



Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

Annual Report
1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025

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 (the Report) for 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

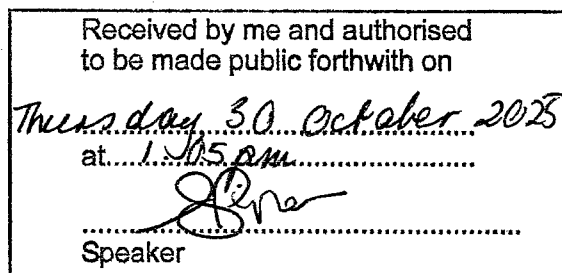
The Report includes a description of the Advocate's activities during the year in relation to each of their functions, an evaluation of the response of relevant authorities to the recommendations of the Advocate, and any recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administrative action, 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
27 October 2025



The Hon. Benjamin Franklin MLC
President
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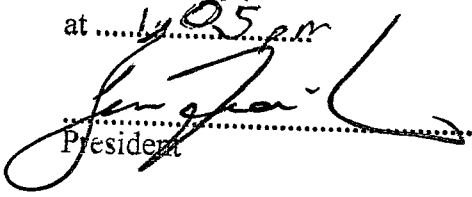


Zoë Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People
27 October 2025

Received by me and authorised
to be made public forthwith on

Thursday 30 October 2025

at 12:05 pm


President

Acknowledgement of Country



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.

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

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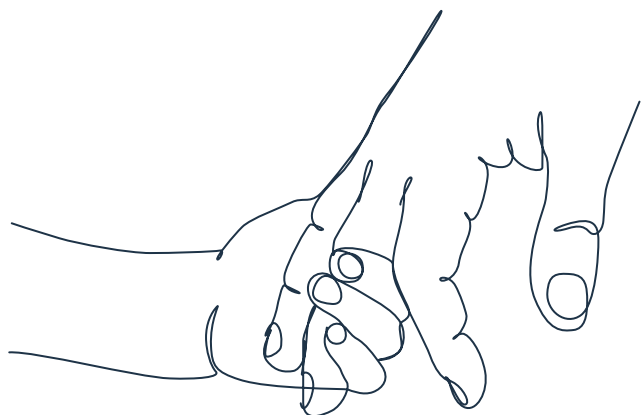
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2024-2025 Overview



The Advocate's's Special Inquiry into children and young people in ACAs resulted in the ban of the use of unaccredited ACAs, zero children and young people placed in unaccredited ACAs and \$1.2 billion dollars of funds allocated to child protection in NSW.



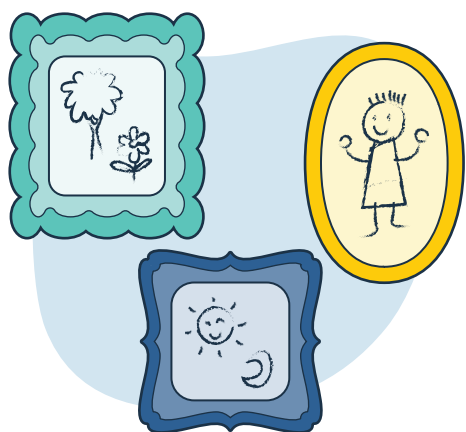
Over 5,650 children and young people were engaged through face-to-face consultations, events and online surveys.



378 applications were received for the 2026 Youth Advisory Council.



Fifteen submissions were made to Parliamentary Inquiries.



Over 660 submissions received for the Youth Week and Children's Week Art Competitions.



ACYP and the Advocate mentioned over 600 times in the media.

11,480 followers across our four social media channels.



More than \$94,000 invested in community programs in the Northern Rivers.



120,920 views of the ACYP website.

Advocate's Foreword



It is my joy to present my final annual report.

This reporting period has again seen the Office and the incredible team continue to meet children and young people where they are and ask them important questions. This reporting period saw the finalisation of the Special Inquiry and the Office welcomed the announcements of this Government around alternative care arrangements and the significant investment in care. The incredible and brave young people who shared their voices have changed a system, and now it is up to us all to continue the critical work to ensure all children and young people are safe and have access to the things they need.

We launched the Advocate's Tour which is the opportunity for the team and I to travel across NSW and sit with children and young people and communities and thank them for their support over the past six years. Connecting with children and young people across this state has been a privilege and what they have shared with me not only informs our work but are things I will carry with me beyond this role.



The team has launched some beautiful reports including *'Everyone should be heard no matter your race, culture, religion... no matter what': The experiences of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in NSW*. The work continues to focus on lifting up voices that are often not heard, and importantly seeking recommendations from those young people about how we can make their experiences better.

Our work engaging with children and young people continues across this state and we have partnered with government to ensure we are supporting departments work in engaging children and young people.

