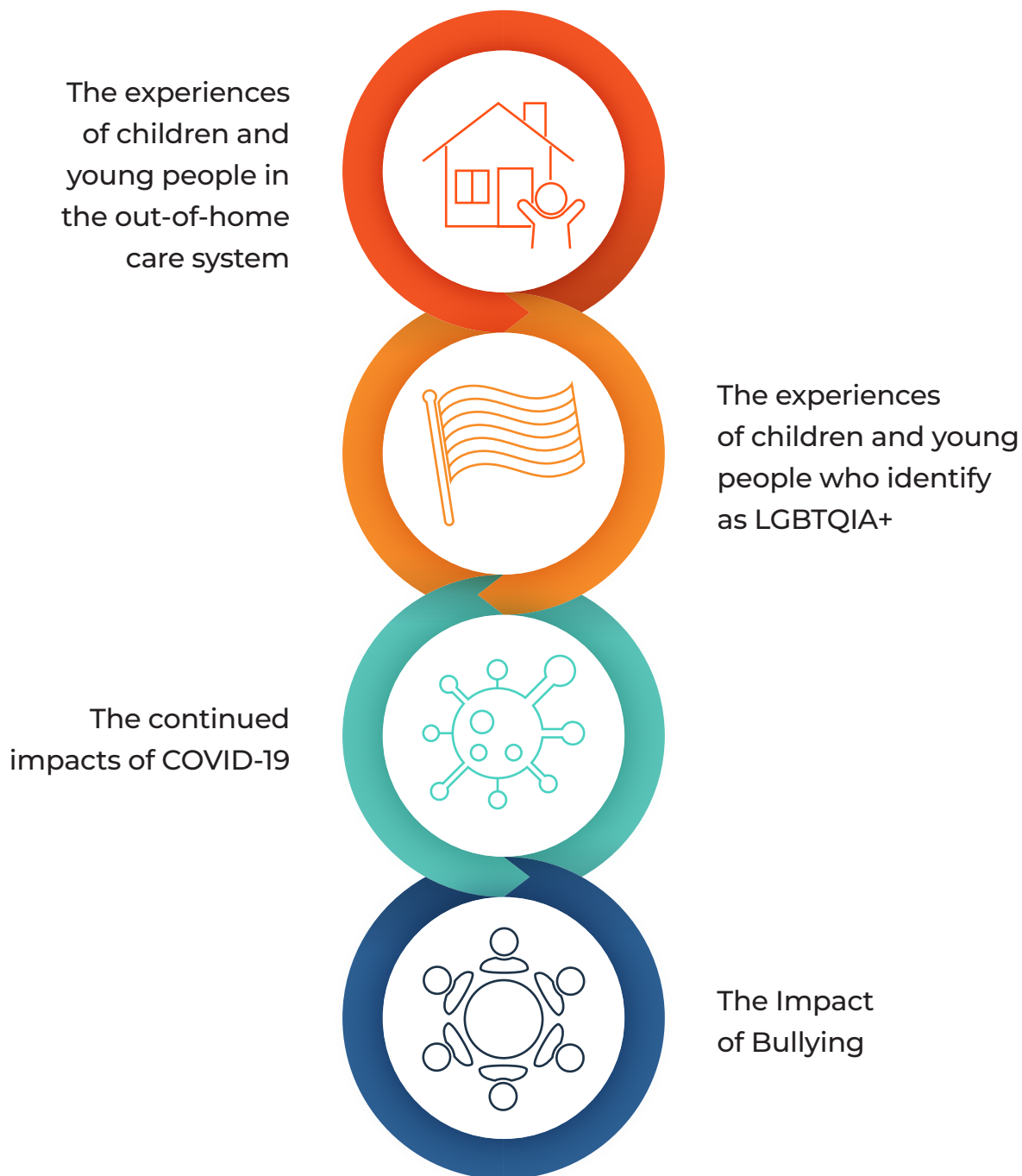
Building on the lessons learned from the last couple of reporting periods, the Advocate continued to undertake consultations through both online and face-to-face means.

The sensitivity of the consultation topic and the unique experiences of participants are two examples of factors that determine the consultation format. Consultations can be larger group consultations, smaller focus groups or one-on-one interviews.



To ensure that the Advocate is representing the views of children and young people from across NSW, wherever possible, the Advocate works to ensure that participants are reflective of the diversity and life experiences of children and young people in NSW.

Throughout the reporting period, the Advocate undertook targeted consultations on:



Consultation: Out-of-Home Care

An important part of the Advocate's mandate, as outlined in the Act, is to "give priority to the interests and needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people."

Building on the work undertaken in the previous reporting period and in partnership with the Department of Communities and Justice and NGO's, the Advocate continued a consultation project to listen to the voices of children and young people as they share their experiences of the out-of-home care system.

Over the course of the project, the Advocate had the privilege of hearing from 99 children and young people across NSW aged 6 to 24 who are currently in out-of-home care (OOHC) or have an experience of living in the OOHC system. Children and young people took part across the following locations:



Children and young people in OOHC are a particularly vulnerable group and often have a range of complex and co-existing needs and challenges, often relating to experiences of trauma and distress. This can result in increased physical, mental and social health needs, which are unfortunately often coupled with limited access to resources. As a result, there is a need to continue to work to ensure that children and young people in OOHC have access to the holistic supports and wraparound services that they need to thrive.

**Consultation:
Out-of-Home Care
cont.**

The project was aimed at providing an opportunity for children and young people with experience in OOHC to express their views, outline their experiences and suggestions around what needs to change within the system. Throughout this project, the children and young people we met with spoke their truth in order to ensure that we could continue to create a better, safe and more respectful system for those in care.

The honesty and vulnerability with which the children and young people shared their insights and experiences was a testament to their resilience, strength and dedication to ensure that those currently in the system have a different experience to their own.

At the close of this reporting period, the Advocate was in the process of finalising their consultation report, for release in August 2022. Reflecting the voices and experiences of children and young people during consultations, the Report makes recommendations to:

- their experiences entering the Care System;
- their experiences while in the Care System;
- their experiences of education while in the Care System;
- their health and wellbeing in the Care System;
- their experiences exiting the Care System; and
- their advice to government.

Consultation: Rainbow Talks Project

An important part of the Advocate's mandate, as outlined in the Act, is to "consult with children and young people from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences."

In 2021 the Advocate committed to conducting consultations with young people in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) community.

This project seeks to empower and provide a platform for LGBTQIA+ identifying young people to share their experiences and insights, and to elevate these voices to decision makers within Government about how we can better support LGBTQIA+ youth in NSW.

This project is being conducted with the support of Twenty10 incorporating GLCS NSW.

Twenty10 work with people across NSW who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender diverse, non-binary, intersex, questioning, queer, asexual and more (LGBTIQA+) people and others of diverse genders and sexualities, their families and communities.

They provide a broad range of specialised services for young people 12-25 including housing, mental health, counselling and social support. For adults they provide social support and for people of all ages they offer telephone support and webchat as the NSW provider for the national QLife project. They also offer inclusivity training and consulting for organisations and service providers across most sectors.

This project has been led by young people from the beginning, creating the project name 'Rainbow Talk' and designing the questions and consultation process.

Prior to commencing this project, all of the ACYP team undertook Twenty10's Inclusivity Training to ensure that this project was conducted in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Following this, a workshop was held in November 2021 with 23 young people to discuss and develop the project plan and consultation questions. This workshop identified some of the barriers that the project may encounter and some solutions as to how to ensure the project was appealing, engaging and inclusive.

**Consultation:
Rainbow Talks
Project cont.**

Once the project plan and consultation questions had been developed, the Advocate and their team attended Fair Day to promote the project and begin getting registrations for the consultations. Fair Day is an annual celebration to mark the start of the Mardi Gras Festival.

In obtaining registrations, the Advocate also reached out to schools and service providers across their network.

At the close of the reporting period, the Advocate had consulted with 208 young people from across NSW, with consultations continuing into the 2022/23 reporting period.

The findings from these consultations will be collated into a report to be released in late 2022.

Consultation: COVID-19

ACYP continued to hear from and provide communication to children and young people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The following research and consultation activities were conducted as a response to the pandemic both to hear from children and young people and share information and resources with them.

COVID-19 Tracking Survey

Objectives

ACYP conducted a series of tracking surveys, supported by SEC Newgate Research, throughout the pandemic in order to understand the experiences of young people and share their views and recommendations with key decision makers across government.

Methodology

Online, quantitative survey among those aged 12-24.

The survey began in 2020 and was reinstated for a further four waves during the lockdown period in 2021. While the majority of questions remained the same across the two reporting periods, there were slight changes to address emerging issues and changes to public health orders throughout the pandemic – such as access to vaccinations and varied restrictions based on location.

Sample sizes and fieldwork dates for each wave are outlined below. The margin of error for each wave was between +/- 4.3-4.4% at a 95% confidence interval. Data were weighted to ABS population data.

2021 Tracking Survey

1. 6 – 15 August: n=401
2. 30 August – 2 September: n=402
3. 13 – 20 September: n=400
4. 5 – 12 November: n=400

Overview of Findings

As these surveys were conducted over a period of several months, the findings included below should be considered an overview of some of the experiences young people reported rather than a comprehensive summary.

Consultation: COVID-19 cont.

Young people struggled throughout the pandemic, in ways that were similar to reported findings about the adult population. They experienced high frequency of negative emotions and reported poorer-than-usual mental health.

Groups who recorded poorer results throughout the pandemic – such as feeling more negative about life, greater concern about COVID and its various impacts and poorer wellbeing scores, were girls and young women, those who spoke a language other than English at home, and unsurprisingly, those who lived in areas with more restrictive public health orders. Around a third of young women and girls reported scores on a diagnostic tool that indicated they were experiencing high levels of psychological distress. Results were slightly lower but still high for young boys and men with roughly 20-25% recording concerning scores.

