

NSW Youth Advisory Council

***Annual Report
2020-2021***

Office of the Advocate for Children & Young People

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Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

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Foreword

It is an absolute honour to present to you the 2020–2021 NSW Youth Advisory Council Annual Report. The Council has fulfilled its duties, as set out in the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*. The variety of responsibilities and opportunities given to the Council, as reflected throughout this report, could not have been achieved without the tremendous support and hard work of The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.

I would love to thank my fellow members for their commitment and willingness to represent the voices of children and young people across NSW and for sharing their wisdom and experiences with the Office and other government departments.

In 2020–2021, the Council faced the unpredictable circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, however they were still able to provide advice to government and other agencies to help develop and implement various policies, initiatives and programs that will continue to allow children and young people to thrive in NSW. I am so proud of everything they have achieved and the growth they have made as advocates for their communities.

We appreciate your support and commitment to listening and working alongside the children and young people in NSW to have their voices heard.

Kind Regards,



Julie Charlton
2020 Chairperson

Role of the Council

The NSW Youth Advisory Council (the YAC) is established under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*. The YAC provides young people with the opportunity to participate in the development and consultation of government policy that concern them.

The YAC's functions under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* are:

1

Advising the Minister and the Advocate on government policies and programs concerning young people;

2

Consulting with young people, community groups and government agencies on issues and policies concerning young people;

3

Monitoring and evaluating legislation, Government policies and programs concerning young people and recommending changes if required;

4

Conducting forums, approved by the Minister, on issues of interest to young people; and

5

Providing the Minister and the Advocate with information on issues and policies concerning young people.

Administration of the Council

As at 30 June 2021, The Hon. Alistair Henskens, MP, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, and The Hon. Bronwyn Taylor, MLC, Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women administered the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*.

Secretariat support for the Council was provided by the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP).

Council members have met on seven occasions* during their 2020-2021 term:



23 August
2020 (online)



20 September
2020 (online)



14/15 November
2020



7 February
2021 (online)



21 March
2021



2 May
2021



20 June
2021

*When face-to-face meetings were not possible due to Public Health Orders, YAC meetings were held online.

Recruitment of the Council

The 2020-2021 YAC was recruited in early 2020 via an extensive recruitment and selection process.

YAC applications were open from 22 January to 1 March 2020, with 625 applications received. The Advocate for Children and Young People read all of the applications with senior members of the Participation Team and determined a shortlist of 150 applicants. Shortlisted applicants were invited to a one day recruitment event scheduled for 30 March at NSW Parliament House in Sydney, then subsequently cancelled due to COVID-19 Public Health Orders.

A digital recruitment process was developed and actioned in place of the face-to face event:

- Individual phone interviews were conducted with ACYP Participation staff for the 150 shortlisted applicants in May 2020.
- An online information session was held on 1 June 2020, in which shortlisted applicants were addressed by the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, the Advocate for Children and Young People, Ms Zoë Robinson and members of the 2019-2020 Youth Advisory Council.

During the session, applicants were given an insight to:

- The work of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP);
- The role and responsibilities of the Council;
- The work and highlights of the 2019-2020 Council; and
- A live Q&A session with the Advocate and Chair of the 2019-2020 Council.

Recruitment of the Council

- Online group activity sessions were held across three days from 2 June to 4 June, with 50 young people allocated to each day, based on age, to aid the selection process.

At these events:

- Participants were asked their views on consultation questions provided by various NSW Government Departments (Department of Education, Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Ministry of Health and Department Planning, Industry and Environment); and
 - Members of the ACYP Office and Non-Government Organisations (NGO) representatives observed the applicants while they discussed their thoughts and ideas as a group on what they would recommend to the departments.
-
- Following the recruitment events and further analysis by ACYP, the Advocate determined 12 candidates to recommend to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services for review and concurrence, which received Cabinet approval in July 2020.

Membership of the Council

The members of the 2020-2021 NSW Youth Advisory Council have been appointed under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*.