We want to thank all departments and agencies for their tireless work in recognising the importance of the voice of children and young people and ensuring there is space for them at tables and in decision making.

As always there is too much for me to summarise in a foreword. So let me just encourage you to sit in a space and read. I hope you see your work in this Annual Report, and I hope you see the ongoing commitment the team have to ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people here in NSW. To the team who continue to deliver such powerful work, thank you for all the time and energy you bring to this work. Thank you to those in government, business and community who create spaces and opportunities for children and young people, and who support them through the work you do.

Finally, to all the children and young people who have worked with us and shared their stories, thank you. You are making a difference every day, and importantly we hope you see and feel the changes that are made because of what you share with us. For six years you have inspired me and challenged me, and you even reminded me that *"I should be proud of myself"*. I am. But I am only proud because every day, children and young people across this state helped us do good work.

Enjoy and thank you.

Zoë Robinson

Advocate for Children and Young People

About the Office

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

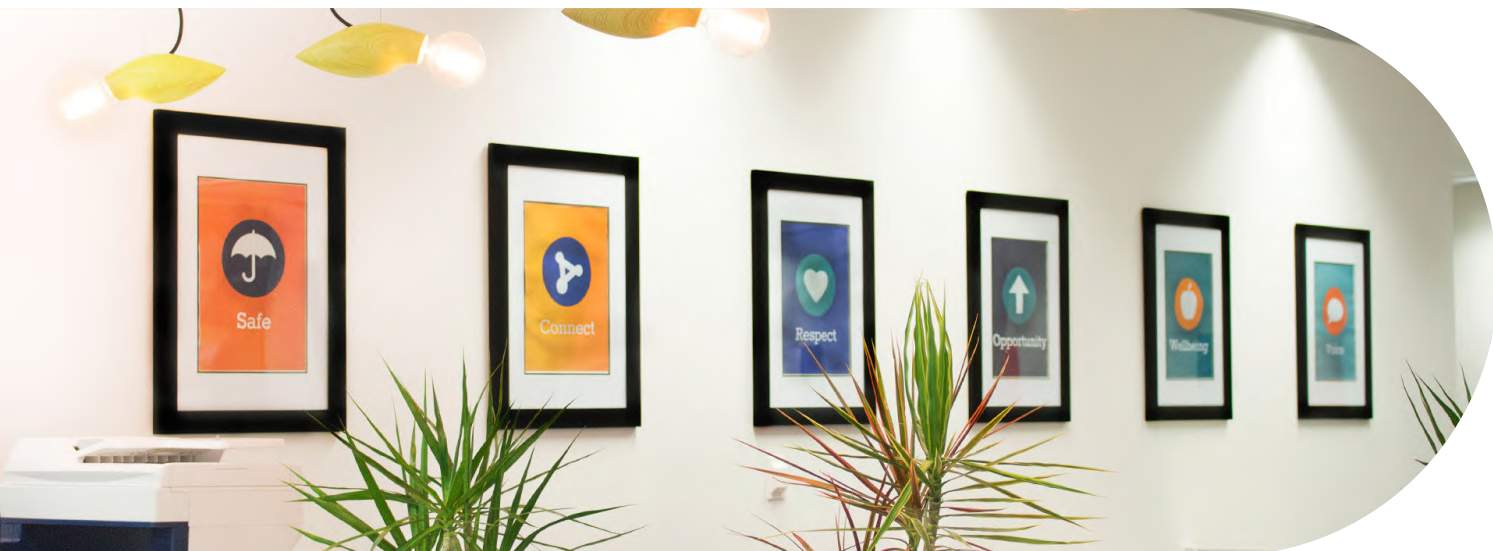
The Advocate is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People.

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

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| a. | b. | c. |
| The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people are the paramount considerations. | The views of children and young people are to be given serious consideration and taken into account. | A co-operative relationship between children and young people and their families and communities is important for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. |

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|
| a. | To advocate for and promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24 years. | d. | To make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people. |
| b. | To promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives and to encourage government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children and young people appropriate to their age and maturity. | e. | To conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people. |
| c. | To conduct special inquiries into issues affecting children and young people. | f. | To promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people. |
| | | g. | To prepare, in consultation with the Minister, a three-year strategic plan for children and young people in the State. |

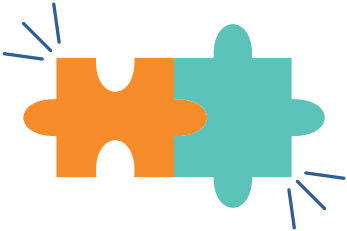


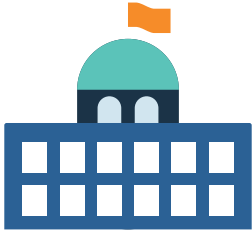
In exercising functions under the Act, the Advocate must do the following:

- 

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

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

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

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

e. Work co-operatively with the Council.