Key concerns throughout the study related to members of their immediate family contracting the virus, the impact on their education, uncertainty, impact on the ability to socialise, the economic impact and impact on their mental health. Many also lost income during the pandemic – 49% of young people who live independently lost income – such as through working reduced hours – and 35% lost their job entirely. This was higher among those who spoke a language other than English and those who lived in Sydney.

Young people also provided feedback on the Government response to the pandemic, including in terms of communications, their preferred methods of hearing information and their relative trust of different information sources.

Most young people were positive about the vaccine and were eager to access it when it became available to them. However, there were concerns from some about whether it had been appropriately tested, was safe for young people, and the potential for side effects. Parents' concerns about vaccination were also a key factor for some.

Actions:

- Findings were circulated to Departmental and Ministerial representatives as issues of relevance arose.
- Findings were also used to complement data collected by the NSW Department of Customer Service, through a similar tracking survey they conducted with the adult population of NSW.

Consultation: COVID-19 cont.

- Insights were also incorporated into the development of the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-24* and were used to inform the ongoing work of ACYP throughout the pandemic.

ACYP and Department of Student Voices in Education and School (DOVES) Return to School Surveys 2021

Objectives

To understand students' experiences of learning from home and their expectations and experiences of returning to school after lockdown. While there was overlap between the content of these surveys, the time difference meant that both yielded meaningful results about students' experiences before returning to school and shortly afterward.

Methodology

Online, quantitative survey among current school students.

ACYP conducted two surveys that were sent out through its networks and hosted on the Survey Monkey platform. This was a convenience sample with respondents recruited through our existing networks and promoted by other organisations and data should be interpreted through this lens.

- The first survey was developed by ACYP, the second was developed by ACYP in collaboration with the Minister for Education's DOVES group.
- The ACYP survey ran from 12 – 18 October 2021 and captured the views of n=713 young people aged 12-19.
- The ACYP and DOVES survey ran from 9 - 15 November 2021 and captured the views of n=2,023 young people aged 12-19 years.

Overview of Findings

While most young people were eager for life to return to 'normal' after the pandemic, many were also able to adapt to the stressors of the pandemic, lockdowns and learning from home. They raised concerns about falling behind, being unable to focus, and difficulty learning new concepts during the lockdown.

Students faced difficulties with accessing instructions and feedback from teachers, and there were mixed experiences of the use of technology.

Consultation: COVID-19 cont.

There were few changes that students felt should be retained after lockdown, with the exception that some appreciated the additional flexibility in how they were able to manage their time. This included being able to learn independently, take breaks when needed and setting aside time to manage their wellbeing.

While two thirds were comfortable to return to school, a considerable group (15%) remained somewhat or very uncomfortable about returning to school at that time. Students' concerns related to lack of motivation for school work; difficulty wearing masks; frustration with the timing of exams and end of year assessments – and associated with this, a lack of flexibility and consideration from schools about that timing.

Concerns about the workload in returning to school were central – with many feeling overwhelmed with managing the transition back to school, catching up on missed work, and being faced with an increased workload as teachers also attempted to account for lost time.

Students' recommendations were closely related to their experiences of wellbeing and their interactions with and expectations from teachers. They spoke about the need to reduce the workload, remove academic pressure and improve relationships with teachers. They also recommended schools set aside time to support students in the transition back to 'normal' life, promoting their wellbeing through student support groups, increased counselling, and not attempting to step straight back into a busy study period.

Actions

Findings from both surveys were circulated to relevant Departmental and Ministerial representatives, particularly the Minister for Education. They were also used to shape information provided to students upon their return to school and inform the ongoing work of ACYP related to the pandemic.

COVID Consultations

Objectives

To understand the experiences of young people during the COVID-19 lockdowns, with particular focus on school students in LGAs of concern, that is, those LGAs experiencing tighter restrictions due to greater transmission of COVID in those areas.

Consultation: COVID-19 cont.

Methodology

Online focus groups with children and young people.

ACYP conducted video focus groups via zoom, mostly with school students in the LGAs of concern. Schools were invited to participate through the NSW Department of Education. Given the lockdowns began partway through existing consultations related to the Strategic Plan, some findings were included from those consultations where it was appropriate to ask about COVID lockdowns.

Between 2 August and 14 September 2021, ACYP conducted 47 focus groups, with a total of 516 young people (this figure includes 58 young people in seven groups who had been involved in Strategic Plan consultations but who answered questions about COVID).

Students were recruited to participate through their schools and recruitment approach varied based on the unique context of each school. For the most part, students were invited to participate in lieu of a regular class group. This allowed recruitment from a broad range of diverse backgrounds reflected in the student body, as opposed to a less representative group of student leaders.

To supplement these findings, ACYP developed the ACYP100, a group of approximately 100 students who signed up to answer questions about their experiences of COVID throughout the lockdowns. Students were sent a short email survey and given the opportunity to provide feedback and advice. There were nine waves of this study, with findings incorporated into weekly consultation reports.

Overview of Findings

This was an iterative research project and findings were reported on a weekly basis. The following provides a high-level overview of findings rather than summary of changes between reporting periods.

Unsurprisingly, the sense of social isolation and separation from friends was an ongoing issue for participants, alongside concerns about mental health.

**Consultation:
COVID-19 cont.**

They frequently reported low motivation, fatigue, and an ongoing sense of monotony. Common descriptions of their experience included feeling deflated and anxious. As restrictions began to ease, young people were most commonly looking forward to seeing friends and family members.

Young people's experiences of the lockdown period in 2021 were also dominated by a sense of uncertainty and frustration with constantly changing public health orders (PHOs). These consultations focused on the LGAs of concern in Sydney, where PHOs were updated frequently in line with the evolving issues. Those who spoke a language other than English at home played a dual role of interpreting the PHOs and communicating them to other family members who did not speak English.

An emerging issue throughout the consultations was a sense of social division between the West/South-West of Sydney and the Eastern Suburbs, particularly Bondi. This was fuelled by comparisons raised in media but reflected an existing sense of "us vs. them". They spoke about the relative freedom some citizens experienced, compared to a feeling of harsh over-policing in their communities. For example, they pointed to media images of beachgoers without masks, compared to anecdotes of family and friends being fined for what they felt were minor infringements such as momentarily shifting down a mask they were wearing to speak more clearly over the phone.

Students spoke about the difficulties they faced with learning from home. This included stress, difficulty managing the workload, difficulty communicating with teachers and difficulty managing their time. Some also discussed the difficulties of poor or slow internet access, balancing download speeds when siblings or parents were also using the internet, and a lack of privacy or space to focus while others were at home. Those who did not have siblings and had parents who worked in essential roles spoke about the isolation of learning from home by themselves throughout the day. Those taking practical subjects were frustrated at their inability to learn from home at all.

HSC students during this time expressed a great deal of anger related to indecision and lack of clarity about how the HSC exams would be conducted, as well as anger that the results would be unfair, given the variation in experiences of PHOs across NSW.

Consultation: COVID-19 cont.

Many felt it was unrealistic and unfair that the Government appeared prepared to continue the HSC exams without adapting to the pandemic.

Some young people also spoke about their experiences of work during the lockdown, with many maintaining casual jobs that were considered essential such as in hospitality and essential retail. They spoke about the burden of interacting with customers both in terms of the risk of contracting the virus and managing difficult customers.

Actions

- Weekly summaries of findings were circulated to the COVID crisis response team through colleagues at Multicultural NSW, who were managing community sentiment feedback.
- Findings were also provided on a weekly basis to the Department of Education and Minister for Education.
- In addition, insights from these consultations were circulated to Departmental and Ministerial representatives as issues of relevance arose.
- Findings have also shaped the ongoing work of ACYP in responding to the pandemic and understanding students' experiences of remote learning and coping during crisis.
- Supported and facilitated the translation of approved community messaging for publication online through The Daily Aus media platform, which assisted in important health messaging reaching a potential 395,000 members of the community.
- Facilitated key government representatives including the then Premier Ms Gladys Berejiklian, Dr Kerry Chant, NSW Chief Health Officer, and the Hon Victor Dominello Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government to participate in online interviews with The Daily Aus about COVID related messaging.

**Consultation:
COVID-19 cont.**

COVID-19 Forums

Objective

To provide information about COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns directly to young people, to answer their questions, and to provide a forum for immediate feedback to key decision makers in the Department of Education and Ministry of Health.

Approach

ACYP conducted a series of youth forums in collaboration with Multicultural NSW, Ministry of Health and with the Department of Education.

There were three forums during 2021 and a further forum in 2022 to provide advice around the return to school.

***COVID Forum with Multicultural NSW held
on Wednesday, 28 July 2021***

Registrations were not required and so it is difficult to capture detail of the forums' reach, however, over 400 young people attended.

Speakers included:

- The Hon. Alister Henskens MP, then Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services;
- The Hon. Natalie Ward MLC, then Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans;
- Gelina Talbot, then Assistant Commissioner, Capability, Performance and Youth Command, NSW Police;
- Dr. Jan Fizzell, Senior Medical Advisor, NSW Health; and
- Ms Deb Summerhayes, Executive Director, School Performance, Department of Education.

**Consultation:
COVID-19 cont.**

***Impacts of COVID on Mental Health and Education
held on Wednesday, 25 August 2021***

Registrations

259 young people

Speakers included:

- The Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC, then Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women;
- The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning; and
- Ms Deb Summerhayes, Executive Director, School Performance, Department of Education.

***COVID Q&A with Dr Kerry Chant on
Monday, 6 December 2021***

Registrations

148 young people

Dr Kerry Chant, NSW Chief Health Officer answered questions submitted by young people.

Back to School Forum on Monday, 31 January 2022

Registrations were not required and so it is difficult to capture detail of the forums' reach, however, over 100 young people attended.

Speakers included:

- Dr Kerry Chant, NSW Chief Health Officer;
- Ms Deb Summerhayes, Executive Director School Performance, Department of Education; and
- Representatives from the Youth Advisory Council and the Minister's DOVES council.

Consultation: COVID-19 cont.

Social Media Messaging

Throughout the pandemic, ACYP worked with NSW Health to ensure the messaging provided by ACYP's social media platforms and to its network was consistent with NSW Health information, while also ensuring health content was accessible for young people aged 24 years or younger.