Julie Charlton (Chair)

Dural

21



Molly Croft

Dubbo

14



Sam Daykin

St Ives

14



Meera Barani

Cherrybrook

15



Campbell Quintrell

Broken Hill

16



Tahlia Barwick

Loomberah

16



Mohmd Alsomay

Woodcroft

17



Kupakwashe Matangira

Newtown

19



Dylan Shoesmith

Cardiff South

20



Marvin Smith

Newport

21



Quinn Harwood

St Clair

22



Portia Walker-Fernando

Casino

23

*Age at the commencement of their term on 1 August 2020

Work of the Council

Summary of Meetings

23 August 2020 (online)



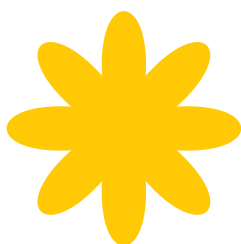
The first meeting of the 2020-2021 YAC began with introductions from each of the members. The Advocate then briefed the members on the expectations of the Council. The YAC also met with the former Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. The YAC underwent advocacy training and media training and then were briefed on current ACYP initiatives including *Digital Lunch Break*. The YAC undertook consultations for with the UN Human Rights Council and Sydney Children's Hospital Network. The meeting closed with ACYP after the YAC were informed about the upcoming Children's Week Parliament event.

20 September 2020 (online)



The meeting began with the Advocate's update and the current initiatives of ACYP including Children's Week and post COVID world advice. The hot topics for this meeting included mental health issues, youth unemployment, current gender marker change legislation, *NSW Education Legislation Amendment Bill* and the impacts of COVID-19. One of the member's presented on health literacy which highlighted the key issues of health and how to enhance youth voice in health. The YAC were involved in consultations that included the Department of Education, Bang the Table, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, *NSW Through their Eyes* and ACYP social media. The YAC also had the opportunity to meet with Mr Alex Greenwich, MP, independent member for Sydney to speak about the issues facing children and young people.

14 and 15 November 2020

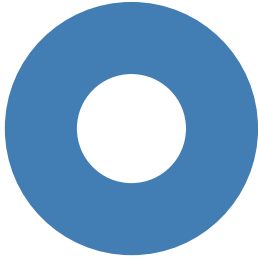


The YAC had their first face-to-face meeting over two days on the weekend of 14 and 15 of November 2020. The Advocate update was provided by Ms Zoë Robinson, where there was a discussion about the current work of ACYP. The YAC covered a wide range of hot topics and decided to request policy briefs on vaping and inter-generational trauma. One of the members also presented on the effects of disaster on mental health. Feedback was provided to Save the Children on two programs: *Our Voice*; to involve young people in disaster recovery, and *Mobilise*; a child's rights education program through arts. The Youth Week theme for 2021 was brainstormed and *Together More Than Ever* was decided on. The YAC then travelled to the Kids Giving Back hub to take part in the Cook4Good program and prepare meals for people experiencing homelessness, with the former Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services in attendance.

On the second day, the YAC underwent cultural awareness training and later consulted with the Disability Council NSW about issues facing young people with a disability. YAC members then participated in a workshop with Reach Foundation that focused on building connections between YAC members. There was an additional consultation with Western

NSW Local Health District where the YAC discussed what they could do to improve services for children and young people.

7 February 2021 (online)



The February meeting was online due to COVID-19 complications and began with the Advocate and Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of NSW, who provided members with a personal and professional history. One of the members gave a presentation on 'What is success?'. YAC members then participated in a consultation for NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), and provided general feedback on experiences of the current curriculum. The YAC also provided feedback on the Digital Education Passport proposal and the ACYP Statutory Review by the Department of Communities and Justice. The Advocate provided an overview of the previous *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People* and the current work to develop a new plan, as well as consulting the YAC members regarding the aims of the new plan. The next session was about the YAC project, "What is meaningful work?" where YAC members were provided with an overview of the work and function of ACYP. YAC members were also tasked with consulting friends and peers to gather ideas and suggestions. YAC members were briefed about the *Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill 2020*, and were given the opportunity to later provide comment and feedback for ACYP's submission. YAC members also discussed the policy briefs on intergenerational trauma and vaping that were created as a result of the hot topics discussion from November.

21 March 2021



The YAC's March meeting began with the Advocate presenting her update to the YAC. Two members gave a presentation to their peers on a topic of their choice; one on youth suicide in NSW and the other on body positivity. This was followed by a presentation by the Advocate on NSW Government initiatives in relation to youth mental health in NSW. The YAC were then joined by NESAs who consulted them about the curriculum reform, which covered topics such as, Year 11 and 12 subjects and the influences in their decisions. YAC members discussed Save the Children's 'Mobilise Program' and provided feedback regarding upholding and promoting Child Rights. The Department of Education provided the YAC with a draft *Statement of Intent* regarding the role of schools in strengthening children and young people's understanding of consent. This was reviewed and feedback was provided back to the Department. The next session involved YAC members providing feedback on what they consider meaningful work for ACYP. YAC members were then consulted by the ACYP Digital Team about ACYP's social media platforms and a potential to revitalise the social media content. The YAC also reviewed and provided suggestions on an app called 'Sonder' by Mr Bryce Morton and how it can provide education, early intervention and support for all members of the community including young people.