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

Advocacy

- a) *to advocate for and promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people.*



Advocate's Tour



The Advocate's Farewell Tour: Empowering Young Voices Across NSW

In February 2025, Zoë Robinson, the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, commenced a statewide community engagement tour to connect with children and young people across NSW. The tour marks the final year of the Advocate's term and provides an opportunity to listen to young voices, acknowledge their contributions, and thank them for their support of ACYP's work.

Expression of interest process

In November 2024, an expression of interest form and promotional video for the tour was shared across the ACYP network including social media, the ACYP website, a media release and via the ACYP newsletter. Expressions of interest closed on Wednesday, 18 December 2024.

Promotion was also conducted through radio release grabs and interviews with regional radio, including ABC Riverina, ABC Western Plains, and ABC Newcastle.

In total, 95 schools, organisations, and youth advisory groups requested for the Advocate and the ACYP team to participate in a range of activities.

Engagement

In this reporting period, the Advocate connected with more than 800 children and young people in face-to-face settings across NSW, listening to their ideas, concerns, and hopes for the future. These engagements have been central to ensuring that children and young people's voices continue to shape ACYP's priorities and inform both the Advocate's work and government decision-making.

Regions visited in the reporting period:



Insights

To support the 2025 Youth Week Survey, which explored children and young people's experiences of and access to employment, education, services, transport, and recreation activities, the Advocate consulted with children and young people about a range of topics, including access in their local communities, to leadership and career progression. The Advocate provided schools and community services who facilitated these consultations with the information on key insights gathered from consultations.

Your Voice, Our Future Survey

In this reporting period, ACYP continued implementation and analysis of the *Your Voice, Our Future: Have your say on the future of youth policy in NSW* survey on behalf of the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC, following its launch on Thursday, 16 May 2024.

Young people were asked:

- To select the top issues facing young people.
- Do you feel listened to by the NSW Government?
- What is missing or not working well to support young people in NSW?
- What services and programs do young people need?
- How can the NSW Government include young people, like you, in the decisions they make?
- How would you like government to connect with you on social media?



From July to November 2024, ACYP provided monthly reports of the survey results to the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC, the Office for Regional Youth and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. The survey closed on Tuesday, 31 December 2024. ACYP undertook analysis of the 999 qualified survey entries and disaggregated the data by demography and region to identify themes and produce insight on the views and experiences of different groups of young people. This was provided to the Minister for Youth to inform a larger report.

Engagement

During this reporting period, the Advocate attended 361 meetings, engagements and consultations with children and young people, and with colleagues who support children and young people from government, businesses, and non-government organisations.

Committees and Advisory Boards

The Advocate or an ACYP delegate holds membership and/or provides advice to several government and non-government committees and advisory boards, which includes the following.

- Australian New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates
- 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 – Youth Steering Committee
- Property Industry Foundation – NSW Beneficiary Review Committee
- Revenue NSW – Hardship Support Program Steering Committee
- South Western Sydney Child and Family Leadership Group
- Southern Cross University – School is for Everyone 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 – Closing the Gap Target 11 Working Group
- Youth Justice NSW – Statewide Steering Committee

Committees and Advisory Boards – Young People Representation

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 nominated and supported young people to participate in the following groups and forums:

- NSW Health – Drug Summit
- Youth Summit
- Social Media Summit
- 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
- Inquiry into the impacts of harmful pornography on mental, emotional, and physical health
- The future of Moore Park South
- Youth judge on the *Youth Voices Get Active* video competition
- Foundational and Disability Supports Available to Children and Young People



Voices of Change

On the morning of Wednesday, 20 November 2024, the Advocate and ACYP staff gathered at ILUMINA in Martin Place, for a stakeholder breakfast event that brought together young changemakers and community leaders.

Voices of Change, hosted annually by the Advocate, aims to connect stakeholders with young people making an impact in the community. In November 2024, the Advocate invited young changemakers to participate in a panel discussion with key members of the NSW Government, non-government organisations and the business community listening and asking questions about young people's experiences and solutions to social issues.

This event was a celebration of resilience and highlighted how young people are working towards building a better future.

Speakers on the day included:



Noor Azizah
2024 NSW Young
Women of the Year



Noura Hijazi
Emerging Writer



Emma McKeon AM
2024 Young
Australian of the Year
and Olympian



Jeff "J-Attack" Dunne
Breakdance Artist



Grace Rowe
Freestyle Moto-
cross Rider



Bailey Pickles
Composer

Attendees of Voices of Change included 130 stakeholders made up of:

- Members of NSW Parliament
- Senior decision-makers from NSW Government departments and agencies
- Policy makers
- CEOs and leaders of non-government organisations who work to improve the lives of children and young people in NSW
- Members of the business community including the financial industry and innovative service provision.



