



# Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

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Annual Report  
1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

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The Hon. Benjamin Franklin, MLC  
President  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Hon. Greg Piper, 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 2023 to 30 June 2024.

The report includes: a description of the Advocate's activities during the year in relation to each of their functions, an evaluation of the response of relevant authorities to the recommendations of the Advocate; and 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.

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

Yours sincerely,

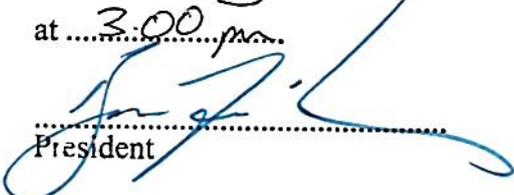


Zoë Robinson  
Advocate for Children and Young People  
30 October 2024

Received by me and authorised  
to be made public forthwith on

Wednesday 30 October 2024

at 3:00 pm



President



Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People  
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30 October 2024

*Received on behalf  
of the Speaker  
Wednesday 30 October 2024*



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

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

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# Advocate's Foreword

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It has been another incredible year for the Advocate for Children and Young People and the team. The work has continued to centre on and elevate the voices of children and young people across New South Wales. At all times the work aims to highlight the issues that are impacting children and young people, but also provide practical recommendations and solutions to these issues.

The team and I have continued to respond to public inquiries and importantly ensure that young people have the opportunity to attend and share their stories at these inquiries. We have produced powerful reports including the *It should be easier to just exist: How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW* report and the *Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs: Young people's perspectives on vaping in 2023* report. Two issues that are significant for our children and young people in New South Wales, and both call on government and business to do better and to ensure that any work that is done considers the needs of children and young people both now and in the future.

The amazing ACYP team in the Northern Rivers have continued to support the children and young people of that region, and particularly those children and young people who live in the Pod Villages. They hosted a round table where children and young people, together with key stakeholders, came together to discuss their experiences in relation to the floods. Importantly children and young people shared their personal experiences, and offered unique insight and solutions that would better support the community, before, during, and after any potential disaster.

The team has started work lifting up the voices of refugee and migrant young people in New South Wales. Whilst the final report will be issued in the next reporting period, the consultations have been impactful to the work of the Office, and it is a unique piece of work.

We continue to respond to the needs of government agencies and businesses who seek to include the voice of children and young people in their work. We are proud to see so many agencies have young people sit on their working groups and steering committees. We continue to support the work of the Minister for Youth and welcomed the opportunity to attend Budget Estimates with the Minister to highlight and account for our work.

Whilst the final report was tabled in the next reporting year, the Special Inquiry into Children and Young People in Alternative Care Arrangements was a huge task undertaken by the Office in this reporting period. It is a profound piece of work and has led to substantial change in how children and young people are cared for in this state. The announcement from Minister Washington to review the use of Alternative Care Arrangements was welcomed, and we look forward to seeing how this report and the accompanying recommendations are implemented. This piece of work highlighted why independent organisations are so important to good government. The ability to centre and focus entirely on the voice of children and young people who experience alternative care arrangements led to the long lasting change we are seeing now. It is significant work that has benefited a number of children and young people, who, at times, were invisible to the system designed to support them.

Let me conclude with my heartfelt thanks to the amazing team at ACYP who continue to focus on children and young people and ensure they are the centre of all our work.

To our stakeholders across, business and community, thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to our work and to the voice of children and young people. To our colleagues and Ministers across NSW government, thank you for engaging meaningfully in our work and seeking to include children and young people in your work.

The work will continue, and the focus will always be the same, but it is ever important to ensure that all work we do, starts with those we serve and that we continue to ensure that the policy, practice and decisions we make now are ones that will ensure our children and young people will thrive now and in the future.



**Zoë Robinson**

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People

# About the Office

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

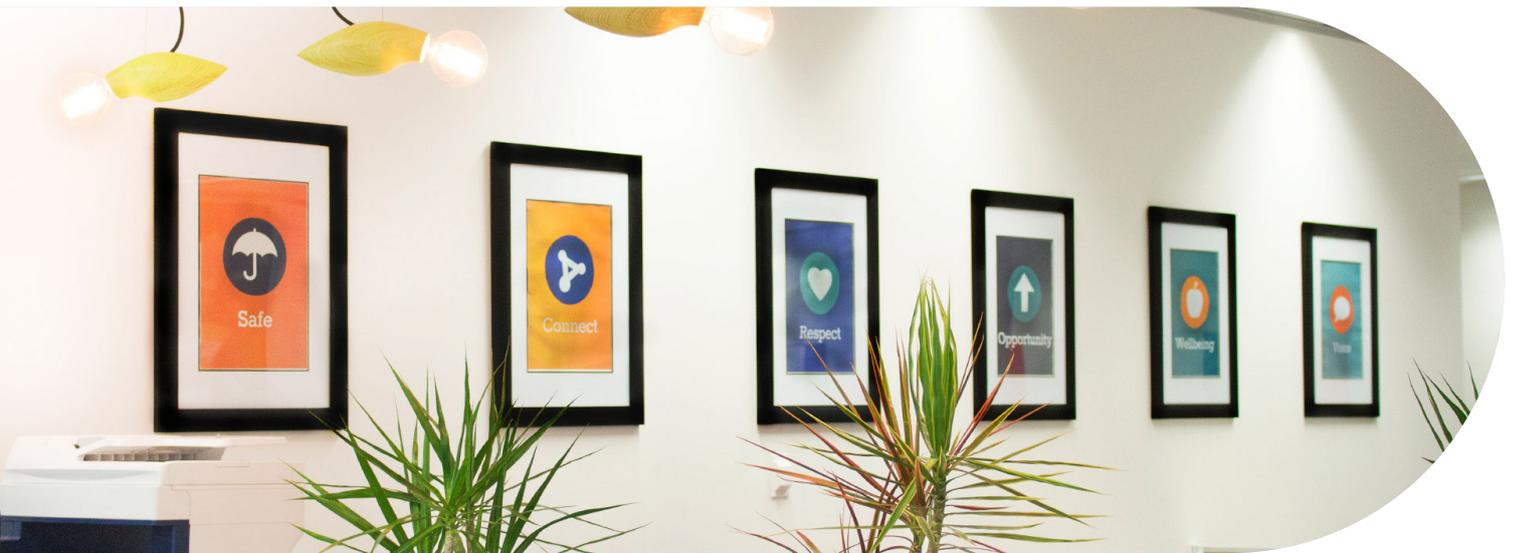
The Advocate is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People.

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

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>a.</b></p> <p>The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people are the paramount considerations.</p> | <p><b>b.</b></p> <p>The views of children and young people are to be given serious consideration and taken into account.</p> | <p><b>c.</b></p> <p>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.</p> |
|--|--|---|

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>a.</b></p> <p>To advocate for and promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24 years.</p>  | <p><b>d.</b></p> <p>To make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people.</p> |
| <p><b>b.</b></p> <p>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.</p> | <p><b>e.</b></p> <p>To conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people.</p>  |
| <p><b>c.</b></p> <p>To conduct special inquiries into issues affecting children and young people.</p>  | <p><b>f.</b></p> <p>To promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>g.</b></p> <p>To prepare, in consultation with the Minister, a three-year strategic plan for children and young people in the State.</p>   |



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



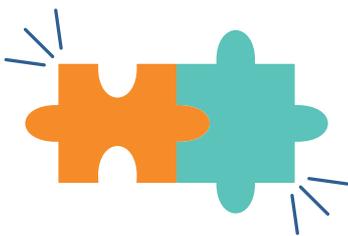
**a.** Focus on systemic issues affecting children and young people.



**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.**

# Special Inquiry into Children and Young People in Alternative Care Arrangements (ACAs)

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# The Special Inquiry into Children and Young People in ACAs

In September 2023, in accordance with Part 5 of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*, the Advocate established a Special Inquiry into children and young people in alternative care arrangements (ACAs). The purpose of this inquiry was to hear directly from children and young people about their experiences, in their own words.

As of 30 June 2023, there were more than 100 children and young people in ACAs across NSW. This included children and young people in the following settings:

- 26 in hotels and motels;
- 37 in serviced apartments; and
- 55 in short-term rentals, including caravan parks.

A key focus of the Special Inquiry was to speak directly with children and young people in ACAs to hear about their experiences and explore what changes could be made to better support them and others in the future. Over the course of the Special Inquiry, the Advocate conducted private hearings with 21 children and young people. The issues emerging from the private hearings held prior to 31 March 2024 were the focus of the interim report of the Special Inquiry, which was published on 2 May 2024. The questions asked during private hearings focused on the issues raised by the Terms of Reference, in particular, the process that led the child or young person to enter an ACA, their treatment and experience whilst in an ACA placement, and any impact that their placement in an ACA had on their safety, welfare and wellbeing.

The demographics for the 21 children and young people that participated in private hearings as part of the Special Inquiry are as follows:



Aged 10 to 23 years.

11 females, 9 males,  
1 young person who  
identifies as gender-diverse.



15 live in regional NSW and  
6 live in metropolitan Sydney.

12 identify as having a disability.



12 identify as Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait Islander.

2 are a parent.



2 identify as LGBTQIA+.

3 have experienced  
homelessness.



2 speak a language other  
than English at home.

To support and inform the work of the Special Inquiry, the Advocate hosted workshops with key stakeholders, including:

 **Academic Workshop**  
Monday, 26 February 2024

The Advocate drew on the expert insights of researchers and academics through this workshop to explore their understanding of the experiences of children and young people in ACAs.

The conversation included consideration of the short, medium and long-term impacts of ACAs on the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. Some of the topics explored included:

- the social, emotional, and physical health impacts of living in ACAs on children and young people;
- the impacts that living in ACAs can have on the children and young people's connections to family, friends, community, culture and other support systems;
- the researcher's perspectives and ideas about alternative approaches to ACAs, drawing on local and global examples of best practice; and
- the researchers' recommendations of priority areas for system reform.

 **Caseworker Workshop**  
Monday, 4 March 2024

The focus of the caseworker workshop was to hear about their experiences with children and young people in ACAs. The caseworkers shared their insight on some contributing factors that can lead to children and young people being placed in ACAs. They also recounted what they've heard and seen from children and young people about their treatment in ACAs, and the impact of these conditions and this treatment.

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On Friday, 8 March 2024, the Advocate held a public hearing on YouTube and Instagram Live to provide an update on the Special Inquiry's progress and future plans.

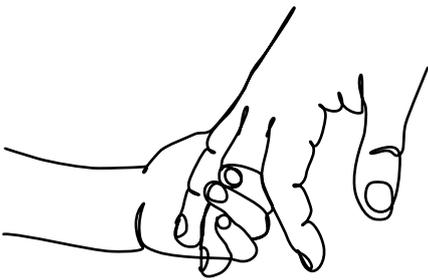
# The Special Inquiry Interim Report Launch

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On Thursday, 2 May 2024, the Advocate launched *Moving Cage to Cage: An interim report of the Special Inquiry into children and young people placed into alternative care arrangements.*

The interim report focuses on amplifying the voices of children and young people with lived experience in ACAs, including those who participated in the private hearings as part of this Special Inquiry.