This involved collaborating on social media tiles and providing advice to Health around communications to young people via social media.

Spotify Playlist

ACYP developed the Spotify Playlist project in response to requests from young people for activities and ways to engage that did not involve video conferencing.

- During the pandemic, most of the activities offered to them were conducted via Zoom, so while Spotify does require engagement with technology, it also provided a way to engage with others without direct screen time.
- The Advocate held a random draw for ten participants to win a \$50 ICONIC Voucher, which was conducted during Children's Week 2021.
- In total, 784 young people aged 12-24 submitted songs for the playlist.
- It has 236 'likes' on Spotify and over 21 hours of music.
- The Young People's Choice playlist is now available and [can be accessed here](#).

Consultation: The Impact of Bullying

The Advocate convened a student round table to discuss bullying and cyberbullying on 15 June 2021. This was a key outcome of an earlier round table conducted by The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Objectives

Consult with students in detail about bullying, cyberbullying and test current approaches to address these issues in schools and online.

Methodology

Three-hour qualitative consultation forum with 20 students.

The round table was run both in person, for metropolitan students, and online for students across regional and rural areas of NSW. Participants were recruited through existing youth councils, such as the NSW Youth Advisory Council, the DOVES Council, and the Regional Youth Taskforce.

Representatives from the Department of Education, the Office of the Minister for Education and Early Learning, and the Office of the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government observed the round table. The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and The Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading, participated and heard directly from students on these issues.

Students were not recruited based on their experiences of bullying and were not asked to explore their personal experiences in this forum to ensure a trauma-informed practice. The round table approach was selected to ensure a clear channel of communication between the Ministers and students and allowed the students to discuss anti-bullying interventions with a wider lens, rather than anchored in one specific type of bullying experience or intervention. Where they felt comfortable, some students offered examples of their experiences and related these to the broader ideas.

The group was diverse and included students who were Aboriginal, were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, identified as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community and attended government and non-government schools.

Consultation: The Impact of Bullying cont.

Overview of Findings

Students called for education about bullying to be more tailored to their needs, noting that education about bullying appeared to be delivered too late for the issues they were experiencing – such as cyberbullying and sexting. They felt it was important to understand how to engage well online, rather than to simply tell a young person to disengage from the online world if they experienced bullying there. They also wanted bullying education to be delivered in a more engaging and relevant way, such as delivered through an external presenter or peer led groups. They felt this should supplement teaching in classrooms rather than replace it.

Alongside education, students felt support was essential, both for those who were victims of bullying and those who had engaged in bullying behaviour. They spoke to the importance of mental health support and increased mental health literacy for students and teachers.

Students discussed teacher intervention in bullying in some detail. They held in tension their concerns that involving a teacher might make a situation worse, as well as their expectation that teachers should intervene when bullying is brought to their attention. While students continue to seek support from peers as their initial response to bullying, they felt teachers should be trained to understand how to step into a situation to resolve it well, without either exacerbating an issue or tacitly permitting abusive behaviour. For instance, some spoke about experiences of ‘sitting down with a bully’ – a restorative practice approach. While they felt restorative practices were ideal in theory, students felt they were poorly executed by teachers.

In discussing cyberbullying, students provided advice for social media companies about regulating and removing abusive content from their platforms, such as through the use of filters, monitoring and the ability to adjust individual settings. They also felt there were opportunities for media platforms to promote positive behaviour and anti-bullying content online through targeted advertising campaigns.

**Consultation:
The Impact
of Bullying cont.**

Students also discussed competing ideas of accountability and privacy. They explored the tension that even though they felt there were reasons to be wary of how they use social media platforms, that it was not a reasonable option to simply disengage from them. Social media platforms are an important way of engaging for many students.

Actions:

- Findings and recommendations were circulated to the Department, Ministerial representatives and key stakeholders who were engaged in the Minister for Education and Early Learning's first round table. ACYP also presented findings to the Department of Education and discussed opportunities to implement the recommendations students had made.
- At the close of this reporting period, ACYP was in the process of working with social media platforms about how to incorporate young peoples' perspectives in their decision-making.

Submissions

Another core mandate of the Advocate's work is 'to make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people.'

Using the insights gathered from their consultations and polling, the Advocate combines this with desktop research and best practice case studies to form evidence-based recommendations when developing their submissions. This work brings the voices of children and young people directly to decision makers combined with specific recommendations from both children and young people and ACYP.

These submissions may be in response to formal invitations from Parliamentary Committees at both the State and Federal level, inquiries that the Advocate becomes aware of in the course of their work or submissions through the eCabinet Process.

eCabinet is a secure platform to support Cabinet and Cabinet committee processes. It enables government agencies and Ministers' offices access to papers securely and facilitates the workflow system for Cabinet, Cabinet Committee and Executive Council meetings. It is the repository for all official Cabinet records.

Where appropriate these submissions and appearances are done in conjunction with other key stakeholders.

Within this reporting period, the Advocate made formal submissions to:

- NSW Inquiry on Options to Improve Access to Existing and Alternative Accommodation to Address the Social Housing Shortage; and
- NSW Independent Flood Inquiry.

The Advocate also appeared before the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety to discuss their submission made in the previous reporting period for the Inquiry into Support for Rural and Regional Learner Drivers.

Within the reporting period, the Advocate made approximately 80 submissions through the eCabinet process.

The Advocate provided feedback in the form of correspondence to the following:

- The National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children;
- The Families is Culture Legislation Review; and
- The Department of Communities and Justice Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Plan and Action Plan.

NSW Inquiry on Options to Improve Access to Existing and Alternative Accommodation to Address the Social Housing Shortage

ACYP provided a short submission to the NSW Inquiry into Options to Improve Access to Existing and Alternative Accommodation to Address the Social Housing Shortage. ACYP's submission drew from consultations conducted in late 2016 with 60 young people aged 13-24 who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These were supplemented by more recent, broader consultations. These were not specific to housing and homelessness, rather, reflect the ideas mentioned when young people raised these issues unprompted.

ACYP's submission highlighted:

- The importance of early intervention and wraparound supports for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
- The importance of stability and suitability of housing, including a variety of housing options to support children and young people;
- The need for greater awareness and availability of safe crisis and emergency support accommodation for young people;
- The need for improved communication about how to access services;
- The need for greater support to transition to independence and reconnect with family, where appropriate;
- The need for greater support for young people exiting the OOH and Youth Justice system to find stable accommodation; and
- The need for greater supports to enter the private housing market.

The submission canvassed; opportunities to improve access to and expand existing and alternative accommodation models for children and young people in NSW; additional opportunities for partnership between the NSW Government, community sector and real estate industry; and purpose-built alternative accommodation for young people.

Based on these findings the following recommendations were made:

- Increase investment in early intervention, including Community of Schools and Services (COSS) models that identify young people at risk of homelessness before they reach crisis point.
- Increase investment in long-term supported accommodation for children and young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
- Convene an expert, multi-agency panel for children and young people who 'over-stay' in Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) beyond the short-term to seek their input and develop accommodation plans in their best interests, including the option to remain in the SHS for longer than three months to allow them to achieve stability.
- Increase the availability of services to children and young people after hours and on weekends (i.e. a 24/7 drop-in centre in Sydney).
- Increase awareness of housing and other support services available to children and young people using social media, print advertisements and through schools.
- Greater support for young people to navigate the rental market, and ensure they are prepared to enter the private rental housing market and independent living.
- Greater investment in family support programs, to allow children and young people to reconcile with their families, while maintaining their safety.
- Develop an implementation plan for the 'No Exits from Government Services into Homelessness Framework' – to ensure young people exiting Out-of-Home Care and the justice system are set up for success.
- Expand funding for medium-term transitional services, such as youth foyers, that include wraparound support based on models designed and proven to work with young people.
- Seek to enhance partnerships between community, government and business sectors, with a focus on reducing the barriers to exploring and utilising vacant or available properties (often referred to as meanwhile use) and other innovative approaches.
- Explore opportunities to support the development of purpose-built alternative accommodation for young people.
- Engage with not-for-profit real estate agencies to determine opportunities to support the development of the sector, including a focus on increasing pathways for young people.
- Work in partnership with the Real Estate Institute to develop greater awareness and knowledge about Rent Choice products which are available for young people.
- Continue to support the development and evaluation of Homeshare models in NSW, with a focus on increasing young people's access to affordable housing.

At the close of the reporting period, the Committee was in deliberations over their final report.

NSW Independent Flood Inquiry

In early 2022, Northern NSW started experiencing storms and intense rainfall, leading to a number of devastating flood events.

Part of the NSW Government response was to commission an independent expert inquiry into the 'preparation for, cause of, response to and recovery from' these flooding events.

This Inquiry was led by Professor Mary O'Kane AC and Mr Michael Fuller APM.

Drawing on the work, the Advocate undertook for the [*Children and Young People's Experience of Disaster Report*](#), ACYP formed a submission to this inquiry.

This report gave children and young people a platform to inform decision makers and service providers about how to best continue to support their needs before, during and after a disaster. The report also highlights the ways in which children and young people want to be included in the planning and implementation of solutions that relate to disaster preparedness and recovery.

The [*Submission*](#) highlighted;

- The ongoing challenges to mental health and the importance of easy and equitable access to services;
- The necessity for timely and accurate information;
- The role that Schools can have in being repurposed as evacuation centres;
- The lack of education to children and young people about disaster events;
- Greater provision for school supports during and after a disaster event;
- The challenges around housing and accommodation in the immediate, short, medium and longer term;
- The fracturing and rebuilding of interpersonal relationships during and post disaster events;
- The nature of community cohesion in successful community recovery; and
- The critical need for children and young people to have a voice in all stages of disaster preparation and recovery.

In addition to the submission, the Advocate also travelled to the flood affected regions to meet with children and young people and service providers to gain a better understanding of their needs.

At the close of the reporting period, the Independent Inquiry was finalising their report for an expected release of July 2022.