ANZCCGA

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People is an active member of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) group. The ANZCCGA promotes the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in Australia and New Zealand. Collectively they are committed to:

- Promoting the rights of children and young people
- Advocating for the right of children and young people to participate in decisions that impact them
- Giving voice to the views of, and encouraging direct consultation with, children and young people on matters that affect them
- Sharing the observations and perspectives obtained through members' varied functions and roles to ensure these drive improvements for children and young people across Australia and New Zealand
- Ensuring the best interests of children and young people are considered in the development of policies and programs
- Encouraging systemic improvement, informed by evidence-based research, in areas that impact on the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people, including but not limited to issues such as child poverty, housing and homelessness, mental health, child protection, and youth justice.

Within this reporting period, the ANZCCGA has met on the below occasions. Throughout these meetings, members share their jurisdictional activities promoting and advocating for the best interests of children and young people, and progressing collective action to improve outcomes for First Nations children and young people in alignment with the [ANZCCGA's 11 Advocacy Priorities](#).

Details of the meeting are described below:

Monday, 5 August 2024

Throughout this online meeting, the following matters were discussed:

- Australian Human Rights Commission – Child Justice Statutory Report
- Guest Speaker A/Prof Rebecca Glauert (University of Western Australia) and Marketa Reeves (Project Manager) – [Australia Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas](#) (ACYWA)
- National implementation of the [Child Safe Standards](#)
- South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People – *Final Report of the Inquiry 'Holding on to Our Future'*
- NSW Advocate for Children and Young People – *Special Inquiry Final Report 'Moving Cage to Cage'*
- Social Media Delay
- Anti-Poverty Week 2024.

Wednesday, 27 November – Friday, 29 November 2024

Over three days, ANZCCGA members met in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The following matters were a key focus of discussion for this meeting:

- Aotearoa New Zealand – Amplifying mokopuna (children and young people) voices
- Aotearoa New Zealand – Strength in culture and self-determination for First Nations mokopuna
- Age restriction for social media
- Aotearoa New Zealand – Roundtable on independent oversight methodologies for the out-of-home care sector
- Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Hear Me Out Report: Inquiry into Implementation Progress for Bansia Hill's Model of Care Instruction*
- South Australian Guardian for Children and Young People's report *From Those Who Know: Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility*
- Domestic and Family Violence Reform across jurisdictions
- Legislative Reform to end corporal punishment across jurisdictions
- Australia's Human Rights Framework and embedding this in domestic legislation

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Throughout the online meeting, the following matters were a key focus of discussion:

- Welcome to Acting National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People – Lil Gordon
- Review of the 11 Key priorities for ANZCCGA
- Call for Royal Commission into child sexual abuse
- Guest Speaker Elena Campbell – Intimate Partner Violence in Young People Study
- Senate Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System
- Social Media Restriction Bill Implementation
- Queensland Family and Children's Commission Child Rights Report *Every Child. Every Right. Every Time.*



Wednesday, 14 May – Friday, 16 May 2025

The Advocate hosted members of the ANZCCGA on Gadigal Country in Sydney. Across the three days, the group attended a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country at the ACYP office, welcomed guest speakers from the e-Safety Commission and Backtrack, attended a community lunch at Redfern Jarjum and met with Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW, were inspired by young person Taylor Hawkins – National Director of Foundations for Tomorrow and finally, spent some time with the wonderful team at Thread Together to help clothe individuals, families, and communities in need.

Further information about the work of the ANZCCGA can be found here:

www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/about/australian-commissioners-and-guardians.

Participation

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



Youth Advisory Council



The 2024 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 (YAC), 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, organisations, and community groups on their work and how the policies, programs, and resources being developed may impact children and young people and their communities.

During this reporting period the 2024 YAC completed their term, the 2025 YAC started their term, and ACYP began recruitment for the 2026 YAC.

2024 Youth Advisory Council

During this reporting period, the 2024 Youth Advisory Council formally met three times:



Sunday, 16 June 2024



Sunday, 18 August 2024



Sunday, 29 September 2024

In these meetings, the YAC provided feedback to:

- NSW Health on a GP factsheet and provided advice about how GPs can best talk to young people on sensitive topics such as healthy eating, healthy living and mental health.
- University of NSW on the design of the social media strategy for a mobile app to help encourage young drivers to be safe on the roads.
- The Australian Human Rights Commission on current and future youth engagement practices.
- The NSW Mental Health Commission Review Team on the importance of the Commission developing a strategy to strengthen communication and engagement with young people to guide and inform their work.