The key themes explored in this interim report include:



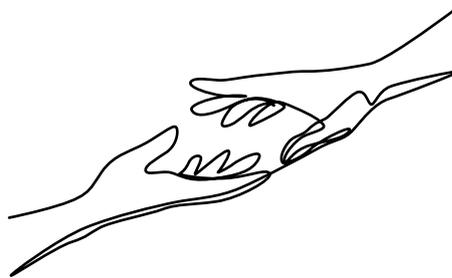
Safety and quality of care



Stability and communication



Access to supports and services



Connection to family, friends, community and culture

To launch the interim report, the Hon. Kate Washington MP, Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Inclusion, and the Advocate, appeared at a press conference to deliver an overview of the report's findings.

Based on these findings, which included the first-hand experiences of children and young people from the private hearings, the NSW Government established an urgent review of the foster care system.

At the close of the reporting period, the Advocate was preparing the final report, which was subsequently tabled in August 2024.

# Consultations

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# Consultations

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As outlined in 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'. It is critical that children and young people are involved in decision making processes because the decisions we make and the policies we design today, will impact them, now and in the future.

To inform their work, the Advocate directly engages in consultation with children and young people from a range of backgrounds and experiences across NSW, with particular interest and priority given to the needs of the children and young people who are most vulnerable.

Consultations can be initiated due to a variety of reasons, including the Advocate's priorities under the [\*NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024\*](#), the emerging themes and issues that the Advocate hears from children and young people, and the targeted consultations the Advocate leads to support other government departments and agencies with their work.

The Advocate draws on a child rights approach when designing their consultations, to encourage children and young people to openly share their views, experiences and hopes for the future. Each consultation is tailored to the needs of the children and young people, depending on a variety of factors, which include the sensitivity of the topic, the lived experiences of participants and the context of the consultation.

## Cost of Living

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The rising cost of living has been of concern to government, media and the community for several years. This is echoed in the views and experiences of children and young people across NSW.

In the 2023 Strategic Plan Tracking Poll, cost of living became the number one issue for young people in NSW for the first time, with over a third (35%) mentioning this issue unprompted; this is up from 26% in 2022 and 8% in 2021. Cost of living is also the top area that young people said they would like to see more support from government.

Responding to this, the Advocate facilitated a project to:

- understand the ways that young people are impacted by and coping with the increasing cost of living pressures in NSW; and
- identify solutions that government, business and community can implement to address these experiences.

Consultations for this report commenced in April 2023, prior to the reporting period, and were conducted across New South Wales. The [\*It should be easier to just exist: How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW\*](#) report was launched in December 2023.

# The Voices of Refugee and Migrant Children and Young People

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To understand the experiences of children and young people who are refugees or newly arrived migrants, the Advocate commenced work focused on this cohort. This work aligns with the priorities of the [\*NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024\*](#), “Love, connection and safety” and “Hope for the future”.

The focus of this work is:

- Community and belonging;
- culture and identity; and
- education and employment aspirations.

In this reporting period the ACYP team has consulted with over 123 young people aged between 12 and 24 in Armidale, Wollongong, Guildford, Lakemba, Fairfield, Blacktown and Holroyd. Further consultations are scheduled for Fairfield, Cooma, Goulburn, Wagga Wagga and Albury, which will take place during the next reporting period.

The findings from these consultations will be outlined in a report that will be launched in late 2024 and inform key recommendations for government, community and business.

## Community-based partnerships for consultations

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### Netball NSW



The Advocate continued their partnership with Netball NSW, which commenced in May of the previous reporting period. In July 2023, the Advocate attended the Netball Regional State Titles tournament in Liverpool. At this tournament, the Advocate heard from more than 79 children and young people aged 14 years and under.

## Becoming an Adult Workshop and Youth Hub Redesign

During this work children and young people were asked about what they liked about being a young person in NSW and what they didn't like. Key positives were the access to sporting opportunities and nature, whilst negative comments related to the demands of school, effects of crime and the perceptions and treatment of young people.

In 2023, the Advocate was a member of the Becoming an Adult Steering Committee and Working Group led by the NSW Department of Customer Service (DCS).

In November 2023, the Advocate worked with DCS to co-facilitate a consultation about life skills with seven young people from Greater Sydney at the ACYP office. During this consultation, participants were asked to rank the importance of seven life skill domains, their confidence and competence in these domains, their perception of what life stage each domain is relevant to, the barriers they perceive in gaining confidence and competence in the domain, and key moments of learning. The domains were:

- social, emotional and relationship skills;
- health and wellbeing skills;
- transport and travel skills;
- at home skills;
- administration and organisational skills;
- career development skills; and
- financial skills.

Following this, the Advocate provided feedback on the re-design of the NSW Government's Young People Hub and facilitated a review and feedback from the 2024 Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The new hub, which included information and support resources across the seven life skills domains, was launched on 16 May 2024.

## Work with the Aboriginal Advocate for Children and Young People – Consultations

In July 2023, Shannon Thorne was appointed as the Aboriginal Advocate for Children and Young People. The Aboriginal Advocate was tasked with working with government, business and community to:

- ensure the voices of Aboriginal children and young people were heard in decision making processes; and
- drive system change to improve welfare and wellbeing.

During his five-month term, the Aboriginal Advocate consulted with children, young people and community in Greater Sydney, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, the Northern Rivers and Broken Hill.

120 children and young people completed surveys where they were asked:

- demographic questions including age, gender, location, who they live with, their lived experiences
- the top issues being faced by Aboriginal children and young people, which were identified as:
  - racism;
  - alcohol and other drugs in their community; and
  - mental health
- questions related to their needs.

An analysis of their responses is included below.

During these consultations, Aboriginal children and young people called for:

- more funding for local services and programs;
- support to connect to culture;
- support to address substance misuse; and
- the Advocate to focus on providing resources, funding, services, breaking cycles of disadvantage and addressing racism.

## NAIDOC Week

The Advocate and the ACYP team attended the AbSec NAIDOC Family Fun Day at Marrickville PCYC on 10 July 2023, where they heard from over 133 children and young people.

At the event, the ACYP team encouraged children and young people to take part in a consultation activity where they were asked:

- What do you like most about NAIDOC Week?
- What do you like most about your culture?

In the responses to these questions, common themes from the children and young people included the importance of their traditions and celebrations, and having a strong connection to their culture.

## Nations of Origin 2023

During the two day Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) Nations of Origin Sports Tournament, the Advocate and the ACYP team hosted small group consultations, where they heard from 276 children and young people from across NSW.

Nations of Origin is a sport, cultural, education and leadership program that culminates around NAIDOC week. Each year, around 1,400 Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people represent their Aboriginal Nation in Rugby League, Football fives, Basketball, Netball and Gymnastics to promote reconciliation within communities and celebrate Australia's diverse Indigenous cultures.

Young people were asked questions about their culture and what key things they wanted government to know. The children and young people who participated spoke about the importance of their culture, and their views that the government should provide more funding and opportunities for them to be involved in decision making. The young people expressed how much they enjoyed engaging with sport and having connections with their peers. When asked about what is not working well for young people in NSW, many participants spoke about the cost of living, vaping and youth crime.

## Settlement Services International Youth Symposium

On 30 August 2023, the Advocate and the ACYP team attended the Settlement Services International (SSI) Youth Symposium for the launch of the SSI Youth Speak report.

The ACYP team led two focus groups of seven young people. The participants were asked about their experiences of:

- settlement in NSW;
- access to higher education; and
- engaging in the workforce.

Through their responses, the young people shared that they experienced barriers with:

- gaining recognition of their previously attained qualifications in Australia;
- understanding the support and pathways that are available to them; and
- connecting with their culture, which they identified as being important to them.

## Central Coast Youth Leadership (YLF23) Forum

In November 2023, the Advocate and the ACYP team were invited to the Central Coast Research Institute's Youth Leadership Forum. At this forum, high school leaders from across the Central Coast in Year 10 and Year 11 participated in a range of workshops. The main topics explored with participants were the issues that matter to them and how they can advocate for change in their community.

The ACYP team delivered a presentation and held a stall to provide information about the work of the Office and facilitate short consultation activities.

## Futsal Fusion State Championships (2023)

In September 2023, the ACYP team attended the Hawkesbury Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) 'Futsal Fusion State Championship' where they held consultation workshops with 121 children and young people aged between eight and thirteen years old.

The participants were asked the following questions:

- What do you like about being a young person in your community?
- What do you not like about being a young person in your community?
- What would you change if you were the boss of the Government?

Through their responses, the children and young people raised concerns about a range of issues, including the cost of living, safety in the community and the need for better access to sports and other programs outside of school.

## Street Industries – Friday Night Football Lakemba

In September 2023, the ACYP team attended the Street Industries 'Friday Night Football' initiative at KIKOFF in Lakemba where they held small group consultations with 61 young people aged between 12 and 18 years old.

Street Industries is a grassroots not for profit organisation that offers innovative programs to support and empower young people from diverse backgrounds across South West and Western Sydney.

In this consultation, the participants reflected on their experiences of having a strong connection to their local community and reported feeling accepted, due to multiculturalism. They also talked about the need for improved support for their employment and career opportunities, through life skills programs.

South West Connect:  
Wellbeing and  
VET Summits

The participants also raised a range of concerns, which included:

- the cost of living;
- access to affordable housing;
- safety in the community; and
- the lack of adequate support for young people and families doing it tough.

The participants shared their aspirations and dreams for after school with the ACYP team, which included a range of careers, including trades, professional football, dentistry, medicine and engineering.

In October 2023, the ACYP team attended the South West Connect: Wellbeing and Success Summit at Novella on the Park in Abbotsbury, where they heard from 203 students from schools across Greater Western Sydney.

The young people participated in a series of workshops, activities and consultations aimed at encouraging conversations about how they maintain their wellbeing and what the NSW Government can do to support their wellbeing.

The schools involved in this consultation were:

- Casula High School;
- Chester Hill High School;
- Fairfield High School;
- Hoxton Park High School;
- Ifran College;
- John Edmondson High School;
- Lurnea High School;
- Merrylands High School;
- Patrician Brothers High School; and
- St Johns Park High School.

In November 2023, the ACYP team also attended the Southwest Connect: VET Summit. At this event, young people participated in activities focussed on education and employment pathways where they consulted with 172 students from the following high schools across Greater Western Sydney:

- Cabramatta High School;
- Canley Vale High Schools;
- Fairvale High School;
- Hoxton Park High School;
- John Edmondson High School;
- Key College (Youth off the Streets);
- Liverpool Girls High School;
- Lurnea High School;
- Merrylands High School;
- Moorebank High School; and
- Westfield Sports High School.

The participants were asked questions about their aspirations for the future, including what was holding them back, their biggest challenge in school and what has been most helpful in school in preparing for their future.