NSW Inquiry into Support for Rural and Regional Learner Drivers

In December 2021, the Advocate was invited to appear before the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety to discuss their submission from the previous reporting period on Support for Rural and Regional Learner Drivers. The Advocate appeared alongside Ms Kate Munro, Chief Executive Officer Youth Action NSW and Mr Dominic Teakle, Chief Executive Officer Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) NSW.

Drawing upon their consultation data, the Advocate's submission canvasses some of the challenges facing rural and regional learner drivers, specifically;

- Costs associated with obtaining a driver's licence;
- Requirement to complete 120 hours;
- Access to a supervised driver;
- Access to an appropriately insured vehicle
- Access to required 100 points of identification; and
- Access to Driving Courses.

The submission also draws upon some current best practice examples for community-based programs that seek to address some of these challenges, such as;

- Western Riverina Community School Road Safety Project; and
- Driving Change and Driver Licensing Access Program.

Based on these barriers and case studies, the Submission makes the following recommendations;

- Expanding the support services available to help children and young people with a broad range of needs including improving access to driver licensing programs.
- Ensuring that driver licensing programs are adequately resourced to provide comprehensive end-to-end support

for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people to obtain their driver licences, particularly those in rural and regional areas.

- Providing additional resources for young people to reduce barriers and navigate the licence process. This may include the development of initiatives aimed at reducing the costs associated with learning to drive, particularly in rural and regional areas.
- Improving access to the Safe Driver Course for disadvantaged young learner drivers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing the course for free.
- Department of Customer Services, through Service NSW, continue to partner with schools and community organisations within regional and rural NSW to provide assistance with ensuring young people have access to the 100 points of identification required to obtain a driver's permit.

The Committee hearing discussed many of these issues and identified further barriers, such as; lower literacy and numeracy rates and the different nature of driving compared with metropolitan drivers as well as the potential for greater use of technology, such as driver simulators in the learning stages.

At the close of the reporting period, the Committee was finalising their report.

Response to Recommendations



The Advocate's enabling legislation empowers them to table any report or submission directly to the NSW Parliament, which would require the Government of the day to formally respond to the recommendations contained within. In this reporting period, the Advocate did not table any report or submission requiring a response.

At the close of the reporting period, the Advocate is awaiting the respective Committee Reports from the Inquiry into Support for Regional and Rural Drivers and NSW Inquiry on Options to Improve Access to Existing and Alternative Accommodation to Address the Social Housing Shortage.

However, the Advocate continues to work with each of the relevant Departments and organisations around implementing the recommendations specific to their remit.

NSW Independent Flood Inquiry

Following the findings and recommendations from the *Children and Young People's Experience of Disaster Report* and *Submission to the NSW Independent Flood Inquiry*, the Advocate is working closely with Resilience NSW to develop a youth focused Recovery Support Service, as part of the Natural Disaster Recovery Support Service, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Government.

This Service would see up to five dedicated youth specialists who provide age-appropriate one-on-one support for young people affected by the March 2022 floods across Northern NSW. Under the model, the youth focused Recovery Support Services will partner with other local Recovery Support Services providers that are working with the families, to provide tailored support to children and young people in the household. It will support young clients with their mental health, wellbeing and recovery by connecting them, and supporting them, into the relevant services that are available.

At the close of the reporting period, the funding request was being considered by Resilience NSW.

Advocate's Recommendations for Changes in the Laws of the State, or for Administrative Action

During this reporting period, the Advocate made no recommendations to changes in the laws of the State or for administrative action.

Special Inquiries

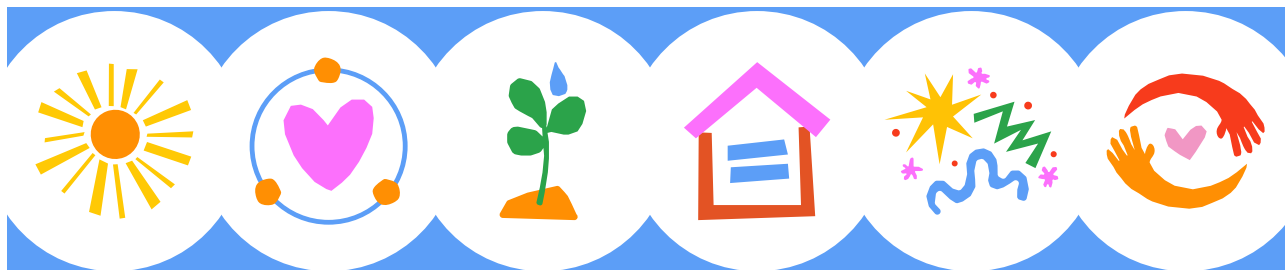
Part 5 of their Act, empowers the Advocate to establish a special inquiry into a specific matter affecting children or young people, after having received approval from their Ministers or on the Minister's own initiative. During the reporting period, neither the Advocate nor their Ministers requested any special inquiry be undertaken.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024

Development of the Plan



Under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act), the Advocate is required to ‘prepare, in consultation with the relevant Minister(s), a three-year strategic plan for children and young people in NSW’. The *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024* (the Plan) is the second whole-of-government plan for all children and young people in NSW.

Launched in April 2022 and informed by the voices of children and young people across NSW, this Plan brings together initiatives undertaken across government under six core commitment areas. Grounded in the articulated needs and hopes of children and young people, the goal of this Plan is to create a future where all children and young people have the supports they need to thrive.

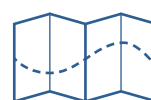
The focus of the Plan is to;



Elevate the voices of children and young people.



Identify the key issues and needs that children and young people have articulated and provide them with an opportunity to influence the solutions.

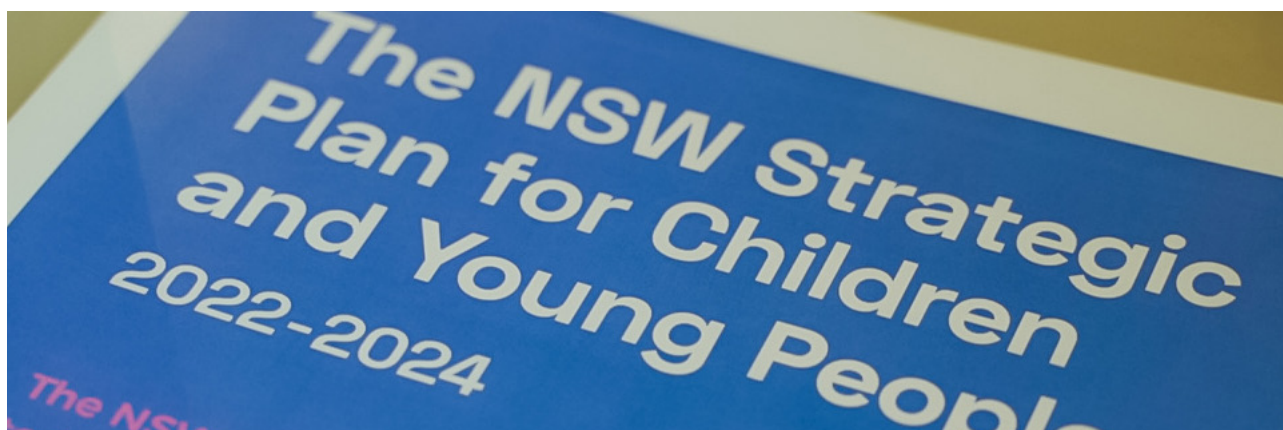


Provide a roadmap that responds to their stated needs by identifying relevant Government priorities and initiatives.

In preparation for the development of the Plan, the Advocate conducted a review of *The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2016-2019*, which was tabled in Parliament in May 2021. Overall, the review process found that significant and meaningful change had been made over the course of the previous plan to support the needs of children and young people across NSW.

The review process allowed the Advocate to consider where positive changes had occurred and continued areas for improvement in the future. Findings from that process shaped the development of *The Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*.

Since 2015, the Advocate has heard from over 41,000 children and young people — through face-to-face consultations, surveys and other engagement activities. This has included speaking to more than 12,300 children and young people in face-to-face consultations and engaging with over 28,700 through surveys and other participation activities. In the 12 months leading up to the Plan's launch, the Advocate engaged with over 5,000 children and young people. Collectively, all of these voices have informed the development of *The Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*.



In order to develop the Plan, ACYP began by undertaking a macro-analysis of existing consultation data. In undertaking this analysis, ACYP considered what issues had remained important for children and young people over this period and what new issues had emerged. From this initial macro-analysis, ACYP synthesised what we heard from children and young people into six core themes.

To further inform the development of the Plan, ACYP consulted with key stakeholders from across both the government and the non-government sector. This involved holding a series of online forums in July 2021 which were aimed at working collaboratively to determine initiatives and actions that responded to the key focus areas that children and young people had identified. Stakeholders were also offered the opportunity to provide written feedback on the Plan framework and propose initiatives for incorporation.

ACYP also undertook online and face-to-face consultations with children and young people to confirm the six draft commitment areas accurately reflected their needs and views. These consultations took place in July and August 2021 through a series of focus groups with children and young people, who ranged in age from 5-24 years old and were from both metropolitan and regional/rural areas. Findings from these consultations and the macro-analysis have been included throughout the Plan.