Members also had the opportunity to participate in three online meetings to progress their YAC Advocacy Project and participate in optional consultations.

2024 YAC Advocacy Project: Reducing the stigma of mental health

In 2024, the YAC Advocacy Project was focused on reducing the stigma of mental health and enhancing mental health education in schools so children and young people in NSW can openly talk about mental health and seek support without fear of judgment or shame.

The YAC heard from over 100 young people and collaborated with batyr's National Youth Advisory Group, the NSW Ministry of Health's Mental Health Youth Advisory Group, and the NSW Department of Education's Department of Student Voices in Education and Schools (DOVES) Youth Advisory Group.

Members of the YAC presented their research and recommendations to key stakeholders including:

The Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon. Prue Car, MP, the NSW Mental Health Commissioner, Jennifer Black, the Minister for Mental Health and Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC.

The recommendations can be found here:

www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/acyp-reports/advocacy-by-the-youth-advisory-council



2025 Youth Advisory Council

During this reporting period, the 2025 Youth Advisory Council formally met four times:



Tuesday, 15 October 2024



Sat, 15 and Sun, 16 February 2025



Sunday, 30 March 2025



Sunday, 18 May 2025



The 2025 Youth Advisory Council

At the end of the reporting period, the 2025 Youth Advisory Council have provided feedback to:

- NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) on school-based assessment in Stage 6. Members spoke about their personal experiences and views on the challenges, issues and needs of students as they undertake assessments in high school to prevent burnout.
- Legal Aid NSW to inform aspects of the *Your Voice Project* which responds to a recommendation made by the Advocate that children and young people in out-of-home care should have access to free and independent legal advice.
- The Net Zero Commission – consulting with YAC members around how they can best engage with young people and raise awareness about climate change.
- NSW Health to inform their *Child Safe Action plan*.
- Legal Aid NSW on how they can improve young people's awareness of legal aid and the services they provide to support children and young people.

2025 YAC Advocacy Projects

This year YAC members are leading individual Advocacy Projects focused on addressing an issue affecting children and young people within their own local community.

YAC members undertook extensive research and consultation to inform their projects, including surveys and in person polling at Youth Week events. YAC members will present their projects to their local members of Parliament, with outcomes to be presented in the next reporting period.

2026 YAC Recruitment

Between Tuesday, 4 March 2025 and Sunday, 20 April 2025, the Advocate opened applications for the 2026 NSW Youth Advisory Council. Applications were sought from children and young people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, aged between 12 to 24 years who live in NSW.

ACYP received 378 applications from children and young across NSW. The Advocate and members of the ACYP team reviewed every application and 94 applicants were shortlisted and invited to attend an online briefing session and a face-to-face recruitment event at NSW Parliament.



Following the in-person event, the Advocate recommended the appointment of 12 young people to the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC. These appointments will progress through the NSW Cabinet processes for approval and the successful candidates will be announced in the next reporting period.

Online briefing

On Thursday, 12 June 2025, the shortlisted young people attended an online briefing ahead of the recruitment event. The Advocate provided information about ACYP, and the expectations, roles and responsibilities for the Youth Advisory Council.

Face-to-face recruitment event

On Wednesday, 18 June 2025, 88 shortlisted young people attended the recruitment event. YAC Alumni member, Billy Bofinger emceed the event. The Minister of Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC attended the morning session and hosted a question-and-answer session. Members of Parliament including the Minister for Communities and Justice and Minister for Disability Inclusion, the Hon. Kate Washington, MLC, Ms Jo Haylen, MP, Member for Summer Hill, the Hon. Kevin Anderson, MLC, Member for Tamworth, Dr Amanda Cohn, MLC, Member of the Committee for Children and Young People, Mr Jordan Lane, MP, Member for Ryde, Ms Kylie Wilkinson, MP, Member for East Hills, and Mr Tim James, MP, Member for Willoughby also participated in discussions with young people at the event.

Activities on the day included discussions around what is happening in their local communities, hearing from current YAC members and YAC alumni about their time on the YAC, participating in a [MyStrengths](#) workshop to help them identify their unique strengths and personality traits and engaging in a stakeholder consultation and advocacy pitch.

The YAC panel included:



Owen Pham
2025 YAC Member



Mia Richardson
2025 YAC Member



Zak O'Hara
2024 YAC member

This year, representatives from 15 government and non-government organisations attended to help assess participants suitability for the role, including:

- Create NSW;
- The Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Sector Development;
- The Department of Communities and Justice, Youth Justice;
- The Department of Education, DOVES;
- The Department of Education, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation;
- The Department of Liquor and Gaming;
- NSW Environment Protection Authority;
- Fairfield City Council;
- LEAD Professional Development Association;
- Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra;
- Multicultural NSW;
- The Premier's Department;
- Transport NSW;
- Youth Action; and
- Yfoundations.