## School Spectacular

In November 2023, the Advocate and the ACYP team attended the two-day NSW Schools Spectacular event. Across the event, the Advocate and the ACYP team heard from over 440 children and young people through a variety of interactive consultation activities and games held at an ACYP stall. The consultations were focussed on two of the priority commitment areas of the [\*NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024\*](#), 'Respect and Acceptance' and 'Love, Connection and Safety'.

A range of questions were asked during the consultation, including:

- What is the best thing about your community?
- What is the best thing about being a young person in NSW?
- If you were the boss of the government, what would you change?

Children and young people spoke about their experiences of bullying (including cyberbullying), stress and pressure to do well in school, and their barriers to education. When asked what can be improved, the participants mentioned changing school times, requiring less attendance and cancelling the phone ban. They also raised matters relating to better supporting cost of living, and stopping vaping.

## University Open Days

To engage children and young people aged 14 and over, and support the work of the Minister for Youth, the ACYP team attended a number of events at Universities and concerts, including The University of Newcastle, Western Sydney University and the University of Wollongong. The ACYP team also ran an engagement activity at the Taylor Swift concerts in Sydney.

During these events, the young people were encouraged to complete a survey to share the top issues facing them and their perspectives on how the government should support young people.

## United Associations of Australia Human Rights Day

In December 2023, the Advocate and the ACYP team were invited to host a stall at the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) NSW One Voice, One Humanity: NextGen event in support of United Nations Human Rights Day and World Day of Social Justice.

During the event, children and young people, and representatives from Save the Children, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Institute of Economics and Peace, and Amnesty International shared their experiences, ideas and work through TEDx style presentations.

# Submissions

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# Submissions

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The Advocate is required, in accordance with the Act, 'to make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people'. 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.

The recommendations made in submissions are informed by children and young people, and the work of the Office in consultations, polling and research.

Below is an outline of the key submissions that the Advocate made in this reporting period. The following chapter highlights progress in relation to recommendations made.

## Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety's Inquiry on E-Cigarette Regulation and Compliance in NSW

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In November 2023, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry on *E-Cigarette Regulation and Compliance in NSW*.

The Advocate drew on the [Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs: Young people's perspectives on vaping in 2023](#) report, which included findings from focus group style consultations that were conducted with 261 young people aged 13 to 18 years. Young people's thoughts, experiences and perceptions of vaping culture were shared with the Advocate and the Office during these consultations, noting that the participants viewed it as:

- strongly influenced by peer pressure;
- a stress management tool; and
- less harmful than some adults portray it to be.

The submission contained recommendations for both the NSW Government and Federal Government, which included:

- work collaboratively with the Federal Government to phase out the availability of non-nicotine e-cigarette products and to expand existing legislation related to advertising and packaging; and
- co-design, test and evaluate a range of support options with young people.

In April 2024, the Advocate was invited to appear before the Committee to provide further information about their submission. The Advocate created an opportunity for a young person with lived experience to appear at a closed hearing, to enable the Committee to hear and learn directly from them.

## Legislative Assembly – Banning LGBTQIA+ Conversion Practice

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In August 2023, the Advocate made a submission to provide feedback to the targeted consultation on the NSW Government's election commitment to ban LGBTQIA+ conversion practices.

To inform this submission, the Advocate drew on the [\*NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024\*](#), and [\*The Voices of LGBTQIA+ Young People in NSW 2022: We don't owe anyone queerness or straightness... I just want to exist, you know?\*](#) report. The report captured the perspectives and experiences of 233 LGBTQIA+ identifying young people gathered through face to face and online consultations.

The Advocate's submission amplified the voices of LGBTQIA+ young people, specifically in relation to their experience of discrimination, bullying and hate speech.

## Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Inquiry into Equity, Accessibility and Appropriate Delivery of Outpatient and Community Mental Health Care in NSW

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In September 2023, the Advocate worked with five former members of the NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to make a [submission](#) to the inquiry into *Equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health care in NSW*.

The young people, who contributed to this submission, came from a range of backgrounds, ages and geographical locations and have lived experience of mental health care in NSW. The submission began with a personal statement from each of the YAC members.

In the submission, the Advocate illustrated that mental health has been consistently identified as a key issue by children and young people through the [\*ACYP NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024\*](#), the annual Strategic Plan Tracking surveys, and the Youth Week survey results from 2021, 2022 and 2023.

This submission included 16 recommendations, including establishing and consulting youth advisory groups, increasing health literacy for the adults who support children and young people, increasing the capacity for peer-led mental health support, and addressing rising costs associated with mental health care.

In September 2023, the Advocate was invited to appear before the Committee to provide further information about the submission.

## Law Reform Commission Review of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*

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In October 2023, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the NSW Law Reform Commission's preliminary review of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* for New South Wales.

This submission was informed by the Advocate's consultations with children and young people in the 2023 [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People: Tracking Report 02](#) and results from the 2023 Youth Week poll.

Recommendations made included:

- modernising the definition of discrimination;
- expanding who is protected under the Anti-Discrimination Act; and
- adding requirements to the Act to require employers to proactively prevent discrimination, harassment and vilification.

## Statutory Review of the *Online Safety Act 2021*

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In June 2024, the Advocate made a submission to the Federal government inquiry into the *Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act 2021*.

This submission was informed by the Advocate's consultations with children and young people, including the [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024](#) and its associated tracking polls, the 2021, 2022 and 2023 Youth Week polls, and work in 2022 with the Minister for Education to address bullying.

Recommendations were focussed on the importance of consulting and co-designing solutions and reforms with children and young people, and the importance of privacy and security.

## Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Inquiry into NSW Children and Young People with Disability in NSW Educational Settings

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In March 2024, the Advocate made a submission to the inquiry into *NSW children and young people with disability in New South Wales educational settings*.

The Advocate drew on their report [The Voices of Children and Young People with Disability](#), which included consultation with 233 children and young people with lived experience, to inform this submission. This submission made 12 recommendations which include increasing the availability of services to support vocational and educational opportunities for children and young people with disability, increasing resources in schools to support students with a disability, and considering creating NDIS-specific Youth Specialist Advisor positions.

In April 2024, the Advocate and two young people from the NSW Youth Advisory Council were invited to appear before the Committee to discuss this submission.

To inform the inquiry:

- the Advocate shared a survey with stakeholders who engage with ACYP; and
- the ACYP team facilitated introductions to service providers to support the participation of young people with lived experience in a roundtable hosted in Newcastle in April 2024.

## Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services – Inquiry into the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTQIA+) Bill 2023

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In April 2024, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the NSW Parliament inquiry into the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTQIA+) Bill 2023.

The Advocate embedded the voices of children and young people in this submission through drawing on [The Voices of LGBTQIA+ Young People in NSW 2022: We don't owe anyone queerness or straightness... I just want to exist, you know?](#) report, the [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024](#), including the annual tracking reports, and Youth Week polling from 2021, 2022 and 2023.

The submission made 18 recommendations which included the importance of developing more accessible and easy-to-understand information targeted at young people, modernising the complaint process, increasing support for young people to lodge a complaint, and providing funding for teachers to complete LGBTQIA+ inclusion training.

In May 2024, the Advocate was invited to appear before the Committee to provide further information about their submission.

## 2024 Review of the Mental Health Commission of NSW

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In June 2024, the Advocate made a submission to the statutory *Review of the Mental Health Commission of NSW*. The voices of children and young people were embedded in this submission through drawing on the [What Aboriginal children and young people have to say](#) report, [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024 tracking polls 2022 and 2023](#), [The Voices of LGBTQIA+ Young People in NSW 2022: We don't owe anyone queerness or straightness... I just want to exist, you know?](#) report, the [Consultations with refugee and asylum seeker children and young people](#) report, [The Voices of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care: You need to listen. You honestly need to listen to what a young person's got to say](#) report, and the [It should be easier to just exist: How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW](#) report.

The Advocate recommended prioritising children and young people in the Commission's future Strategic Plans and co-designing with them, to ensure their voices are included.

## NSW Law Reform Commission – Serious Racial and Religious Vilification

In April 2024, the Advocate made a submission to the Review of Section 93Z of the Crimes Act and its effectiveness in addressing *serious racial and religious vilification*.

The Advocate embedded the voices of children and young people in this submission utilising previous work, including the [Consultations with refugee and asylum seeker children and young people](#) report, [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024](#), [NSW Strategic Plan Tracking Report 02](#), and Youth Week surveys.

Recommendations in this submission include suggestions to provide more information tailored for young people about the process and steps involved in making a complaint, co-designing with young people, modernising the complaints process, and providing an additional support person to support children and young with a disability or who have a language barrier.

## Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety – Community Safety in Regional and Rural NSW

In June 2024, the Advocate made a submission to the inquiry into *Community Safety in Regional and Rural NSW*. The Advocate and the ACYP team have done a lot of work in regional and rural areas, supporting children and young people who have had contact with the youth justice system.

The Advocate made 12 recommendations which include increasing funding and support for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, greater investment in trauma-informed youth-specific services, and enhancing pathways for children and young people to access safe, stable and affordable housing post-release, which is ideally co-located with holistic support available.

## Other Submissions

The Advocate also made submissions to the following:

- NSW Fair Trading – Improving NSW Rental Laws Consultation Paper;
- Office for Youth – Australia’s Youth Engagement Strategy;
- Department of Social Services – National Housing and Homelessness Plan;
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice – Reviewing Legal Protections Against Forced Marriage in NSW;
- Department of Social Services – Review of Financial Wellbeing and Capability Programs;
- Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Safety – Improving Access to Early Childhood Health and Development Checks;
- Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal’s (IPART) – Review of Out-of-Home Care Cost and Pricing;
- Commonwealth Parliament – Crimes Amendment (Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Violence) Bill 2024;
- NSW Parliament - Consultation Bill – Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Amendment Bill 2024;
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice – Redesigning Family Preservation in NSW Discussion Paper; and
- Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters – Civics Education, Engagement, and Participation in Australia.

# Report Launches

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# Report Launches

Based on the reoccurring themes that have emerged from consultations and surveys with children and young people, the Advocate periodically undertakes further investigation to produce reports. During this reporting period, the Advocate delivered five publicly available reports.



## Vaping Report | September 2023

In October 2023, the Advocate released their consultation report, *Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs: Young people's perspectives on vaping in 2023*. This report was informed by consultations with over 260 young people who had participated in 25 focus groups.

The report highlighted these young people's thoughts about:

- why young people choose to vape or not to vape; and
- what supports would help a young person if they were trying to stop vaping, with specific tools or services proposed for consideration.



## Cost-of-Living Report | December 2023

In December 2023, the Advocate released the final report *It should be easier to just exist: How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW*.

This report builds on an interim report and includes qualitative and quantitative data drawn from mixed-methods engagement with over 2,000 children and young people across NSW through:

- the Advocate's annual Youth Week survey facilitated by SEC Newgate;
- 34 face-to-face focus group consultations with young people aged 16 – 24 years; and
- three supplementary online questionnaires targeting the general population of children and young people aged 10 – 24 years, and tertiary education students who attend TAFE and University.