2 May 2021



The meeting began with an update from the Advocate including reflections on the recent *Committee Hearing on the Education (Parental Rights) Bill 2020*, where the Advocate was called upon as a witness. During the Hot Topics session, some of the topics raised included the 'Milkshake consent campaign', a new program in Western Sydney LHD for suicidal people as an alternative to hospital admission, and young people in Blacktown and other Western Sydney suburbs having received a total of \$10 million in transport fines. This was followed by a member presentation on Youth Job Instability. YAC members then took part in ongoing consultations with NESAs and provided feedback on structure and types of student major projects. The next session was facilitated by Sydney Water and introduced members to their *Water Literacy Framework* for community engagement. The remainder of the meeting was spent working in groups to draft their Annual Report and compose a letter for the Advocate reflecting on their time on the YAC.

20 June 2021



At the final YAC meeting, members began the meeting by reflecting with the Advocate on their highlights and learnings from their term and feedback to ACYP for the incoming YAC. YAC members then took part in a consultation with ACYP Policy Team members on the new NSW Government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People. Members provided feedback on the draft commitments, as well the priority areas and underlying principles. YAC member then had the opportunity to meet with the new Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services – The Hon. Alister Henskens. This was followed by another consultation with NESA, this time on the topic of student learner profiles. The next guest to meet with the YAC was from NSW/ACT Community Engagement Team at Department of Home Affairs, and spoke about their COVID community engagement strategy, as well as their draft Social Cohesion Statement. YAC Members then met with guests from NSW Ombudsmen and learnt about the services offered to children and young people, as well as the wider public. The last guest for the meeting was the CEO of 'Fams', Ms Julie Hourigan Ruse, who consulted with members about their research on the impacts and experiences of the COVID outbreak on the way family workers deliver support for children and young people and their families. The meeting wrapped up with the writing of postcards to new members of the incoming YAC, as well as a farewell and token of appreciation presented to members by ACYP.

Advice given to ACYP



ACYP Social Media Strategy *20 September 2020; 21 March 2021*

YAC members were consulted on ACYP's social media strategy, initially to canvas and gain feedback on what was working well and not working, then using their ideas to draft a new strategy.



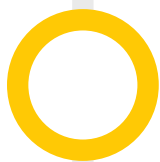
ACYP Life Skills Project *20 September 2020*

YAC members provided feedback on the topics they would want covered in a Life Skills series. Their feedback contributed to the topics chosen for the first four episodes to be produced by ACYP in 2021.



Children's Week 2020 Art Competition *October 2020 (out of session)*

YAC members voted on and chose the winners of ACYP's Children's Week Art Competition together with the Advocate, the Chair of the NSW Children's Week Council, Julie Hourigan Ruse and ABC Early Childhood Education Producer, Laura Stone. There were over 300 entries in three age categories (under five, ages six -11, ages 12- 18), and children and young people were asked to create an artwork to show how they were keeping safely connected with their family, friends and community during the 2020 COVID pandemic.



Youth Week 2021 *14 November 2020*

YAC members brainstormed and chose the theme *Together more than ever* for Youth Week 2021.



NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People
7 February 2021; 20 June 2021

YAC members have been involved from the early stages in the creation of a new *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People* from guiding the Office on what needs to be considered in the Plan, as well as what its purpose should be. This was then followed by analysis by members of the first draft, on the issues and priority areas to be included.



YAC Project: What is meaningful work?
7 February 2021; 2 May 2021; 20 June 2021

YAC members were tasked with a project to create a framework or set of guiding principles to help ACYP determine 'What is meaningful work?', when deciding to engage in projects. The first stage involved YAC members consulting with their peers to provide ACYP feedback on what is important to children and young people in NSW, what ACYP should do to represent all children and young people aged 0-24 year in NSW, and how to best engage with them. This feedback was then used to create a guiding framework consisting of core questions and principles which ACYP must consider to determine whether a project is meaningful for children and young people, and therefore be included in the work of the Office.