The following six commitment areas form the framework for the Plan:

Hope for the Future

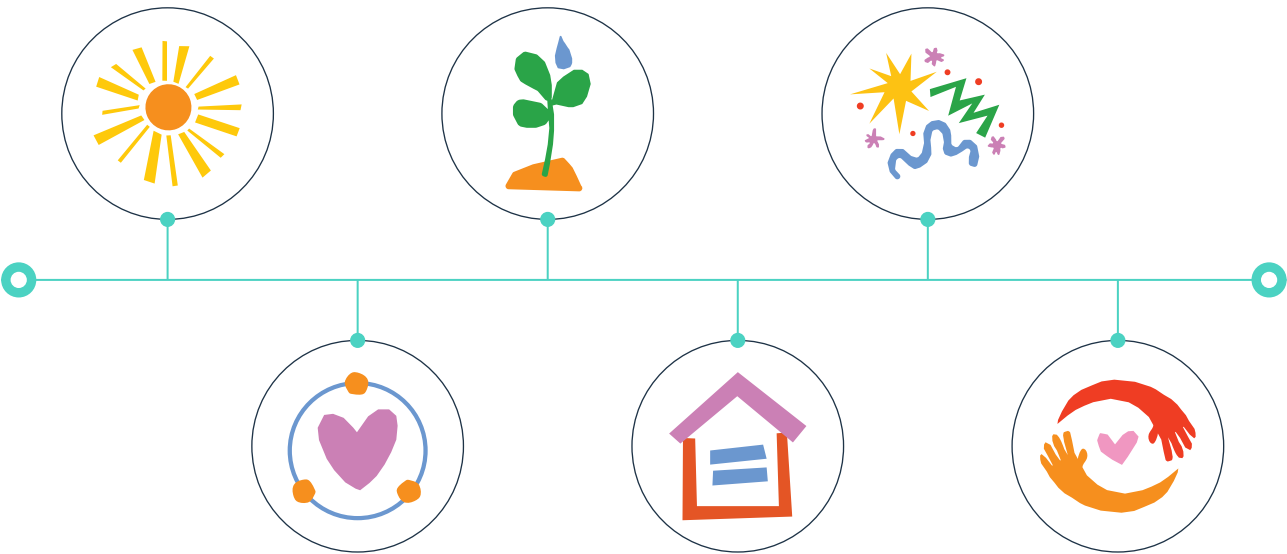
Children and young people's individual learning and interests are fostered through education training and skills development which supports them to grow and prepares them for their future. They are supported to be independent, engage in society and to join the workforce.

Health and Wellbeing

Children and young people's mental, physical and emotional health is nurtured and supported to enable them to flourish.

Environments for Joy and Fun

Children and young people have spaces and opportunities to engage in activities for recreation and leisure.



Love, Connection and Safety

Children and young people feel safe, loved and nurtured. They can connect and build friendships with others. They feel that they belong to a wider community, social or cultural group. They are free from neglect, abuse and violence.

A Good Standard of Living

Children and young people are provided with the necessities they need to thrive. Children and young people do not live in poverty and are provided with adequate services and resources to operate in society.

Respect and Acceptance

Children and young people feel respected, accepted and included in society. They are part of a community that supports them to be proud of their culture, diversity and individual identity. They are free from discrimination, racism and structural violence.

In addition to these six commitment areas, there are also three core principles that underpin the Plan:

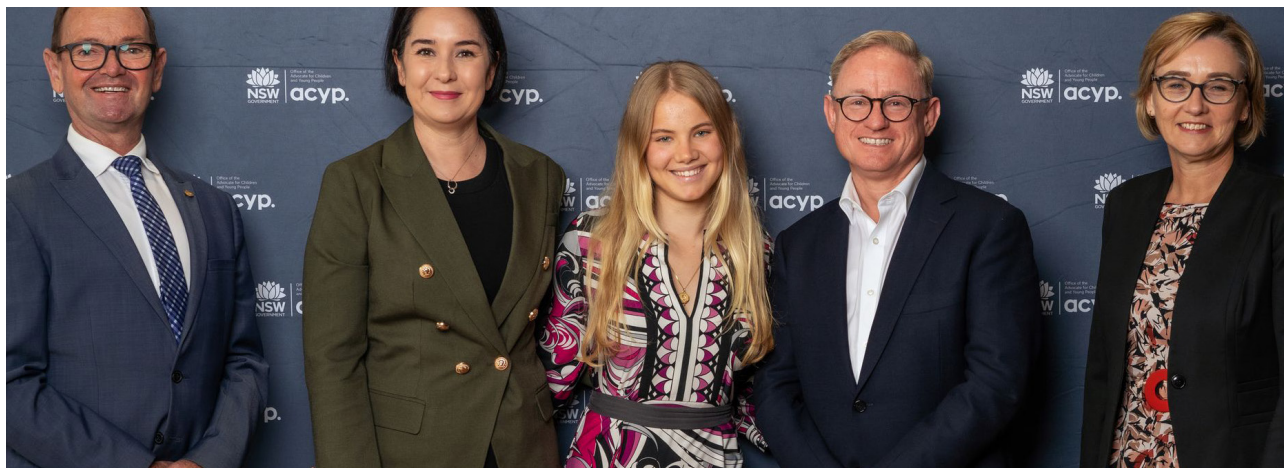


Each commitment area in the Plan includes a series of corresponding priority areas for action, under which sit a series of goals. Progress against the goals will be tracked by a series of indicators. These have been drawn from a combination of publicly available data sets and ACYP surveys. In addition to the indicators linked to each goal, ACYP has developed a survey instrument to measure children and young people's perceptions of each commitment. The baseline 2021 Strategic Plan Survey involved a 15-minute online survey with children and young people in NSW aged 10 to 24 years.

ACYP will monitor and track changes in each of the commitments and indicators through a series of annual progress reports. Regular tracking will allow ACYP to be responsive to the changing and emerging needs of children and young people.

In addition, ACYP will focus on two commitment areas for each calendar year and work to elevate the voices of children and young people on the related priority areas throughout that period.

Launch of the Plan



Following the development process, the Plan was tabled in NSW Parliament by the relevant Ministers. The Plan was then publicly launched in April 2022 at an event held at Julia Reserve Youth and Community Centre in Camden.

The event commenced with a moving Acknowledgement of Country from former Youth Advisory Council Member, Hamani Tanginoa a proud Wiradjuri, Gooreng Gooreng, and Tongan young person.

The Launch was hosted by Members of the 2021/2022 Youth Advisory Council who were integral in the development of the Plan, Mr Shahim Shabbir and Chairperson Lua Pellegrini, who spoke of the central role children and young people will continue to hold as the Plan progresses.

The event was attended by Members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People including the Chairperson and Local Member, Mr Peter Sidgreaves MP who spoke of the important role the Committee had in supporting the Plan, and Ms Jodie Harrison MP. The Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, Minister for Regional Youth, Aboriginal Affairs and the Arts spoke as one of the Ministers responsible for the Plan.

The Hon. John Ajaka, who was key to the establishment of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People in 2015, also attended the launch.

The event concluded with an address by the Advocate for Children and Young People, who outlined the importance of the Plan not just for their office, but for all individuals and organisations who work with and for children and young people. The Advocate highlighted the importance of continuing to elevate children and young people's voices as we work towards progress under the Plan's six commitment areas.

[Click here for more information about the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024.](#)

Initiatives

Throughout the reporting period, the Advocate undertakes a number of initiatives outside of consultations to increase the engagement and participation of children and young people and engage with key stakeholders across Government and non-government organisations.

Within this reporting period, these initiatives included:



Children's
Week 2021



Voices of Change
Breakfast



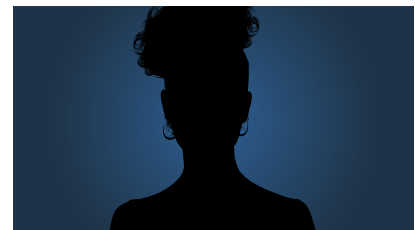
Internships and Work
Experience Program



NSW Youth
Advisory Council



Youth Week
2022



Female Change
Makers and Leaders
in NSW



Life Skills



Youth Justice

Children's Week 2021

Each year Children's Week is marked in Australia in the third week of October to acknowledge Australia ratifying the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* in 1990. Children's Week is an opportunity for children to celebrate and for adults to reflect on ensuring that we are doing everything in our power to ensure that children's rights are upheld and that all children have the opportunity to thrive.

In 2021, Children's Week was held between 23 October and 31 October. The theme was based on Article 15 of the UNCRC - Children have the right to choose their own friends and safely connect with others.

To introduce Children's Week and the celebration that would take place during that week, the Advocate had the opportunity to record a message from Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales and Julie Hourigan-Ruse Chairperson of the NSW Children's Week Council.

As a result of Public Health Orders for COVID-19, Children's Week 2021 looked different from previous years, as we were unable to meet together. As a result, the Advocate partnered with the Australian Children's Laureate 2021-2022 Ursula Dubosansky to develop an online story time.

The Children's Laureate is an initiative developed by the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation. Their role is to promote the transformational power of reading, creativity and story in the lives of young Australians. They also act as an ambassador for Australian children's literature nationally and internationally.





The Advocate and the Children's Laureate discussed the importance of reading, stories and the process of writing. During the story time, Ursula read her book, *The March of Ants*. It tells the story of a colony of ants heading off on an important journey, each one bringing something useful for the long journey ahead. It is a story of hope, heart and the power of reading.

To celebrate Children's Week, the Advocate invited children from across NSW to come together and create uplifting messages to share with their local communities. The children that participated created artworks and videos to tell us what love, connection and safety means to them and how they have fun and connect with their friends and communities.

Creative works were sent in by schools, playgroups, childcare centres and kindergartens from across fifteen NSW electorates including; Wollongong, Bega, Monaro, Maroubra, Canterbury, Lakemba, Hornsby, Cootamundra, Strathfield, Hawkesbury, Willoughby, Mt Druitt, Barwon, Clarence and Maitland. The Advocate shared the videos with Local Members and also produced a highlights video from all participating electorates across the State.

Voices of Change Breakfast



This event supports young change makers in NSW to bring their voice, work and experience to decision makers, policy makers and service providers in NSW and to explore how they can cooperate to bring about positive and lasting change for all children and young people in NSW.

Held at the Establishment Hotel on Wednesday, 15 December 2021, this event was hosted by Grace Rowe, a familiar face for viewers of ACYP's COVID-19 Health Videos with Dr Kerry Chant.

Grace is quickly becoming an active voice for young people appearing on the Today Show and hosting events for Women NSW. She also recently graduated with her communications degree at UTS, and is now working with an organisation called Stand Tall, which seeks to inspire hope in the younger generations through various events.

The event commenced with a Welcome to Country by Uncle Allan Murray. Followed by an address from the Advocate.

Next was a keynote address from 2021 Australian of the Year, Grace Tame.