This report provides insight into the specific pressures that young people and their families are facing in a variety of areas, including:



Groceries



Healthcare



Housing



Education



Employment



Transport



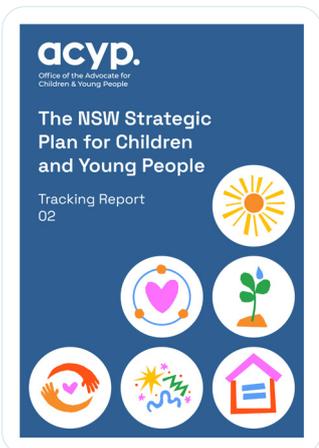
Childcare



Experiences of Debt

This report highlights the reality that young people are being forced to change their aspirations and sacrifice their health, wellbeing, education and social connections, due to the rising cost of living.

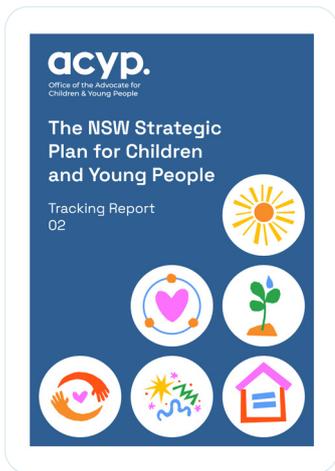
These pressures are even more stark for those young people who are already experiencing vulnerability and doing it tough.



## Strategic Tracking Report 02 | February 2024

In this reporting period, the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024* continued to drive the activities of the Advocate. In February 2024, the Advocate released the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People: Tracking Report 02*.

This tracking report outlines the key findings from the 2023 tracking survey and its areas of focus: 'A Good Standard of Living' and 'Respect and Acceptance'. This report compares the findings from 2023 to the 2022 benchmark results from the Strategic Plan.



Findings from Tracking Report 02 include that:



**72%** of children and young people provided a positive rating of seven or more out of ten when asked how they felt about their life as a whole, an increase from **65%** in 2022.



**75%** of children and young people provided a positive rating of seven or more out of ten on their hope for getting the education and training they need.



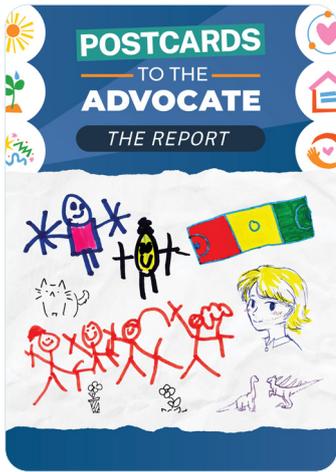
There was an increase of children and young people who identify cost of living as the number one issue, with **35%** of participants mentioning it unprompted, up from **8%** in 2021



Mental health and emotional wellbeing remain a key concern with just over **one in five** young people (22%) mentioning one or both topics unprompted. However, it is down **10%** from 2022, when nearly a third (**32%**) mentioned it as a key issue.



In 2023, **36%** of children and young people had experienced bullying in the past 12 months. Among the participants who experienced bullying in the past 12 months, more than **one in three** (36%) experienced bullying weekly.



## Postcards to the Advocate Report | June 2024

During Children's Week 2022, the Advocate announced a new engagement initiative, Postcards to the Advocate. Reply paid postcards were sent to organisations that expressed interest in participating, in which children and young people share their hopes for the future through drawings or writing.

Over the course of the initiative, the Advocate received more than 600 postcards from 24 schools across NSW, engaging with children as young as three years old. Across the three age groups, the Advocate received postcards from:



97

children between three and six



220

children between seven and 12



338

young people between 13 and 18



The postcards highlighted the insights that can be gained from listening to the views of children and young people, particularly on what makes them happy and gives them hope. This report also speaks to the need for government, business and community to work with children and young people to fulfil their hopes and build a future that supports them and future generations of children and young people.

The *Postcards to the Advocate* report presents the responses completed from October 2022 to April 2023. The key themes shared by children and young people in the postcards include:

- Career;
- School and university;
- Environment;
- Financial stability and wealth;
- Relationships;
- Happiness;
- Safer society;
- Health and wellbeing; and
- Equality.



I want to write a book to make people happy

# Recovery Youth Support Services

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# Northern Rivers Youth Recovery Support Service

The Advocate's Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS) team has entered its second year of operation in the flood affected areas of the Northern Rivers.

acyp recovery  
youth  
support  
service.



This team was initially funded until June 2024, but was extended until the end of March 2025.

This reporting period, the RYSS team focussed on:

- increasing their engagement within the Northern Rivers community;
- designing and launching the Brief Intervention Support Service; and
- driving targeted advocacy projects, such as the Youth Led Disaster Recovery, and the Future Preparedness Roundtable in the Northern Rivers, which was done in collaboration with the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Youth and Minister for the North Coast.

## ■ Northern Rivers Youth Consultation

Since March 2023, the Advocate's RYSS team has engaged in wide ranging consultations across the Northern Rivers region, reaching over 850 children and young people.

The team focussed their consultation efforts specifically on the young people living in the temporary pod villages, to make sure their voices were being heard and included when decision makers were designing and facilitating community-led recovery activities and programs.

The findings from these consultations were synthesised into thematic reports which have been provided to the NSW Reconstruction Authority and used by the Advocate to influence decision making processes.

To inform the report, RYSS built relationships and collaborated with local councils to gather feedback from the community and contribute to place-based design projects.

The ACYP team routinely work with children and young people to hear about their thoughts, perspectives and experiences on matters that impact them, this includes the consultations RYSS led on:

- the ACYP Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024;
- Life in Acmena Youth Justice Centre and transition back into community;
- Richmond-Tweed Library, resulting in the successful co-design of a new youth space in the Lismore library;
- Casino Beef Week and a new youth space for Casino; and
- Agency for Youth Survey.

## ■ Northern Rivers Youth Community Engagement

A key focus of the Advocate's RYSS team's work is to undertake community engagement and foster connections between children, young people and decision-makers. Disaster recovery, adaptation and mitigation are all multi-stage processes in which the voices and representation of children and young people will need to be embedded throughout.

Throughout the past year, the ACYP team has supported volunteers and community members from a variety of organisations and groups to facilitate community run activities for children and young people. These events enabled the team to build relationships, collaborate, share key findings, and ensure that their services are differentiated, so that resources are maximised.

The RYSS team has co-designed and delivered many recreational initiatives and events with and for children and young people to increase social cohesion in local communities, including:

- regular school holiday activities and after school programs on site at the Pod Villages, with the community housing providers that manage these facilities;
- providing outreach school holiday activities and after school programs with PCYC Lismore in remote communities, such as Coraki and Wardell;
- continuing to sponsor the 2024 Casino Beef Week Ambassador program, which involved delivering an Advocacy Training program; and
- engaging in existing programs, such as the PCYC Lismore's Fit for Life program, the Children's Week Colour Run in Ballina, and more broadly with Northern NSW through the Netball NSW Regional Tournament.

## Northern Rivers Youth Capacity Building

Children and young people in disaster recovery often face unique and difficult circumstances.

In this reporting period, the Advocate's RYSS team had a focus on community capacity building for the services that currently, or likely will, work with children and young people in the Northern Rivers.

On an ongoing basis, the RYSS team shares and promotes existing programs delivered by colleagues in other government agencies and non-government organisations, to boost awareness of the importance and support the participation of children and young people. The sharing of knowledge and experiences is facilitated by RYSS with local service providers in a similar way to a community of practice.

The ACYP team has also established a formal working group with regular meetings between the Pod Village Engagement Co-ordinators to promote the sharing of best practice, explore collaboration opportunities, and amplify the voices of children and young people living in the pod villages.



## Northern Rivers Youth Support Service

A central pillar of the Advocate's RYSS team work is the facilitation of a trauma-informed intervention support service for children and young people aged between eight and 24 years old who live in the flood affected areas of the Northern Rivers.

This support service was launched in August 2023 and to date has provided targeted support to 47 children and young people.

Children and young people voluntarily participated in this service, which focussed on providing supported referrals and coordinated with other services in the region to provide holistic psycho-social care to the child or young person.





## ■ Northern Rivers Youth Advocacy

### *Youth Led Disaster Recovery and Future Preparedness Roundtable*

In November 2023, the Advocate co-hosted a Youth Led Disaster Recovery and Future Preparedness Roundtable in the Northern Rivers with the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Youth and Minister for the North Coast.

The event hosted 28 young people aged between 13 and 24 years who live in the Northern Rivers community, alongside local support services, businesses and local government.

Discussion at the roundtable focussed on the young people's reflections and experiences of natural disaster recovery and preparedness, as well as their ideas about what they feel they need in their local communities to enhance their wellbeing.

# Voices of Children and Young People in the Northern Rivers



In March 2024, the Advocate together with the RYSS team launched a report titled *Disaster Recovery and Preparedness Report: 'Voices of children and young people in the Northern Rivers'*.

This report shares the thoughts, views and ideas of 635 young people who had engaged with the Advocate's Recovery Support Service. This report also features recommendations that were co-designed with young people on how disaster recovery and future preparedness responses can better meet the needs of all children and young people in NSW.

Report recommendations include:

- an evaluation of current recovery and preparedness responses, based on our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- an urgent evaluation into temporary pod villages and emergency accommodation models, which includes considering alternative immediate housing solutions and making provision for a sustainable long-term transition solution from pod villages;
- the development of a youth-led disaster recovery volunteer group in the Northern Rivers to mobilise young people, with a focus on preparing to support communities during natural disaster events and the development of systems, processes and support for the community;
- the importance of embedding
  - long-term, sustainable systems of co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build genuine relationships and partnerships with Traditional Owners, Elders and community leaders grounded in the principles of local cultural protocols, self-determination and community control;
- an increase in school counsellors at all schools across the Northern Rivers and ensuring the provision of school infrastructure that supports confidentiality and privacy; and
- funding and resourcing for the increased provision of public transport in the Northern Rivers, which could include funding for private providers of transport.

To launch the report in the Northern Rivers, the Advocate and the RYSS team attended the Resilient Lismore Disaster Ready Together Conference and participated in an interview with ABC Radio North Coast.

During the launch of this report the Advocate and young people in the Northern Rivers engaged with media and other platforms.

# Responses to Recommendations

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# Responses to Recommendations

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## Submission to the Consultation on Banning LGBTQIA+ Conversion Practice

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In March 2024, the NSW Government passed the LGBTQIA+ Conversion Practice law which criminalises conversion practices that seek to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity and cause serious mental or physical harm. These changes also provide redress to survivors through a civil pathway and makes it illegal to take someone out of NSW to undergo a conversion practice. The Advocate continues to elevate young people's rights and their voices based on the findings from ACYP's reports and the Office's ongoing consultations with young people.

## Submission into Inquiry on Equity, Accessibility and Appropriate Delivery of Outpatient and Community Mental Health Care in NSW

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The Advocate welcomed the inquiry's final report which called for more funding, programs and services to the community, so that they can access support before they become critically ill or unwell.

The final report highlighted the difficulties for people impacted by trauma and traumatic events, such as flooding disasters in the Northern Rivers region, to access complex mental health support. It also called for a model of care that is underpinned by long-term funding.