Observers submitted a consultation question and the young people on their table worked together to develop an advocacy pitch to address the issue. Each group presented their pitch to the room at the end of the day.

NSW Youth Week



NSW Youth Week is an annual celebration by young people for young people aged 12 to 24 years. It brings young people together in their local communities to organise and attend free events and activities in partnership with local councils, youth organisations and schools.

ACYP plays a lead role in supporting NSW Youth Week, alongside local councils and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). ACYP chairs and coordinates the NSW Youth Week Reference Group (YWRG), which is responsible for providing advice on the management and operation of Youth Week in NSW. The YWRG is a forum to share best practice, ideas and learnings to shape and enhance Youth Week activities.

Members of the reference group include:

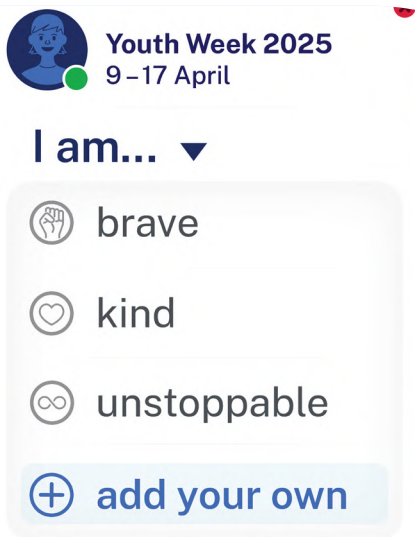
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Department of Customer Service
- Youth Action NSW
- Yfoundations
- Local Government NSW
- Local Council representatives
- PCYC
- Other partner agencies.

ACYP also works closely with the YAC and partner agencies to facilitate and promote activities for young people across NSW.

Through consultation with the YWRG and the YAC, the Advocate provides advice and recommendations to the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC, regarding the dates and theme for Youth Week each year.

In 2025, Youth Week was held between Wednesday, 9 April to Thursday, 17 April. The theme for 2025, decided by the YAC, was:

I am_____. We are the future, and the future is now!



The YAC chose this theme as an opportunity to:

- Celebrate every young person's unique strengths;
- Recognise young people's individual and collective power as our current and future influencers, leaders and decision makers; and,
- Young people were invited to participate and celebrate the theme by sharing something about themselves they are proud of.

Across Youth Week events ACYP heard about young people's strengths, the things they are good at and what they are proud of including:



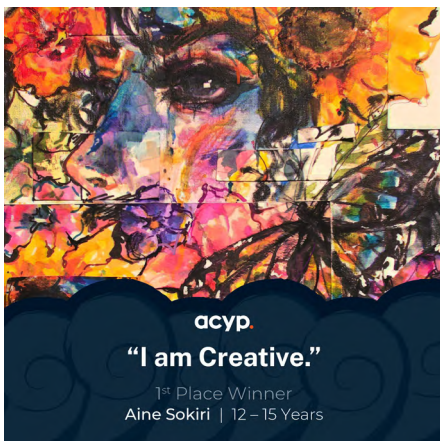
Youth Week Art Competition

To celebrate Youth Week 2025, ACYP ran a creative arts competition between Friday, 14 March 2025 and Sunday, 13 April 2025. Young people living in NSW between the ages of 12 to 24 years were invited to enter a visual art piece representing the Youth Week “I am” theme.

ACYP received 285 entries across three age categories, 12 to 15 years, 16 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years.

The Advocate and a panel of three YAC members picked three winners from each age category. The nine winners received an award and prize, and ACYP shared the artists’ winning artworks through the ACYP digital communications and social media platforms.

Winners’ artworks:



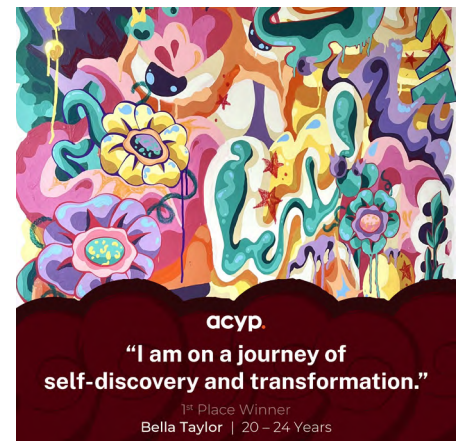
Aine Sokiri

1st Place Winner 12–15 years



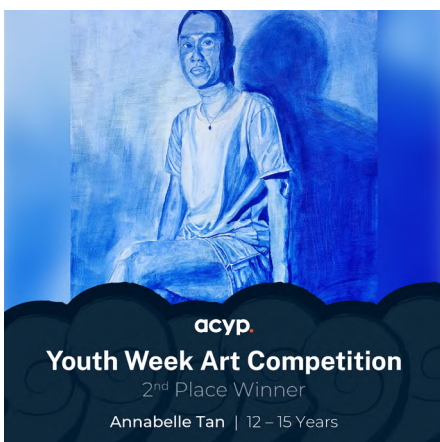
Athena Jinson

1st Place Winner 16–19 years



Bella Taylor

1st Place Winner 20–24 years



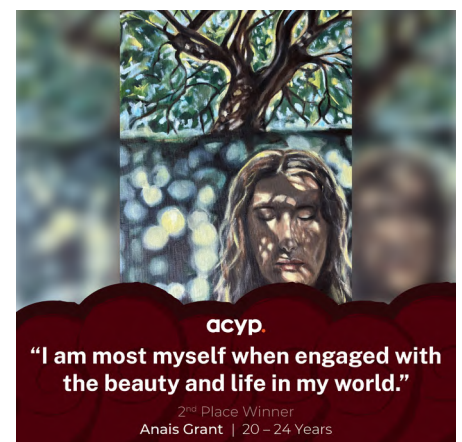
Annabelle Tan

2nd Place Winner 12–15 years



Kosta Giitsidis

2nd Place Winner 16–19 years



Anais Grant

2nd Place Winner 20–24 years



Shavneet Singh

3rd Place Winner 12–15 years

Jessica Tai

3rd Place Winner 16–19 years

Tuan Hung Pham

3rd Place Winner 20–24 years

NSW Youth Week Events

During April 2025, the Advocate and ACYP team attended events across Metropolitan Sydney and Regional NSW to celebrate NSW Youth Week.

The Advocate opened Council Youth Week events in Dubbo, Wellington and Fairfield, facilitated a panel with young people who have experienced homelessness at **Marist 180 in Blacktown**, and spent time with young people and the team at **LeaderLife** in Dubbo.

The ACYP team supported YAC members to run consultations with young people to inform their Advocacy Projects and facilitated activities and consultations with over 894 young people at Council-organised events including:

- Youth Futures Expo, Canterbury Bankstown Council
- Get Reel on Country, Canterbury Bankstown Council
- Julia Reserve Youth Precinct Drop-in, Camden Council
- Bring it on Festival, Fairfield Council
- Barton Park Youth Week Pop Up, Bayside Council
- Youth Day Out event, Central Coast Council
- Dubbo Family Fun Day, Dubbo Council
- Wellington Family Fun Day, Dubbo Council.

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?

How government and other services can better support children and young people in their community?

Children's Week 2024

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. It helps to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to uphold children's rights and ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive.

In 2024, Children's Week was held between Saturday, 19 October to Saturday, 26 October. The theme was based on Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'Children have the right to a clean and safe environment'.

To celebrate Children's Week, ACYP hosted two events in Western Sydney and the Illawarra Shoalhaven region for children aged three to 12 years.

Across these events, ACYP facilitated consultations and activities with 72 children focused on exploring and supporting children's access to safe and clean spaces that allow them to engage positively in activities within their community and with their peers.

The activities included nature-based arts and crafts and imaginative outdoor play, a guided educational bush walk and archery. During the consultations, children were asked a series of questions exploring where they liked to spend time outside in their community, how they learn about looking after the environment and keeping it clean, and their ideas for keeping their homes, communities and environment clean and safe.

Children's Week Art Competition

To celebrate Children's Week, the Advocate and the NSW Children's Week Council invited children and young people to submit an artwork displaying the ways they connect and love the environments that are important to them.

The competition was open from Monday, 19 August until Monday, 14 October 2024 to all children and young people under 18 years who live in NSW.

Entries were received from 391 children and young people, with many participants utilising reusable items in their artworks such as plastic bottles and paper, as well as materials found in nature such as leaves and sticks. Alongside the artwork, children and young people were asked to describe their artwork and the reasons how and why they feel connected to the environment.

First, second and third place were awarded for each age category, with artworks shared on ACYP's Facebook and Instagram accounts, and displayed in the ACYP office.

Winners' artworks:



Under 5
1st Place Winner



6-11 Years
1st Place Winner



12-18 Years
1st Place Winner



Under 5
2nd Place Winner



6-11 Years
2nd Place Winner



12-18 Years
2nd Place Winner



Under 5
3rd Place Winner



6-11 Years
3rd Place Winner



12-18 Years
3rd Place Winner

Children's Week

Children have the right to a clean and safe environment.



Return and Earn Competition

In collaboration with *Exchange for Change NSW* and the NSW Environment Protection Authority, the Advocate piloted ACYP's first 'Clean up your community' competition which encourages schools to participate in the *NSW Return and Earn* scheme. The prize was up to \$1,000 to match the monetary value of cans and bottles collected at the Return and Earn collection sites. The winning school was Gilgandra Public School, where children collected 2,677 bottles and cans.