Education Legislation Amendment
(Parental Rights) Bill Submission

YAC members were one of the groups consulted by ACYP to inform its joint submission with the Office of the Children's Guardian on the *Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill 2020*. The Advocate was subsequently called as a witness to represent the views of children and young people in NSW at the Education Committee Hearing at NSW Parliament.



YAC Annual Report 2020-21

2 May 2020

YAC members write their own Annual Report, with assistance from ACYP to design, finalise and publish the document.



NSW Youth Week 2022

20 June 2021

In preparation for NSW Youth Week 2022, YAC members provided feedback on the dates and best timing for NSW Youth Week to maximise engagement with young people.

Advice given to external agencies



United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) *23 August 2020*

YAC members reviewed a draft child-friendly guide to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to assist the participation of children and young people in the UPR process. The UPR is a process led by the UN Human Rights Council which reviews the human rights and child rights record of all UN member countries once every four and a half years.



Sydney Children's Hospital Network (SCHN) *23 August 2020*

The YAC met with research ethics officers who provided an introduction to research to YAC members. The YAC provided feedback on how to engage with children and young people in the design and conducting of research projects.



Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services *23 August 2020*

The YAC met with the former Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, who welcomed them to the Council. YAC members introduced themselves and shared their areas of interest with the Minister.



Department of Education *20 September 2020*

YAC members provided feedback on what drives young people towards a particular career, how young people perceive teaching as a career, and how young people could be encouraged to become teachers.



Western Sydney Parklands Authority
20 September 2020

YAC members completed an online consultation about the Western Sydney Aerotropolis on the platform Bang the Table. YAC members also provided feedback on the platform and how to make it more engaging for children and young people.



Department of Premier and Cabinet
20 September 2020

YAC members provided feedback on the factors that influence young people when deciding an education or training pathways post-school, such as choosing between vocational education and university.



Mr Alex Greenwich, MP, Member for Sydney
20 September 2020

YAC members met with Mr Alex Greenwich, MP and discussed matters important to children and young people in NSW.



NSW Ministry of Health
October 2020

YAC members provided feedback to help name a NSW Health Community Project addressing youth mental health and youth suicide in communities.



Save the Children
14 November 2020

In consultation with Save the Children, YAC discussed two key programs - *Our Voice*; to involve young people in disaster recovery and *Mobilise*; a child rights education program through arts.

21 March 2021

YAC members provided feedback on how children and young people can engage in upholding and promoting child rights.



Disability Council NSW

15 November 2020

The YAC provided extensive feedback to Disability Council NSW (DCNSW). Key areas of advice included support for young carers, inadequacies in current deficit model/failure mode that does not consider the capacity of children and young people, and challenges in accessing DCNSW services.



Western NSW Local Health District

15 November 2020

YAC consulted with Western NSW Local Health District. YAC discussed what Western NSW LHD could do to improve services for children and young people. Key areas included advertisements designed for children and young people, entry processes to be individualised for each person, and environments conducive and encouraging of conversation.



Governor of NSW - Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC

7 February 2021

The YAC met with her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley. YAC members had the opportunity to ask the Governor questions about their areas of interest.



NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) – Curriculum Reform

7 February 2021

The YAC provided feedback to NSW Education Standards Authority on the Curriculum Reform. The YAC provided general feedback on their experiences of the curriculum including areas or issues they feel could be addressed.

21 March 2021

YAC members discussed whether subject groupings would be helpful when selecting subjects and why they picked their senior HSC subjects.

2 May 2021

YAC members discussed their experiences with projects at schools, and what influences them to elect to undertake a major project. They also provided feedback on different types of major projects and what would be most suitable for senior students.

20 June 2021

YAC members provided feedback on whether a learner profile for students would be useful, and what kind of information should be held in the learner profile.

**NESAs engagement with the YAC will be ongoing for the duration of the Curriculum Reform and will continue with YAC 2021-22*



Department of Communities and Justice - ACYP Statutory Review 7 February 2021

The YAC were guided through *The Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* and provided feedback and advice on each aspect of the Act.



Department of Education (DoE) - Statement of Intent 21 March 2021

The YAC was provided with a draft *Statement of Intent* regarding the level of understanding that CYP have about consent. The feedback was provided to the DoE, to allow them the ability to produce an improved statement.



Sonder 21 March 2021

The YAC were introduced to the 'Sonder' app by Mr Bryce Morton and how it can provide education, early intervention and support for NSW young people. The YAC believed that the app was a good addition to the everyday world and can't wait to see it develop further.