## Recommendation Tracking: Vaping Report and Submission to Inquiry on E-Cigarette Regulation and Compliance in NSW

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Many of the Advocate's recommendations from the [Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs: Young people's perspectives on vaping in 2023](#) report have been or are currently being implemented.

The Advocate is working with NSW Health and the Cancer Institute to develop an online tool and app for young people, to support them to quit vaping, due for release in December 2024. The Cancer Institute and NSW Health used insights from the Advocate's report to develop a peer-led anti-vaping campaign, which uses real life experiences of young people's addiction and health problems due to vaping. The campaign included testimonials from young people who have experienced the health harms of vaping.

The Advocate also worked with NSW Health and the Cancer Institute to ensure that supports for young people are co-designed with young people, and that there are a variety of supports available for them.

In line with recommendations from the Advocate's report and other key voices, the Department of Education and NSW Health have worked together to create universal education about the health harms of vaping, via online webinars and factsheets. These resources included information about referral to appropriate services.

Following evidence presented at the Vaping in Schools roundtable, which included a presentation of the Advocate's *Vaping can affect your whole life, not just your lungs: Young people's perspectives on vaping in 2023* report, the Department of Education decided not to install vape detectors as a method to reduce vaping in schools.

The report explained that young people believed they could circumvent vape detectors installed in school toilets and this preventative measure would not be effective. The department will focus on a range of actions including an increase in capability building for teachers, parent awareness webinars and information, and additional support for schools to promote vaping cessation and support pathways.

The Advocate welcomes changes to legislation, campaigning and practice at both the state and federal levels that were an outcome of the Inquiry on E-Cigarette Regulation and Compliance in NSW. Some notable changes include in:

- **January 2024** The Federal Government passed legislation banning disposable vapes.
- **January 2024** NSW Health launched the *Every Hit to Your Health* campaign.
- **July 2024** Nicotine vapes became regulated as therapeutic goods.
- **July 2024** Further legislation was passed by the Federal Government requiring plain packaging and limiting vape flavours.

Since the hearing, the NSW Government has focussed on:

- the illegal sale of vapes; and
- providing additional funding for vaping cessation, crackdowns on illegal vape sales and anti-vaping campaigns in the 2024-2025 Budget.

The report for this inquiry is now published on the NSW Parliamentary website, with findings and recommendations aligning with those presented to the inquiry, by the Advocate including:

- e-vaping retailers and companies are using a predatory approach to target children and young people;
- many stakeholders would prefer schools use a health-focussed approach to vaping rather than a punitive approach;
- the Department of Education should continue to explore peer-led approaches to vaping cessation; and
- public health vaping campaigns should be co-designed with target audiences and sustained over the long-term.

## Recommendation Tracking: Cost-of-Living Report

Alongside other organisations, the Advocate's final consultation report *It should be easier to just exist: How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW* advocated to address the rising costs of living in key areas, including accessing basic medical care.

The NSW Government has been working in partnership with the Federal Government to improve access to bulk-billed GP services for young people across NSW. During the 2024-2025 Budget, the NSW Government introduced a new telehealth service, Virtual Adults.

In June 2024, the Federal Government introduced the Treasury Laws Amendment (Responsible Buy Now Pay Later and Other Measures) Bill 2024, to provide greater regulation and protection for the usage of Buy Now Pay Later services.

The Advocate's recommendation for extending the Fee-Free TAFE initiative was also adopted as the program was extended for a further three years, from 1 January 2024 to 30 December 2026.

The Advocate has been working closely with the NSW Government across the Becoming an Adult Project.

Specifically in response to the Cost of Living Report, this has included:

*"My Career Planner launched in May 2024 as part of an upgrade to the Careers NSW platform to better support young people with the knowledge and guidance as they navigate a career."*

*"Young people co-designed an upgrade to the Young People's Hub which launched in May 2024 which included new and updated content with new content across seven 'Life Skills' domains."*

## Recommendation Tracking: Voices of Children and Young People in the Northern Rivers Report

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Since the launch of the [Disaster Preparedness Report: Voices of children and young people in the Northern Rivers](#), the Advocate's Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS) team has continued to support children, young people and support services and organisations in the Northern Rivers community. Progress has been made towards several of the recommendations from this report, including that:

- Richmond-Tweed Library conducted consultations with children and young people for the re-design of the new Lismore Library space that was rebuilt after the flood;
- community housing providers are increasingly facilitating consultations with the children and young people who use their services;
- Reconstruction Authority and community housing providers now support children and young people to have their own Housing Transition plans, to promote a sustainable transition from pod villages and emergency accommodation to long-term solutions;
- the Department of Communities and Justice Disaster Welfare team continues to work with the RYSS team on the design and provision of services in evacuation centres;
- the RYSS team support local community organisations with the drafting and development of grant proposals and other key documents; and
- the RYSS team are actively promoting the inclusion of children and young people's voices in the development of Disaster Adaptation Plans, led by Reconstruction Authority and Local Emergency Management Committees.
  - The RYSS team are working with the Reconstruction Authority to ensure the voices of children and young people are included in any considerations relating to the NSW Recovery Plan.

The RYSS team is supporting children, young people and services in the Northern Rivers community, and continues to work across the region around the needs of children and young people.

# Initiatives

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# Initiatives

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Throughout the reporting period, the Advocate led, facilitated and supported a number of key initiatives to continue to engage with children and young people.

The Advocate and the ACYP team designed tailored engagement activities to create opportunities for children and young people to share their thoughts, experiences and aspirations, on matters that are important to them.

The Advocate leads a series of ongoing, annual initiatives that align with their obligations, and complements this with supporting existing community-led projects with partner organisations.

## Ongoing Initiatives

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### ■ Children's Week 2023



Each year, in the third week of October, Children's Week is commemorated 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, to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to uphold children's human rights and ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive.

In 2023, Children's Week was observed between 21 and 29 October. The theme was based on Article 31 of the UNCRC: "All Children have the right to relax, play and take part in activities they enjoy".

### Children's Week Competition

To promote creativity and interactivity, the Advocate and the NSW Children's Week Council invited submissions for the NSW Children's Week Board Game Competition.

The competition was open to all children and young people under 18 years old who live in NSW between 3 October 2023 and 15 November 2023. The participants who entered this competition were tasked with designing and creating a board game based on their interests that is suitable for other children and young people to play. Some of the entries involved places of significance, favourite movies and activities, and other things that the entrants enjoy.

Nine winners received an award and prize, three from each of the age group categories.



*Social media tiles congratulating each of the first place winners.*

### Children's Week 2023 Events

#### Launch of the ACYP Office Mural

On 25 October 2023, to commemorate Children's Week, the Advocate hosted the launch of the office's mural, which was painted by students from Jarjum College.

The event commenced with a Welcome to Country from Uncle Elvis, who also performed a smoking ceremony at the entrance of the ACYP office building for the launch of the mural.



Her Excellency, the Hon. Margaret Beazley AO QC, who is the Patron of Redfern Jarjum College and the Patron of Children’s Week in NSW, and Mr Dennis Wilson, added their handprints to the mural as part of the opening ceremony.

As part of the formalities, Her Excellency and the Advocate invited the artists from Jarjum College to share their stories, thoughts and experiences about participating in the mural project.



### Children’s Week Consultations

The Advocate facilitated two consultation events with children in Year 3 and Year 4 at:

- the Penrith Valley Regional Sports Centre, engaging with 60 children from Werrington Public School, St Marys North Public School and Luddenham Public School; and
- Wagga Wagga PCYC, engaging with 70 children from Redhill Public School, Sturt Public School and Ashmont Public School.

The children were split into smaller groups and engaged in fun activities, including laser tag, nerf gun wars, basketball and craft painting rocks.



The consultation questions included:

- ‘What’s the most important rule when playing?’;
- ‘What does your community need for children to have fun and take part in activities?’; and
- ‘What do you do to relax and have fun in your community?’

Dr Joe McGuir, the Member for Wagga Wagga, attended this Children’s Week event and heard insights directly from the children who were there.

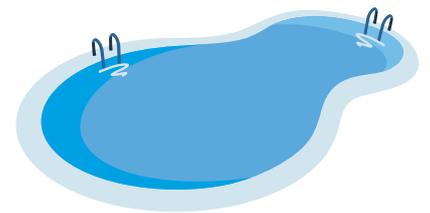
There were common themes in the responses from children at both events, including the importance of:



Having fun.

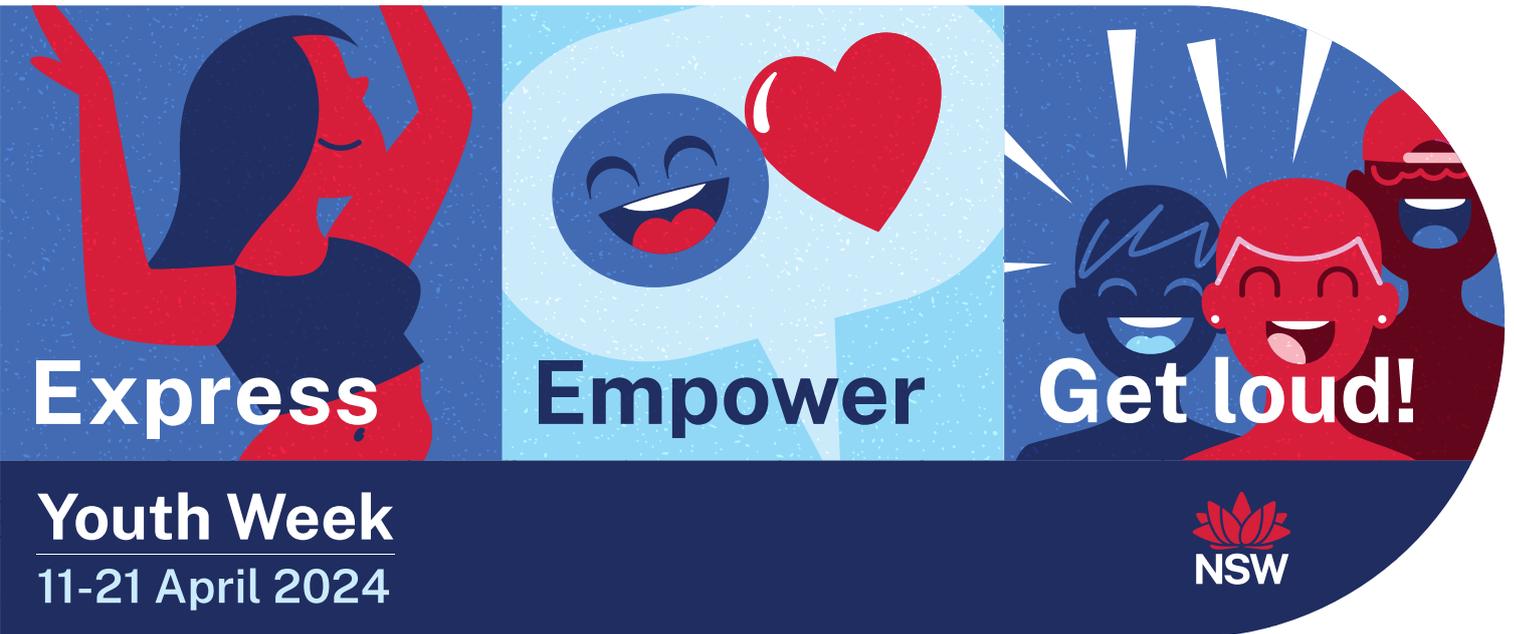


Respecting and including others while playing.