Grace has become a powerful advocate and activist for fellow sexual assault survivors, helping them find a voice against society's imbalances of power, by lending her own voice to the #Letherspeak campaign created by Nina Funnell.

This address was followed by a Q&A session with Grace hosted by Zara Seidler, co-founder of the Daily Aus. Zara is a passionate advocate for media and political literacy in Australia, particularly amongst millennials and Gen Z.

Concluding the event was a panel discussion with young change makers, hosted by Sam Koslowski, co-founder of the Daily Aus. Sam is a passionate business leader, journalist, presenter and commentator.

Panel members included:

Madison de Rozario



Madison, is a three-time world champion para-athletics representative who recently competed at her fourth Paralympic Games at Tokyo 2020. Madison made history competing at her fourth Paralympics and becoming the Paralympic champion in the women's T54 marathon and T53 800m event – remarkably breaking both Paralympic records. She also claimed a bronze medal in the women's 1,500m T54 event.

Taje Fowler



A proud decedent of the Wurundjeri nation with family connection to the Wiradjuri nation with family in Narromine. Taje's dream is to see the young people she works with, grow up to achieve their goals and aspirations. Currently studying a Bachelor of Community and Social Development for Indigenous Communities, Taje one day hopes to work supporting youth in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

Shahim Shabbir



Shahim moved from Pakistan to Mount Druitt when he was younger. At 16, Shahim is very involved in his local Pakistani community and the wider community through campaigning for youth leadership, mental health awareness, and representing the views of young people to his wider community.

The panel members discussed how they saw themselves as 'Voices of Change' for NSW and what that meant to them and their communities. Each member discussed that to create real change in NSW, we have to embed a culture of inclusion and diversity in everything that we do. This may mean working to remove barriers that exclude children and young people having an equal voice and opportunity. Or, it may mean partnering and mentoring the young people in our communities to empower them to have a voice in the things that matter to them. Each panel member recognised the unique opportunities they had been given and encouraged those in attendance to commit to using their influence and platform to expand these opportunities to all children and young people across NSW.

As part of the follow-up to the event, the Advocate shared with guests the incredible example of Isobel Marshall. Isobel is a South Australian social entrepreneur and medical student who was named Young Australian of the Year for 2021. Isobel is the co-founder of Taboo Period Products, which was founded to eradicate global period poverty and improve menstrual wellbeing in Australia, with all company profits, education initiatives and advocacy efforts dedicated to eradicating period poverty through systematic and social change.

Internships and Work Experience Programs



In 2021, the Advocate hosted one young person for a one-week work experience placement.



CareerTrackers™

In 2021, the Advocate also partnered with CareerTrackers to host one young person for a 12-week internship.

CareerTrackers is a non-profit organisation that supports Indigenous University Students by linking them with employers to participate in a paid internship.

The Advocate has now committed to sponsor a young person through CareerTrackers each year.

NSW Youth Advisory Council



The *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* establishes the NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) of which the Advocate is an ex officio member. The Advocate is also responsible for providing secretariat support to the YAC.

Functions of the YAC are outlined in Part 3 Section 22 of the Act.

1. The Council has the following functions:
 - a. to advise the Minister and the Advocate on the planning, development, integration and implementation of government policies and programs concerning young persons,
 - b. to consult with young persons, community groups and government agencies on issues and policies concerning young persons,
 - c. to monitor and evaluate legislation and government policies and programs concerning young persons and to recommend changes if required,
 - d. to conduct forums, approved by the Minister, on issues of interest to young persons, and
 - e. to collect, analyse and provide the Minister and the Advocate with information on issues and policies concerning young persons.
2. Any advice given to the Minister by the Council may be given either at the request of the Minister or without any such request.
3. The Council must work co-operatively with the Advocate in exercising its functions.
4. The Council has such other functions as are conferred or imposed on it by or under this or any other Act.

This 12-member Council is integral in advising the Advocate and NSW Government on issues affecting children and young people in their communities. Recruited to represent the diversity of children and young people across the State, membership is open to all children and young people, aged 12 to 24, in NSW.

The Council meets regularly throughout the year, to advise government agencies, departments, ministers and community groups on their work and how the policies, programs, and resources being developed may impact on children and young people.

This group presents stakeholders with a unique perspective to gather feedback on the practicalities of a proposal.

Membership of the 2021-2022 Youth Advisory Council, their meeting schedule and details on the programs they were involved with is presented in their annual report, which is available on the Advocate's website.



Recruitment for the NSW Youth Advisory Council 2022-2023

Applications for the 2022-23 NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) were opened to children and young people aged 12- 24 years and residing in NSW on 31 January 2022 and closed on 13 March 2022. The application process was promoted through the Advocate's website, social media and a variety of newspapers and community radio.

In total, 496 applications were received, each of these being read by both the Advocate and members of the Participation Team. From these 496 applications, the Advocate and Participation Team determined a short list of 135 applicants.

An online information session was held on 2 May 2022 in which shortlisted applicants were addressed by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services, the Advocate for Children and Young People, and current members of the Youth Advisory Council.

During the session the applicants were given an insight in to:

- The work of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young people (ACYP);
- The role and responsibility of the NSW Youth Advisory Council;
- The work and highlights of the current NSW Youth Advisory Council; and
- A live Q&A session with the Advocate for Children and Young people and the chairperson of the 2021-22 NSW Youth Advisory Council.



Online group activity sessions were held across two days on 3 May and 4 May 2022, with 60 and 75 young people allocated to each day, based on age, to aid the selection process.

Participants were asked their views on consultation questions provided by several NSW Government departments (Department of Education, Transport for NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Customer Service, Department of Communities and Justice and the NSW Ombudsman).

Members of the ACYP office, NSW Government and NGO representatives observed the applicants while they discussed their thoughts and ideas as a group on what they would recommend to the departments. This helped to get a better understanding of individual personalities and group dynamics when making the final selection.

Following the online recruitment events and further analysis by ACYP, the Participation Team determined 34 candidates to take part in a one-day face-to-face recruitment event on Friday, 27 May 2022 at State Library of NSW in Sydney.

Participants took part in a mock Council meeting, a tour of the State Library of NSW and a Q&A panel with NSW Government and business representatives.

Following this in-person event, the Advocate made recommendations to their Ministers as to the 12 members to be appointed. The appointments then went through the NSW Cabinet process for endorsement.

At the close of the reporting period, the announcement of the 2022-23 Youth Advisory Council was imminent.

Youth Week 2022



Held annually, Youth Week is a week-long celebration organised by children and young people for children and young people.

Youth Week is an opportunity to:

- Share ideas;
- Attend live events;
- Have your voice heard on issues of concern to you;
- Showcase your talents;
- Celebrate your contribution to the community;
- Take part in competitions; and
- Have fun!

Conducted in partnership between the NSW Government and Local Councils, Youth Week 2022 was held from 4 to 14 April 2022.

The theme for Youth Week 2022 was *It's up to YOU'th*. To celebrate Youth Week, ACYP held face-to-face consultations with 75 young people aged 12-24 years in metropolitan Sydney, Tweed Heads and Eurobodalla.

Children and young people responded to questions provided by NSW Government Departments and agencies, including the Department of Education, NSW Ombudsman, and the Department of Communities and Justice.

Their responses were fed back to the Departments to inform their work.

During Youth Week, the Advocate also helped KYUP Project to facilitate a workshops with schools in Tweed. Founded by Mel Thomas, in 2013, in response to increasing incidents of child on child assaults and domestic violence, KYUP is helping to empower young people to find their voice and learn about positive relationships.

Representatives from ACYP also attended a harbor cruise hosted by Canterbury Bankstown Council.

During Youth Week there was over 300 events across NSW, with the Youth Week website receiving over 13,000 visits and 28,000 page views during the week to promote these opportunities.

In the lead up to Youth Week 2022, the Advocate engaged Sec Newgate Research to conduct a study to provide insights into a range of issues and key areas of interest to children and young people in NSW.

The 2022 Youth Week Survey was conducted to hear from children and young people around:

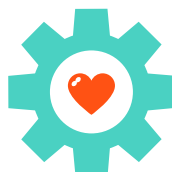
- How they feel about life in NSW including what they like about it, issues they face, and priorities for improvement;
- Engagement with activities and events under the Commitment Area 'Environments for Joy and Fun' from the Strategic Plan 2022-2024;
- Political literacy and engagement with the electoral system;
- How NSW is tracking against the principles of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024; and
- Preferences for communication about health initiatives.

The fieldwork was undertaken between 14-26 April, sampling 1,000 children and young people aged 10-24. Quota targets were set to provide a good mix of participants across demographic subgroups. Weighting was applied to the sample to match population benchmarks for age, gender and location, which was weighted to ABS data.

Some of the key findings from the poll were:



Young people are feeling significantly more positive about their life since the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.



Mental health remains a dominant issue of concern for young people. Unprompted, it was mentioned as the main issue facing young people in NSW.

36%

of young people were more likely to feel the NSW government is performing poorly rather than positively (29%) in understanding the needs of young people.

57%

of young people aged 17 years and younger said they were either 'very' or 'somewhat' interested in voting before they turn 18, if given the opportunity. Retrospectively, this was much lower for those over 18 with 45%.

91%

The vast majority of young people participate in some form of organised activity, such as sport (79%) or creative arts (54%) at least occasionally.

Results from this polling was shared with the relevant Government agencies and have been used to inform the Advocate's recent publications and submissions. Further, the findings from the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 related questions will form part of the annual tracking report conducted by the Advocate in evaluating the Plan.

Female Change Makers and Leaders in NSW



The Advocate hosted a round table networking event to promote the work of Chanel Contos in the Teach Us Consent campaign and draw together female leaders who work and advocate on issues related to gender equality, domestic and family violence, sexual violence and consent in relationships.

ACYP partnered with Two Good Co. to host the event on 17 February, 2022 in Sydney. Two Good Co. is a social enterprise employing women with a history of trauma and disadvantage, particularly those who have experienced homelessness or domestic violence.