Sydney Water
2 May 2021

YAC members were introduced to Sydney Water's *Water Literacy Framework* for Community management and shared their ideas for engaging with young people to help design and create a resilient and liveable future.



**The Hon. Alister Henskens, Minister for Families,
Communities and Disability Services**
20 June 2021

YAC members met with The Hon. Alister Henskens MP, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and had the opportunity to share their areas of interest with the Minister, as well as raising some of the major issues facing children and young people in NSW.



**Department of Home Affairs – NSW/ACT Community
Engagement Team**
20 June 2021

YAC members were presented with the Department of Home Affairs COVID Community Engagement Strategy, as well as having discussions about their draft Social Cohesion Statement.



NSW Ombudsman
20 June 2021

YAC members learnt about the services offered to children and young people by the NSW Ombudsman, as well as an overview of the functions of the agency.



Fams
20 June 2021

YAC members provided feedback on their experience of using online and tele-practice to access services and supports. This information was used to assist Fams in the formulation of the types of questions to ask children and young people for their research on the impacts and experiences of the COVID outbreak on the way family workers deliver support for children and young people and their families.

Participation in Events, Projects and Activities



Presentations by YAC Members

YAC members gave presentations about the issues their communities face, and how as a Council and young leaders they are able to make an impact. YAC members volunteered to present at a meeting of their choice, giving an insight into the programs, initiatives and issues experienced within their communities.



Training

YAC members also had the opportunity to partake in advocacy training, media training and cultural awareness training in order to develop their skills. These were supported by the Advocate, ACYP and Mr Rhett Burraston.



Issues Put on Agenda by YAC Members to Discuss

Some of the issues YAC members have spoken about and have requested policy briefs about are:

- LGBTQIA+;
- Youth Unemployment and COVID-19;
- Intergenerational Trauma (Epigenetics);
- Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill 2020;
- Vaping or E-cigarettes;
- Access to Mental Health Inpatient Units;
- Racial Discrimination in Hiring;
- Teacher Shortages in Regional and Rural Areas; and
- Disability discrimination in sport



Events and Activities

Cook4Good Workshop – 14 Nov 2020

YAC members went into the community and took part in a Cook4Good workshop at the Kids Giving Back hub and cooked meals for people experiencing homelessness.

Reach Connection Session – 15 Nov 2020

YAC members participated in a connection session run by Reach Foundation youth facilitators, which fostered meaningful connections between the members.

NSW, Through their eyes Series – 17 November 2020

Julie Charlton, Chairperson of the 2020-21 YAC, hosted an interview with Ben Ballard, R/Executive Director, Inclusion and Wellbeing for the NSW Department of Education, as part of ACYP's *NSW, Through their Eyes Series*.

Julie first appeared on this series in April 2020 as a member of the 2019-20 YAC, an advocate for Spina Bifida awareness and 'Don't Dis My Ability' ambassador and was interviewed by the Advocate, Ms Zoë Robinson.

To view the series, visit:

<https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/through-their-eyes>

ACYP Promotional Videos

YAC members featured in a number of ACYP promotional videos, including Youth Week 2021 and YAC recruitment 2021-22.

Children's Week Parliament – 29 Oct 2020

Four YAC member represented their state electorate in ACYP Children's Week Parliament event, two of whom were also the master of ceremonies at the event, which included facilitating a Q&A panel with Members of Parliament.

Young Thinking Seminar – 19 Nov 2020

A YAC member was master of ceremonies for the third ACYP Young Thinking Seminar for 2020.

2021 NSW Women of Year Awards – March 2021

Molly Croft, member of 2020-21 YAC was nominated for and winner of the “2021 The One to Watch Award”, as part of the NSW Women of the Year Awards, held during NSW Women’s Week.

“The One to Watch” category recognises girls and young women aged seven to 17, who demonstrate courage, strength, determination and/or kindness to help and support those around them.

Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People’s Review of the Annual Reports of ACYP – 7 May 2021

The YAC 2019-20 and YAC 2020-21 chairpersons, along with a 2020-21 member, were called upon as witnesses to the Committee Hearing on ACYP and YAC’s Annual Reports.

NSW Governor’s Dinner – 19 June 2021

The 2020-21 YAC were invited to dinner by Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of NSW, at her home at NSW Government House to celebrate their hard work and achievements during their time on the Council.

Photos