Having more pools and play equipment within their communities.

■ Youth Week



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

The Advocate plays a lead role in coordinating NSW Youth Week, alongside partner agencies, to facilitate and promote activities for young people across NSW.

The Advocate chairs and coordinates the NSW Youth Week Reference Group, which is responsible for providing advice on the management and operation of Youth Week in NSW. This forum is used to share best practice, ideas and learnings to shape Youth Week activities. Members of the reference group include:

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice;
- NSW Department of Customer Service;
- Youth Action NSW;
- Yfoundations;
- Local Government NSW;
- Local Council representatives;
- PCYC; and
- other partner agencies.

Through consultation with the Youth Week Reference Group and the YAC, the Advocate provided advice and recommendations to the Minister for Youth regarding the dates and theme for Youth Week.

NSW Youth Week was held between 11 and 21 April 2024. The theme that was decided by the NSW Youth Advisory Council was: *“Express. Empower. Get Loud!”*.

The 12-member NSW YAC decided the theme with the intention to convey that young people in NSW during Youth Week are free to...

## Express

Youth Week is a chance for every young person from across NSW to be themselves! It gives young people the opportunity to showcase their talents and get involved.



## Empower

It's time for young people in NSW to have their voices heard on issues that matter to them

## Get Loud!

Get loud and celebrate together at events happening in your local community and across NSW.



During Youth Week, the ACYP team co-ordinated and partnered with councils across NSW and attended 17 Youth Week events. This included:



Music festivals



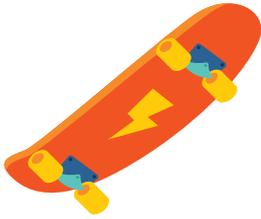
Celebrations



Movie nights



Sports activities



Skate competitions



Colour runs



Other fun activities

The Advocate or members of the ACYP team attended Youth Week activities in the following locations:

- Bankstown;
- Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service, Ballina;
- Casino;
- Coraki Pod Village;
- Coraki Riverside;
- Fairfield Showground;
- Kingswood TAFE;
- Kurachee, Coraki;
- Missingham;
- Murwillumbah;
- Nyngan High School;
- Nyngan Youth Centre;
- Peshurt;
- Walgett PCYC;
- Wardell Pod Village;
- Wollongong; and
- Wyong.



At each of the events, young people participated in a range of fun consultation activities to encourage them to share:

- what life is like in their communities;
- what are some of the issues affecting young people; and
- how government and other services can better support children and young people in their community.

## ■ NSW Youth Advisory Council



Part 4 and Schedule 1 of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*, establishes the functions and membership of the Youth Advisory Council, of which the Advocate is an ex-officio member and provides secretarial support.

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 children and young people and their communities.

### *YAC Recruitment 2025–2026*

Between 22 March 2024 and 21 April 2024, the Advocate accepted applications for the NSW 2025-2026 Youth Advisory Council (YAC) from children and young people aged between 12 and 24 years who reside in NSW.

The Advocate received 301 applications from children and young people across the state.

Each application was reviewed by the Advocate and members of the ACYP team, with 50 applicants being shortlisted and invited to attend an online briefing session and face-to-face recruitment event at NSW Parliament.

Following the in-person event, the Advocate made a recommendation to the Ministers as to the 12 members to be appointed. The appointments are progressing through the NSW Cabinet process for endorsement.

### *Youth Advisory Council Online Briefing*

On 28 June 2024, the online briefing session began with a Welcome to Country from the YAC Chair, Dylan Farr, a proud Gamilaroi man from Walgett in Far Western NSW. The Advocate then provided an address to the audience, which included an overview of the Office, and the importance, role and expectations of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC).

To assist the applicants to understand what being a YAC member involves, a “Day in a Life of a Youth Advisory Member” video, which featured the current YAC members Zak O’Hara, Sina Yousofi and Oluhle Gasa, was played.

This was followed by a Q&A panel with the YAC Chair Dylan Farr, and current YAC member, Oluhle Gasa, to provide the applicants with an opportunity to ask them questions directly.

The attendees were divided into virtual breakout rooms, so they could meet their peers and the members of the ACYP team that would be on their tables at the face-to-face recruitment event.

### *YAC Face-to-Face Recruitment Event*



On 28 June 2024, the face-to-face YAC recruitment event opened with a Welcome to Country from Savannah Finn. This event was filled with interesting activities, which are detailed on the following page.

## Panel

The Advocate chaired a panel of current and previous YAC members consisting of:



**Billy Bofinger**  
2022-2023  
YAC Member



**Sonja Vujanic**  
2023-2024  
YAC Member



**Ashish Thapa**  
2020-2021  
YAC Member



### MyStrengths Survey and Workshop

The 'MyStrengths' program was delivered to help the attendees find the strengths and personality traits that are unique and great about themselves. Each of the applicants had an opportunity to complete a MyStrengths assessment survey to identify their top five strengths and speak one-on-one with a coach to share and learn insight about their qualities.

### Social Media Consultation

A consultation about social media was conducted to hear children and young people's perspectives and experiences of the usage, benefits and potential harms of social media. The Advocate selected this topic to gain insight on children and young people's perspectives of the state government's proposal to raise the age requirement of accessing social media.

## Advocate Think Tank Activity

Applicants were invited to take part in an Advocate Think Tank Challenge, where each group was tasked with creating and developing a three-minute pitch based on one of the following topics:

- the cost of living;
- young people's voice to government;
- bullying; and
- preparing for life after school.

Each group was invited to deliver their pitch to a judging panel, which included the Advocate. The applicants also voted on their peers' presentations to select a fan favourite. This encouraged active listening and constructive feedback.



## YAC Student Voice Report

The 2022-2023 NSW YAC focused on a project to promote greater, more meaningful student voice in the education system. This project was initiated by the YAC who drew on their lived experiences from school and decided that they wanted to create change for themselves and their peers.

Members of the YAC, represented by students from rural, regional, and metropolitan schools across NSW, as well as Public, Catholic and Independent schools, reflected on their shared experiences of feeling unheard by their school systems.

The YAC decided that they should draw on these experiences and work with decision-makers to create change for themselves and their peers.

The 2022-23 NSW YAC surveyed 1,561 children and young people across NSW. They asked questions to learn more about how children and young people would like to have their voices and ideas heard and responded to at school. From their research, the YAC authored a report which shared their findings. The report was written to support the participation of students in decision making, with a focus on:

- identifying best practice examples of student voice in schools across NSW;
- reviewing current methods and tools used to capture student voice, including how current mechanisms impact school decision making;
- the current challenges and barriers for students to participate meaningfully in decisions on matters that impact them; and
- key recommendations on how schools can improve opportunities for students, including how to engage more meaningfully with students in decision making.

The report was launched publicly on 29 June 2024.

Ahead of its launch, the YAC sent an early release copy of the report and delivered a presentation to the Secretary of the NSW Department of Education (DoE), Murat Dizdar. The YAC also shared their findings with the Department of Education more broadly through the Quarterly Forum that the Advocate hosts with the Department.

The YAC and Secretary Dizdar co-authored statewide communications about the report's recommendations, which was sent to all school principals across NSW.

## Memorandum of Understanding: Department of Education

In June 2023, the Advocate entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the DoE. The MoU sets out how the DoE and the Advocate will work together to elevate the voices of children and young people in public education, from early childhood to post-school learning, so they are active contributors in decision making and have opportunities to thrive at school and in life.

A key aspect of this MoU was the quarterly forums between the Advocate and the DoE.



The main purpose of these forums is to provide a platform for shared insights and learnings between the Advocate and the DoE. Since its inception, a series of initiatives, presentations and strategic projects were delivered during this reporting period under the MoU, including in:

- **August 2023** The ACYP team presented findings from the Advocate's vaping consultations.
- **November 2023** An online interactive advocacy training was delivered to six disability advocacy service providers participating in the Disability Advocacy Futures Program, which was requested by the DoE, who has oversight of the program.
- **February 2024** The Advocate worked with the 2024 YAC and the DoE to co-design, build and launch a survey to record young people's online habits, experiences and perceptions of online safety. This was shared on the Office's social media and its networks.
- **May 2024** Members of the 2022-2023 YAC presented their Student Voice in Schools report recommendations with the DoE.

To continue building this relationship, discussions about more partnership opportunities between the Advocate and DoE are ongoing.

## Other Initiatives

### Refugee and Migrant Short Film Competition



On 29 February 2024, the Advocate launched a Short Film Competition to celebrate the voices of young people aged 13-24 who have arrived in Australia as a refugee or migrant. Young people were asked to submit a two-minute video which could be fictional or non-fiction, to reflect the theme 'Tell Us A Story'.

This opportunity was shared with the Advocate's network of stakeholders, organisations and schools across NSW. Entries for the competition closed on 25 June 2024.

### Work with the Minister for Youth: Australia's Youth Engagement Agency

In September 2023, the Advocate provided high-level feedback to inform the development of Australia's Youth Engagement Strategy.

The Advocate drew on the voices of children and young people from the *It should be easier to just exist: How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW Interim Quantitative Report*.

The information drawn from this report that influenced the development of Australia's Youth Engagement Strategy included the top issues that are important to young people, which were:

- mental health and access to healthcare, with a priority in mental health literacy, peer support capacity building, availability of services, fee help and a reduction in the waiting times of services;
- access to quality education, which includes resources on practical life skills, pathways to further education, training and employment opportunities, and better education about the Higher Education Contribution Scheme and its fee arrangement options; and
- the cost of living and housing, including addressing youth homelessness, inherent discrimination in the rental application system and the need for better access to transport in regional areas.

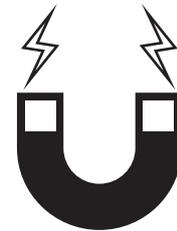
The Advocate also provided advice to inform the development of the Youth Engagement Model, including methods to facilitate meaningful engagement, and recommendations about programs and initiatives to consider as well as best practice examples that are based on:



International and national models



Common barriers to engagement that were identified by the children and young people



Strategies to engage effectively and sensitively with young people from diverse backgrounds.

The Advocate and the ACYP team has supported the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, in work around engaging young people in the Minister's work.

On 16 May 2024, the *'Your Voice, Our Future: Have your say on the future of youth policy in NSW'* survey was launched on the Have Your Say platform.

Monthly reporting is provided to the Minister to inform their work.