Attendees heard from The Advocate and Chanel Contos and then discussed the opportunities to share advocacy platforms with those whose voices are otherwise marginalised.

The event included representatives across government, non-government organisations, advocacy groups, media spokespersons, and private sector actors.

Life Skills

The Advocate has regularly heard from children and young people that they want more opportunities to learn information about practical life skills.

Young people often tell the Advocate that, in addition to the education and supports they already receive, they want more access to practical, real-life advice - including support on how to manage one's health, finances, employment and households.

In June 2022, the Advocate released the [Life Skills resource](#), a series of four videos to provide support in young people's transition to adulthood.

The Life Skills videos were created by drawing on feedback that ACYP has heard directly from consultations with young people. The topics chosen are based on ACYP's consultation and polling findings.

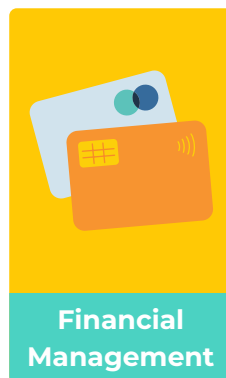
The project was co-designed with young people, including content and message delivery drafted by a young person studying film. These scripts were then provided to industry experts to ensure they were accurate and applicable.

Young actors were contracted with the assistance of the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP).

The four videos focus on:



This video aims to provide knowledge and basic skills to evaluate your performance in today's workplace.



This video explains how to manage your finances. This includes planning, organising and controlling your money by raising and effectively using funds, paying rent and budgeting.



This video includes the basics of living on your own and being independent. Concepts such as cooking, purchasing food and groceries and cleaning are explored.



This video outlines how to stay both mentally and physically healthy and support your social wellbeing.

Each video is accompanied by a list of additional resources that young people may find useful, if they wanted to see further information or advice on the specific topics.

Youth Justice Work

As per previous reporting periods, the Advocate has continued to engage with children and young people within Youth Justice in a variety of different ways.

Throughout 2022, ACYP committed to supporting the Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) with their review of the six youth justice centres across NSW. Under Section 5 of the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012*, ICS is required to conduct an inspection of every Youth Justice Centre in NSW, at least every three years. ACYP staff are supporting ICS to undertake this regular inspection process, with a focus on supporting interviews with young people.

At the close of the reporting period, ACYP visited Frank Baxter, Acmena and Cobham Youth Justice Centres in partnership with the ICS. Visits to the remaining three Youth Justice Centres will be completed in the next reporting period, culminating in a report being published by ICS.

Independently of the ICS project, the Advocate has committed to spend at least one day in Youth Justice Centres each month. As of 30 June 2022, the Advocate had visited Cobham, Frank Baxter, Reiby, Riverina, and Orana Youth Justice Centres collectively approximately 20 times within the reporting period.

These opportunities allow the Advocate to hear directly from the young people on a regular basis to gain a greater understanding of the challenges that may be systemic and work to see meaningful change between these visits.

Following on from the Child Rights e-Learning Module that the Advocate developed with Youth Justice in the previous reporting period, the Advocate is continuing to work with Youth Justice around opportunities to improve practice and embed participatory approaches across their work.

The Advocate also regularly participates in a number of Youth Justice NSW (YJNSW) led working groups, including: the Youth Justice Advisory Committee and the Short-Term Remand (STR) Steering Committee and Working Group. As a member of these committees, ACYP provides advice and supports opportunities that enable young people to share their perspectives with decision-makers.

For example, throughout the reporting period, ACYP worked collaboratively with YJNSW to support a young engagement project as part of the broader STR Pilot Project. The project involved engagement with twenty-eight young people aged 13 to 19 years of age and was aimed at better understanding young people and their families' experiences and views of remand and bail processes.

Trainings



Over recent years, ACYP has developed a suite of training courses designed for government and non-government organisations that work with and for children and young people.

This training includes:



Advocacy
Training



Participation
Training



Child Rights
Training

Child Rights Training

Following the launch of the Child Rights e-Learning module in Youth Justice Centres, the Advocate has developed a wider Child Rights e-Learning module for those that work with children and young people.

The e-learning training has four modules:

- Module 1: Introducing ACYP;
- Module 2: Introducing child rights and the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*;
- Module 3: General principles in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*; and
- Module 4: Applying a child rights approach when working with children and young people.

These modules will allow participants to:

- Understand the difference between needs and rights, and the relationship between rights-holders and duty-bearers;
- Understand what child rights are and develop some familiarity with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC);
- Understand what is meant by a 'child rights-based approach' – over and above knowledge of specific child rights;
- Use a child rights-based approach to plan interventions, activities, policies and programmes for working with children; and;
- See situations with a child rights lens and approach which can improve engagement, participation and wellbeing, as well as promote a safe and respectful environment.

This e-Learning module will allow for greater reach and flexibility of Child Rights training. At the close of the reporting period, the Advocate was currently in the process of finding the most appropriate platform to host the training.

Within the reporting period, the Advocate conducted face-to-face Child Rights training with members of the incoming Youth Advisory Council and Regional Youth Taskforce. Trainings were also held for the staff at the YASMAR Youth Justice Training facility and the network of Local Council Youth Development Officers (YDO's).



Advocacy Training

This training contains tips on how to improve participants' advocacy skills, including; what is advocacy and the advocacy process, how to identify your audience, and how to craft your message so that it emphasises your important points succinctly.

The Advocate conducted Advocacy Training with the incoming members of the Regional Youth Taskforce and Youth Advisory Council. Training was also conducted with the Tamworth Youth Council and staff and students at the Sir Joseph Banks High School.

Facilitation Training

This training runs through the different facilitation methodologies the Advocate uses in their work. It equips participants with the skills to conduct a meaningful and respectful consultation. It covers the ethical matters that need to be considered around consent and gives some case studies and examples of how to use the information gathered in the consultation effectively.

Within the reporting period, the Advocate conducted Facilitation Training with the incoming members of the Youth Advisory Council and Regional Youth Taskforce.

Engaging with Stakeholders

Committees and Advisory Boards

The Advocate or an ACYP delegate holds membership and/or provides advice to a number of government and non-government committees and advisory boards, some of which are listed below:

- Aboriginal Outcomes Taskforce;
- Adolescent Mental Health Interagency Meeting;
- Adolescent Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Interagency Meeting;
- At Risk Workers Safety in Action Group Meeting;
- Australian New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG);
- Child Death Review Team (CDRT);
- Child Wellbeing Taskforce - Governance Group Meeting;
- Children, Young People and Families Executive Steering Committee (CYPFESC);
- Children and Families of Offenders Steering Committee (CFOSC);
- Commonwealth Bank Australia Customer Advocacy Panel;
- COVID-19 Child Wellbeing Taskforce Governance Group Meeting;
- Duke of Edinburgh International Award - Advisory Committee Meeting;
- Four You Peer to Peer Alliance Meeting;
- Joint Protocol Statewide Steering Committee;
- Kids First Vouchers Advisory Committee Meeting;
- Law Society of New South Wales Children's Legal Issues;
- Learn to Swim Preschool Voucher Steering Committee;
- Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services monthly meeting with sector leaders and peaks;
- NSW Child and Youth Mental Health Advisory Group;
- NSW Children's Week Committee;
- Permanency Support Sub Group - Child and Family Meeting;
- Property Industry Foundation – NSW Beneficiary Review Committee (BRC) Meeting;
- Regional Youth Steering Committee;
- Revenue NSW Hardship Support Program Steering Committee;
- School for Life Board meeting;
- Social Sector Transformation Fund Team Steering Committee (SSTF);
- Statewide COVID-19 Child Wellbeing Taskforce;
- State Recovery Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee Meeting;
- South Western Sydney Child and Family Leadership Group;
- UNICEF Child Rights Taskforce;
- Vaping Communications Advisory Panel Meeting;
- Voice2Action Steering Committee;
- Wellbeing and Health In-Reach Nurse Operation Rollout Working group;
- Women's Strategy Economic Opportunity and Advancement, Participation and Empowerment Working Group;
- Youth Justice Advisory Committee;
- Youth Justice NSW Short Term Remand Project Steering Committee;
- Youth Mental Health Interagency Meeting; and
- Youth Week 2022 Reference Group.

Research Projects

SIFE (School is for Everyone)



The SIFE (School is for Everyone) project aims to understand and improve participation and felt sense of belonging for students at risk of disengaging from school.

This project acknowledges that policy reform over the last decade has focused on fairness and inclusion for all students, however, there remains a significant gap in reducing education inequalities. This project seeks to support students of all abilities and backgrounds to remain engaged in education and complete secondary schools.

The research is funded by the NSW Department of Education's Strategic Research Fund: Priority Projects and is led by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University in conjunction with the NSW Department of Education, Charles Sturt University and the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.

At the close of this reporting period, this research was still in the planning phase with field research commencing at the beginning of the next reporting period.

Once commenced, this project will take on four phases:



Phase 1 *Qualitative Fieldwork*

Focus groups with students and staff to identify current practices in schools that help build participation and belonging for those most at risk of disengaging.



Phase 2 *Quantitative Survey*

A student and staff survey that tests the participation and belonging practices most positively associated with students' engagement, wellbeing and safety, and the role recognition plays in mediating this.



Phase 3 *Co-designing Professional Learning*

Professional learning resources based on the Phase 1 and 2 findings will be co-developed with students and staff.