# Training and Internships

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# Training for those who work with children and young people

## ■ Child Rights eLearning Course

There were 257 successful completions of the Child Rights online training course from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

# Child Rights Training

## Child Rights, Advocacy and Participation Training

Throughout the last few years, the Advocate has continued to offer a range of training opportunities for children, young people and the adults who work with and support children and young people.

These training offerings contain valuable tips on a range of topics, including:



Child Rights



Advocacy Skills



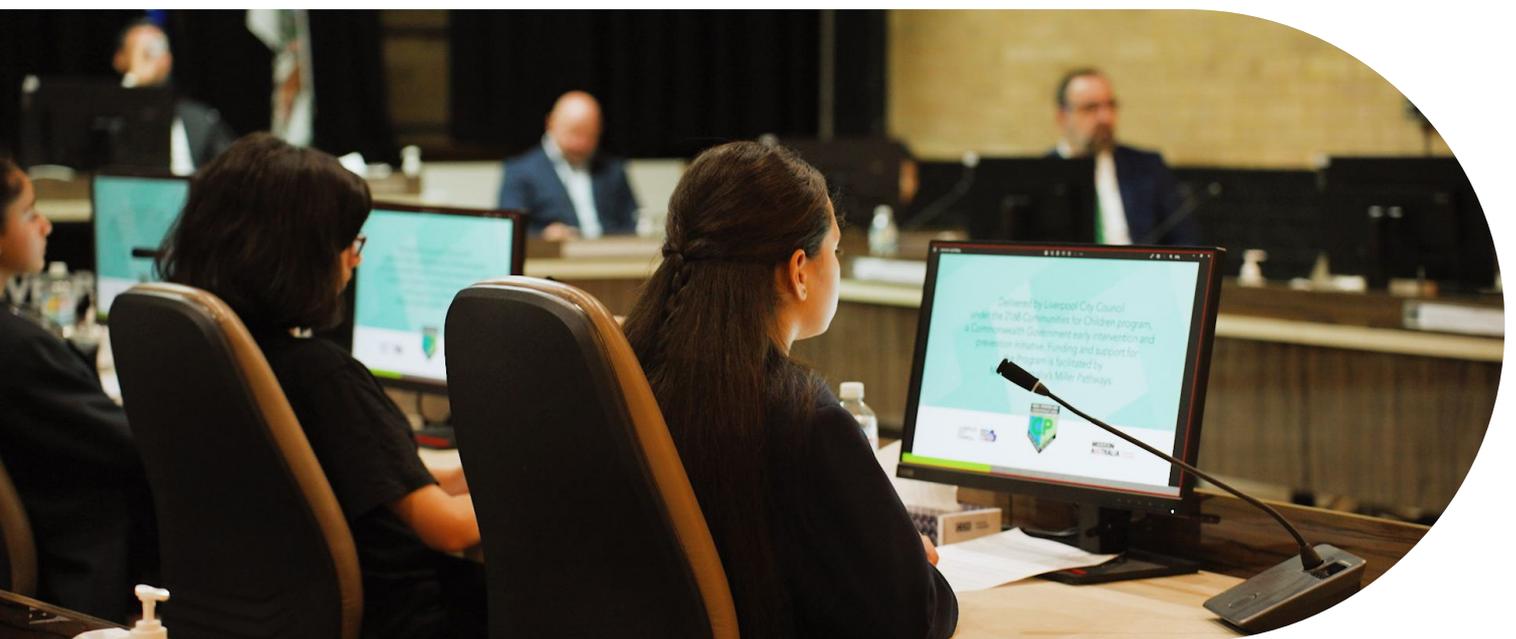
Facilitation Training

## ■ Training for those who Work with Children and Young People

In the reporting period, the Advocate and the ACYP team provided Advocacy and Participation training to government and non-government organisations and groups, including the:

- Youth Development Officers from Inner West Councils;
- NSW Health Child Safe Standards Community of Practice;
- Inner West Child and Family Interagency;
- Disability Advocacy Futures Program providers; and
- the Cumberland Council Children and Youth Development team.

## ■ Youth Participation Showcase



In June 2024, the Advocate launched three new *Participation in Practice* Case Study videos to highlight the value, benefits and outcomes of best-practice participation. Building on the four pre-existing case studies, the new videos focussed on the:

- 2168 Children's Parliament initiative led by the Liverpool City Council, Mission Australia and the NSW Department of Education. This annual program provides leadership and public speaking skills to 44 young people who are selected from the 12 participating schools from the Liverpool Local Government Area;
- Julia Reserve Youth Precinct in Camden, which is a space that was designed by young people, for young people. It has a drop-in service and soft entry points for specialised support, which includes case management, counselling and employment support; and
- Role and purpose of the Western Sydney Local Health District Youth Council which has 25 members aged between 16 and 25 years old. The focus of this case study video was to highlight how young people are engaged in the design and delivery of local services and strategies, including how they work effectively with Health District executives.

# Training for Children and Young People

## 2168 Children's Parliament

As an ambassador for the project, the Advocate and their team supported the 2168 Children's Parliament, which is an annual initiative facilitated by the Liverpool City Council, Mission Australia and the NSW Department of Education.

Each year, approximately 40 young Parliamentarians aged between nine and 12 years old, from eleven local primary schools in Liverpool, are elected to represent their school in this initiative.

Ambassadors and their representatives are invited to attend two Parliament sitting meetings every year, where they respond to the young Parliamentarians speeches and proposed solutions. The Advocate's fellow Ambassadors included:

- The Hon. Anne Stanley, Federal MP for Werriwa;
- Mayor Ned Mannoun, Liverpool City Council;
- Ms Megan Mitchell, former National Children's Commissioner;
- Professor Amanda Third, Institute of Culture and Society, Western Sydney University;
- Mr Nicholas Magriplis, Director Department of Education, Liverpool Network; and
- a delegate from the National Children's Commissioner's Office.

Through the Advocate's ongoing work with Liverpool City Council, the Office facilitated Voice and Participation training for the 2168 Children's Parliament in March 2024. As part of this training, the Advocate facilitated two teamwork activities for the 44 young Parliamentarians to work on to:

- develop a solution to fix a specific issue impacting the community; and
- use emojis, pictures and words to tell adults what changes would make their school better, through a visual mapping exercise.



The Advocate received positive feedback from the young Parliamentarians and a request to make this an annual exercise as part of the onboarding process for the 2168 Children's Parliament.

## Mental Health Youth Advisory Group



### ■ NSW Health's Mental Health Youth Advisory Group

In 2023, NSW Health established the Mental Health Youth Advisory Group to embed young people's voice on child and youth mental health services and help shape the work of NSW Health.

The group is comprised of 12 diverse young people aged between 16 and 24 years from across NSW, who advise NSW Health on the real-life experiences of young people living with mental health issues.

The ACYP team provided advice to NSW Health during the design, development, recruitment and onboarding phases of establishing this inaugural advisory group. The ACYP team were requested to provide advocacy training as part of the onboarding program.

### ■ Western Sydney Primary Health Network's WentWest – Youth Advisory Group

The WentWest Youth Advisory Group is aimed at supporting the participation of young people aged between 18 and 24 who have a lived experience of mental health services within the Western Sydney Primary Health Network.

Through this group, the young people have informed the development of the Right Care, First Time, Where you Live Program to improve the suite of services available to the Western Sydney community. The program is a partnership project between WentWest, the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Centre and the community.

The youth advisory group received advocacy training, to learn key tools and techniques so they can ensure young people's views and ideas are considered as part of this process.



■ Educate to Advocate (E2A)

Learn to express .....

# Educate 2 Advocate Training

..... *your ideas*

In March 2024, the Advocate launched the Educate to Advocate (E2A) training, a new comprehensive online workshop that combines all the knowledge and skills from our Advocacy, Participation and Child Rights training.

This workshop helps to build young people's knowledge of the process and techniques that will enable them to express their ideas and objectives in daily life, and in their local communities, including at school, work or in politics. The training contains important information about the:

- meaning, history and significance of children and young people's rights, including in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child;
- examples of how children and young people can be involved in decision making and why this is important; and
- some key tools and techniques to equip the children and young people for their own advocacy journeys.

In April 2024, the first training session took place virtually and there were twelve young people from across the state who completed this online course.

In May 2024, the ACYP team delivered the E2A training face-to-face to 14 young people from refugee backgrounds in Armidale at Mosaic Multicultural Connections.

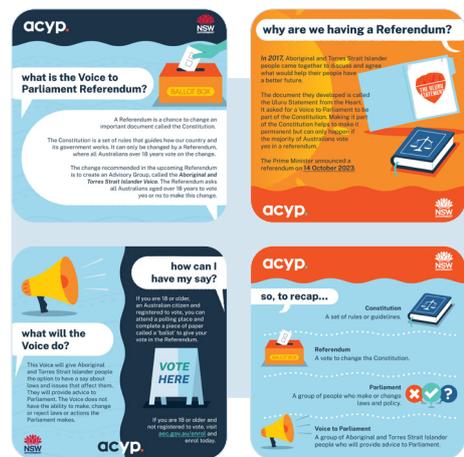
# Voice to Parliament Resources

In the lead up to Voice to Parliament Referendum on 14 October 2023, the Advocate facilitated a social media campaign to share vital information about what a referendum is, why it was being held, and the process to vote in youth-friendly language, to ensure that children and young people who were eligible to vote could do so.

The results of this campaign, as well as information gathered from the Office's annual Youth Week polling, was used to develop a range of resources, which included:



FAQ Page



Fact sheet social media carousel



Quick reference guide



Four videos based on the above resources, which were distributed through Instagram and Facebook

# Internships and Work Experience

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In 2023, the Advocate hosted four Year 10 students for a one-week work experience program during Children's Week.

The students were from:



St Columba's Catholic College, Springwood



William Carey Christian School, Prestons



Wiley Park Girls High School, Wiley Park



Cherrybrook Technology High School, Cherrybrook

The Advocate also supported a social work student from the University of Sydney to complete a three-month work experience placement.

# Engaging with Stakeholders

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# Committees and Advisory Boards

During this reporting period, the Advocate attended 474 meetings, engagements and consultations with children and young people, and colleagues who support children and young people from government, businesses, and non-government organisations.

- Australian New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians
- Cancer Institute and NSW Health – Youth Services Vaping Cessation Module Steering Committee
- Cancer Institute NSW – Vaping Digital Advisory Panel Meeting
- NSW Ombudsman Child Death Review team
- Commonwealth Bank Australia Customer Advocacy Panel
- Department of Communities and Justice – Aboriginal Outcomes Taskforce
- Department of Communities and Justice – Joint Protocol Statewide Steering Committee
- Law Society of New South Wales – Children's Legal Issues
- NSW Children's Week Committee
- NSW Health – Child Youth Mental Health Advisory Group
- NSW Health – Youth Mental Health Sub-Advisory Group
- NSW Health – Children, Young People and Families' Executive Steering Committee
- NSW Health – Statewide Wellbeing Health in-Reach Nurse Co-ordinator Committee
- NSW Health – Whole of NSW Government Working Group on e-Cigarettes and Young People
- NSW Reconstruction Authority – Recovery Support Service Steering Committee
- NSW Reconstruction Authority – State Recovery Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee Meeting
- Office of Regional Youth – Regional Youth Steering Committee
- Property Industry Foundation – NSW Beneficiary Review Committee (BRC) Meeting
- Revenue NSW – Hardship Support Program Steering Committee
- South Western Sydney Child & Family Leadership Group
- Southern Cross University – School is for Everyone (SIFE) Research Project Advisory Group
- SPARKE – research project on preventing take-up of e-cigarettes led by University of Newcastle
- Western Sydney Local Health District – Unpacking Vaping Cessation
- Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Steering Committee
- Youth Justice NSW – Short Term Remand Project Steering Committee
- Youth Week 2024 Reference Group
- Responding to Harmful Behaviour Steering Committee
- Youth Justice NSW – Close the Gap Target 11 Working Group
- Youth Justice NSW – Statewide Steering Committee

# Committees and Advisory Boards – Young People Representation

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The Advocate responded to several requests from NSW Government partner agencies and non-government organisations that sought representation from young people on various boards, steering committees and in forums.

The Advocate and the ACYP team have nominated young people to represent their peers on the following groups and forums:

- Committee on Law and Safety Hearing on e-cigarette regulation and compliance
- Digital Childhoods Summit
- Heritage NSW Youth Roundtable
- International Women of the Year Awards Ceremony 2024
- Inquiry into children and young people with disability in New South Wales education settings
- The future of Moore Park South
- Youth judge on the Youth Voices Get Active video competition

# Research Projects

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# Annual Youth Week Poll

Every year, in the lead up to Youth Week, the Advocate conducts an annual poll to collect timely and accurate quantitative and qualitative data from children and young people across NSW.

The Advocate uses the results of this survey to monitor the sentiments and emerging issues identified by children and young people across several areas. The polling results inform the forward research agenda for the Office.

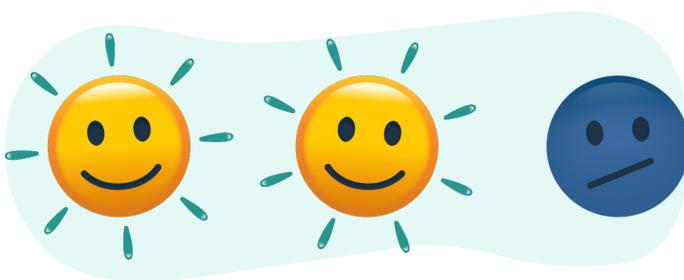
The Advocate commissioned SecNewgate Australia to undertake a representative poll of approximately 1,000 children and young people. Key findings from this year's Youth Week Polling include:



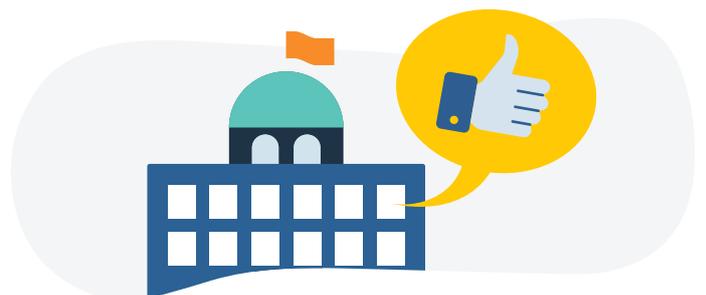
Cost of living was identified as the top issue impacting children and young people in NSW. Approximately **46%** of participants listed cost of living as the number one issue facing young people in NSW. This is up by **11%**, from 2023 when 35% of young people responded with the cost of living to the same question.



**62%** of children and young people reported that friendships are a key influence on their sense of identity.



Around two thirds (**67%**) feel highly comfortable expressing their true selves in everyday life, measured by them rating seven or higher out of ten. It is important to note that those who were more likely to report that they are not comfortable expressing their true selves in everyday life were the respondents who are not studying or working, live with a mental health concern or live with disability.



Of the total sample, **25%** of children and young people felt like the NSW Government listens to young people and considers their opinions when making decisions.

# Research Supported by the Advocate

## School is for Everyone



## Improving Participation and Wellbeing for Every Student

The School is for Everyone (SIFE) project sought to identify practices in schools that support and could improve students' participation, belonging, wellbeing and safety.

While policy reform often focuses on fairness and inclusion for all students, there is a knowledge gap related to everyday practices that can be applied at school to strengthen participation and belonging.

The SIFE project aims to support students of all abilities and backgrounds to remain engaged in education and complete their secondary schooling. The project was designed to do this by meaningfully collaborating with young people, to understand their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of participation and belonging practices at school.

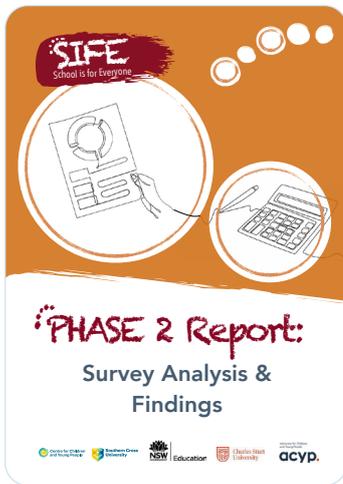
A comprehensive consultation process has been facilitated throughout the project, which includes young people from the NSW YAC, the Department of Education's (DoE) Department of Student Voices in Education and Schools (DOVES), and young people from participating schools, to ensure the findings and professional learning outputs have suitable messaging for young people's experiences and lives.

The research was funded by the DoE's Strategic Research Fund: Priority Projects and was led by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University, in partnership with the DoE, Charles Sturt University and ACYP. At the close of the reporting period, the project has been completed, and some practical outputs are going through the final draft stages.

Drawing on the findings of what students say keeps them engaged or disengaged at school, the Phase 1 Qualitative Fieldwork with NSW schools' stage was completed in 2023, which involved conducting focus groups with 183 students between Year 8 and Year 11 and 40 staff, across ten schools in NSW.

The Phase 2 quantitative surveys were built on the Phase 1 findings, surveying staff and students between October and November 2023. The data from this survey was analysed and results were prepared in 2024. Nine schools completed the survey, which amounted to 1,498 students in Years 7-10, and 268 staff participating.

A major finding from staff and student survey data showed that participation practices and/or belonging practices at school were significantly associated with greater recognition. These practices and recognition were also associated with greater student wellbeing, safety and engagement. The results suggest that participation and belonging practices at school may help foster recognition, wellbeing, safety and engagement.



The final Phase 2 report is now available.

During Phases 3 and 4, between January and July 2024, the project team worked with young people and school staff to co-design a professional learning component to translate the findings into training that staff can draw on in school and classroom settings. The modules were designed to be undertaken in groups or individually, and with the opportunity to engage with students and the wider school community. The modules are currently being adapted for the DoE's professional development learning platform by department staff.

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

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# Digital Network

## Website Engagement

Throughout the reporting period, the Advocate has updated their website to improve navigation and user experience.

Below is a snapshot of the Advocate's reach, which shows the count of unique views on content from some of the key web pages during this reporting period.

The total visits to the ACYP website was 48,248 viewers, accessed from the following countries:



Australia  
38,000



United States  
3,400



Philippines  
1,200



United Kingdom  
1,200



India  
459



South Africa  
339



Canada  
252

The Office's top web pages accessed in this reporting period were the:

## Advocate for Children and Young People



17,117 views

## Ethical Considerations



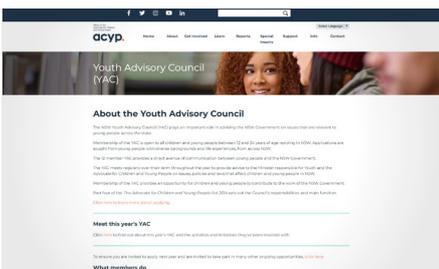
9,582 views

## The Convention on the Rights of the Child



9,127 views

## Youth Advisory Council (YAC)



6,634 views

## ACYP Special Inquiry



4,902 views

## The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People



3,551 views

## About the Office



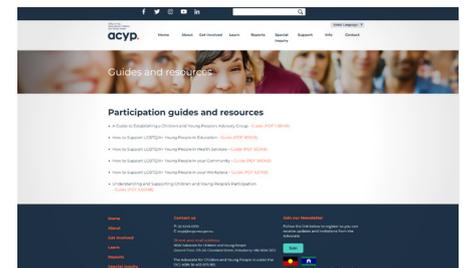
3,349 views

## Learn



3,261 views

## Participation Resources



2,554 views

## Newsletters, Emails and Social Media

The Advocate interacts with an engaged network of children and young people across NSW, and individuals and organisations that work to support children and young people.

The Advocate regularly updates their network through sharing newsletters, engagement opportunities, reports and events. The Advocate also uses their network to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of children and young people, and to elevate their voice and experiences to decision-makers.

The total number of subscribers to ACYP newsletters and emails is **14,884**, which comprises of:



The Advocate and the ACYP team is active across many social media platforms and has a large following across the below platforms:



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

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

## Requests for information under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*

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

# Office Structure and Governance

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# Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People

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The Advocate for Children and Young People is overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People as specified by Part 7 and Schedule 2 of the Act.

The Advocate and members of the Youth Advisory Council appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on 18 March 2024 for their annual oversight inquiry.

The 2024 review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children’s Guardian is currently being finalised by the Committee.

## Staffing

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As of 30 June 2024, there were 19 full-time staff and four part-time staff employed against an establishment of 24 positions.

This excludes the Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS), which had six staff members as of 30 June 2024

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

# Budget

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The expenditure of the Advocate and their Office is allocated each year as part of the Department of Communities and Justice annual budget and incorporated into their financial statements.

In the 2023-2024 reporting period, the annual budget of the Advocate for Children and Young People was \$4.2 million, which included \$3.1 million in Employment Related Expenses (ERE) and \$1.1 million in Operating Expenses.

ACYP entered into a funding agreement between the Commonwealth and State Government, under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, of approximately \$2.2 million to support the work of the Recovery Youth Support Service over the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 financial years.

During this reporting period, the Advocate granted donations to the following organisations and causes:

- Plate It Forward's Cobham Youth Justice Centre Second Chance Kitchen;
- The Women in Sport Australia Supporting our Girls - The Sports Bra Project CeleBRation Lunch event;
- Redfern Jarjum College;
- Western Sydney Local Health District's Youth Voices competition;
- Stand Tall Australia Donation to Liverpool Schools; and
- AbSec's NAIDOC Family Fun Day 2024.

The Office engaged the following suppliers to support their work: Johnson Winter Slattery, Sonder Australia Pty Ltd, SEC Newgate PTY Limited, Deloitte, and Gilbert + Tobin.

# Principal Officers

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- **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 Xanthe Foster**  
B.A. (Hons) Cultural Studies  
and Philosophy, A/Director  
(26 June – 5 July 2024)



Office of the Advocate for  
Children and Young People

**acyp.**

Office of the Advocate for Children  
and Young People

Report:  
*Annual Report 2024*

Date:  
October 2024



### Contact Us

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