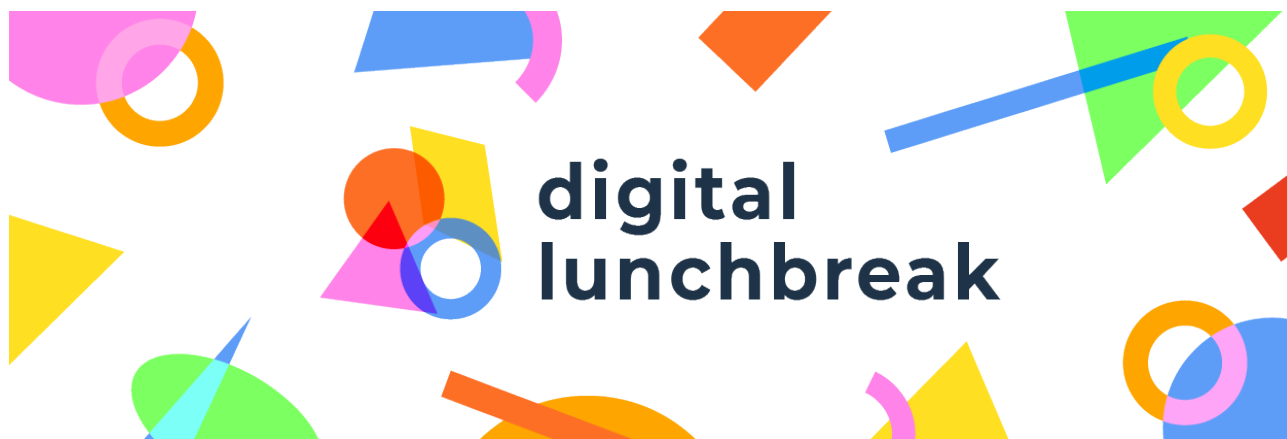


Phase 4 *Implementation & Evaluation of Resources*

The co-designed professional learning and associated resources will be implemented across a larger number of schools and evaluated.

Promote the Provision of Information and Advice to Assist Children and Young People

Digital Lunchbreak



Following the success of the Digital Lunchbreak in the previous reporting period and the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the Advocate continued to update and maintain Digital Lunchbreak in this reporting period.

Created in 2020 at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Digital Lunchbreak was designed to collate all the activities and resources prepared by government and non-government organisations for children and young people.

The website collates activities to help children and young people learn, create, and discover new experiences and places through digital workshops and virtual excursions. The website also includes helpful information on COVID-19 restrictions and related information, as well as information on support services for mental, physical and practical assistance.

Since the website was launched in 2020, the website has been viewed over 120,313 times.

A breakdown of page visits for the different categories for 2021 and 2022 are as follows:

- **Arts and craft:**
2021: 3,077 views | 2022: 3,698 views
- **Music and performance:**
2021: 1,064 views | 2022: 1,272 views
- **Health and wellbeing:**
2021: 264 views | 2022: 2,208 views
- **Education and learning:**
2021: 832 views | 2022: 1,042 views
- **Nature and environment:**
2021: 932 views | 2022: 1,205 views
- **Science and history:**
2021: 1,037 views | 2022: 1,277 views

ACYP's Network

ACYP has an engaged network of children and young people, as well as stakeholders who work with children and young people. The following channels are used to share newsletters; opportunities to engage; findings and reports; to celebrate the diversity of young people; and champion their accomplishments.

Email contact list

Children and young people



7,487
subscribers

Email contact list

Stakeholders who work with children and young people



8,955
subscribers

Instagram



1,329
followers

Facebook



5,100
followers

Twitter



3,115
followers

LinkedIn



1,411
followers

Website Engagement

The following outlines the number of individual page views of key content on the ACYP website since the last reporting period.



Homepage
24,309 views



Digital Lunchbreak
12,283 views



Engage (Materials
related to good practice
in participation)
2,859 views



Strategic Plan 2022-24
**2,336 views (since
1 April 2022)**



LGBTQIA+ Consultations
540

Request for information under Section 13AA of the *Ombudsman's Act 1974*

No requests for information under Section 13AA of the *Ombudsmans Act 1974* were received during the reporting period.

***Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* Requests**

No requests under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* were received by the Advocate during the reporting period.

Office Structure and Governance

Parliamentary Oversight

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People

According to Part 7, Section 37 of their enabling legislation, the functions of the Parliamentary Committee as are follows:

- a. to monitor and review the exercise by the Advocate of the Advocate's functions,
- b. to monitor and review the exercise by the Children's Guardian of functions under
 - i. the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, or
 - ii. the Children's Guardian Act 2019 in relation to the reportable conduct scheme and working with relevant entities to prevent, identify and respond to reportable conduct and promote compliance with the scheme,
- c. to report to both Houses of Parliament, with such comments as it thinks fit, on any matter relating to the Advocate or connected with the exercise of the Advocate's functions, or on any matter relating to the exercise of the Children's Guardian's functions specified in paragraph (b), to which, in the opinion of the Joint Committee, the attention of Parliament should be directed,
- d. to examine each annual or other report of the Advocate and report to both Houses of Parliament on any matter appearing in, or arising out of, any such report,
- e. to examine trends and changes in services and issues affecting children and young people, and report to both Houses of Parliament any changes that the Joint Committee thinks desirable to the functions and procedures of the Advocate,
- f. to inquire into any question in connection with the Advocate's functions which is referred to it by both Houses of Parliament, and report to both Houses on that question.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee is to consist of 7 members, of whom:

- 3 are to be members of, and appointed by, the Legislative Council, and
- 4 are to be members of, and appointed by, the Legislative Assembly.

As of the 30 June 2022 membership of the Committee consisted of;

Chairperson:

- Mr Peter Sidgreaves, MP (from 19 May 2022); and
- Mr Peter Poulos, MLC (until 22 December 2021).

Acting Chairperson:

- Mr Peter Sidgreaves, MP (from 23 December 2021 to 18 May 2022).

Deputy Chairperson:

- Ms Melanie Gibbons, MP (from 19 May 2022); and
- Mr Peter Sidgreaves, MP (until 19 May 2022).

Members:

- The Hon. Greg Donnelly, MLC;
- Ms Jodie Harrison, MP;
- Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC (from 30 March 2022);
- The Hon. Christopher Rath, MLC (from 30 March 2022);
- Mr Nathaniel Smith, MP (from 18 May 2022);
- Ms Robyn Preston, MP (until 22 December 2021);
- Mr Dugald Saunders, MP (until 21 December 2021);
- Mr David Shoebridge, MLC (until 30 March 2022);
- The Hon. Leslie Williams, MP (from 24 February 2022 until 31 March 2022);
- The Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC (from 24 February 2022 until 30 March 2022); and
- Mr Stephen Bromhead, MP (from 31 March 2022 until 12 April 2022).

2021 Review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

It is a function of the Oversight Committee to monitor and review the activities and functions of the Advocate, including an examination of their annual report.

Following the appearance of the Advocate for the 2021 Review of the Annual Reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, the Committee found that the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People is fulfilling its functions and following the principles governing its work as specified by the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*.

The Committee recommended that the next strategic plan for children and young people incorporates an annual evaluation report, which will provide government and non-government organisations with timely insights on the progress of these initiatives. This recommendation has been addressed in the development and implementation of the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*.

The Advocate appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on 24 June 2022 for their 2022 Review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. Also appearing before the Committee was Ms Shannon Longhurst, A/Director, NSW Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.

At that time, the Committee also held a hearing with members of the Youth Advisory Council that sat during the reporting period and subsequent reporting period. Members of that hearing consisted of Ms Julie Charlton (Chairperson of the 2020-2021 YAC), Mr Mohmd Alsomay (Member of the 2020-2021 YAC), and Ms Lua Pellegrini (Chairperson of the 2021-2022 YAC).

At this hearing, the Committee examined a variety of the Advocate's functions and work. This included but was not limited to;

- Review of the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2016-2019*;
- Development of the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*;
- Youth consultations and initiatives; including consultations during the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- Cyberbullying;
- Regional Youth Taskforce;
- Youth Advisory Council; and
- Outreach, advocacy and collaboration.

At the close of the reporting period, the Committee was preparing their findings and recommendations as to whether the Advocate and Youth Advisory Council was fulfilling its function and meeting its obligations and principles as outlined in their Act.

Statutory Review of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*

According to Part 8 Section 43 of the Act,

1. The Minister is to review this Act to determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and whether the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing those objectives.
2. The review is to be undertaken as soon as possible after 5 years from the date of assent to this Act.
3. A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period of 5 years.
4. When carrying out the review, the Minister is required—
 - a. to consult with government and non-government agencies that provide or deal with services or issues affecting children and young people, and
 - b. to consult, as far as practicable, with children and young people, and
 - c. to invite and consider public submissions relating to the review of this Act.

The Statutory Review was conducted by the Department of Communities and Justice on behalf of the then Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Mr Gareth Ward, MP, and then Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, The Hon. Bronnie Taylor, MLC.

The Review was undertaken between November 2020 and March 2021. The Department prepared a discussion paper and received submissions, conducted a survey and carried out consultations.

The Advocate and the Youth Advisory Council were given the opportunity to feed into this Review. The Advocate was also given the opportunity to comment on the draft report produced by the Department at the end of the Review.

As they were the subject of the Review, outside of being directly asked by the Department to contribute, the Advocate remained independent to the Review.

It is the Advocate's understanding that the Review is currently with their respective Ministers for consideration prior to any legislative amendments going through the Parliamentary process.

Staffing

As at 30 June 2022, there was 11 full-time staff and 6 part-time staff, employed against a staff establishment of 23 positions.

This establishment does not include the 12 members of the Youth Advisory Council who are employed on a part-time basis for their term.

Budget

The expenditure of the Office of the Advocate for Young People and Children (ACYP) is negotiated each year as part of the Department of Communities and Justice annual budget and incorporated into their financial statements.

In the 2021-2022 reporting period the annual operating budget of ACYP was \$3.3 million which included \$2.4 million in Employment Related Expenses (ERE) and \$0.9 million in Operating Expenses (OpEx).

Principal Officers

- Ms Zoë Robinson, B Media, LLB, MHR, GAICD, Advocate for Children and Young People.
- Ms Una O'Neill, B.A (Hons) Marketing, MA PR, Director.
- Ms Shannon Longhurst, B Socio-Legal Studies (Hons), M.A Global Studies, Grad. Cert. International Development Policy, A/Director (20 June – 22 July 2022).



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**Office of the Advocate for
Children and Young People:**

Ground Floor, 219-241 Cleveland Street
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2012

ABN: 36 433 875 185

Phone: (02) 9248 0970

Email: acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au

Website : www.acyp.nsw.gov.au