About Consultation



Members of the ACYP Participation Team in consultation with young people.

As outlined in the Act, 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 regarding government policies which will impact their lives both now and in the future.

To inform this work, ACYP engages directly in consultation with children and young people from a range of backgrounds and with diverse experiences across NSW, with particular focus on the needs of vulnerable children and young people, in line with the Act.

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

ACYP draws on a child rights approach when designing consultations, encouraging 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.

Brighter Beginnings

The NSW Government is rolling out free health and development checks for four-year-old children at their preschool or long day care service to make it easier for families to access this screening.

ACYP has worked with the NSW Department of Education and NSW Health to hear from four-year-old children who have completed their health and development checks in early childhood services.

This work aligns with the priority of the [***NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024***](#), 'Health and Wellbeing', which lists increasing the proportion of children aged two, three and four completing their development checks as a priority area.



Consultations focused on:

- Children's experience of health and development checks
- Adjustments or improvements that could be made to make the process more comfortable for them.

During this work ACYP consulted with 25 four-year-old children in Warragamba, Kellyville Ridge, Dubbo and Cowra. The final report will be published in the next reporting period. As part of this final report, ACYP will be publishing a case study regarding the approach to consultation with young children to inform future work by the Advocate and other government agencies.

Participation in Practice

Department of Education Memorandum of Understanding (DoE MoU)

In June 2023, the Advocate entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Education (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 childhood to post-school learning. This is to ensure that 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 introduction of 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:

- **September 2024:** The Advocate delivered a presentation about their Special Inquiry into Alternative Care Arrangements, which include showcasing the key findings from the final report through a video and summary that was developed specifically for education.
- **November 2024:** The Advocate and ACYP team presented a high-level summary of their report focused on newly arrived refugee and migrant young people, the 2024 Strategic Plan poll and ACYP's involvement in supporting the Social Media Summit. The Advocate also provided an opportunity for the Quarterly Forum attendees to suggest questions and/or topics for consultation at SpecFest 2024. SpecFest is an outdoor entertainment hub with food, activations and chill-out zones. The event is held during Schools Spectacular.
- **March 2025:** The Advocate presented key things we heard at SpecFest 2024. The Advocate also provided an update on their Office's Strategic Plan work and the Youth Week survey results.
- During this reporting period DoE made a request under the MoU for ACYP to undertake research exploring students' sense of belonging in schools. This research supports the sense of belonging research series developed by DoE as part of their commitment in *Our Plan for NSW Public Education* to strengthen student wellbeing.
- During the first half of 2025, ACYP partnered with DoE to develop the consultation plan, complete SERAP approval and began project planning. Consultations with five primary and high school across NSW will take place throughout August 2025. ACYP will directly engage with students through small-group discussions to capture student's experiences of belonging in NSW public schools. The final consultation report will be delivered in early 2026.

Partnerships

NAIDOC

The Advocate and the ACYP team held a stall at the AbSec NAIDOC Family Fun Day at Marrickville PCYC on Wednesday, 10 July 2024, where they engaged with over 70 children and young people through face painting and an interactive art activity.

Children and young people were also encouraged to explore their strengths during a small consultation activity where they were asked:

- What is the best thing about your culture (being Aboriginal)?
- If you could do something to make the lives of Aboriginal people better, what would you do?

Children and young people spoke highly of their connection to culture and to their mob and the diverse ways in which they would make life better for Aboriginal people.



Nations of Origin

During the Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) Nations of Origin Sports Tournament from Tuesday, 16 July 2024 to Friday, 19 July 2024, the Advocate and ACYP team spoke with 258 young people aged 10 to 24 from Greater Sydney (17%) and regional NSW (83%).

Nations of Origin is a sport, culture, 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Over three days and at different sporting events, ACYP asked young people questions about:

The top issues affecting children and young people in NSW.

The positives and negatives of social media for young people.

How the Government can listen to children and young people about important issues.

2024 School Spectacular – SpecFest

On Thursday, 29 November and Friday, 30 November 2024, ACYP attended the Schools Spectacular 2024 Spec Fest, located outside Qudos Bank Arena which included pre-show entertainment and activities. More than 550 children and young people from across NSW visited ACYP's marquee and participated in a range of fun activities and consultations.

Children aged 4 to 18 years provided valuable feedback and insights regarding their biggest worries, what they liked about being a child, what made them want to go to school, their favourite learning activities, life in their community, and about their rights as children living in NSW.

Liverpool Children's Parliament

Throughout this reporting period, the Advocate held the role of Ambassador for the 2168 Children's Parliament. The 2168 Children's Parliament is a program that aims to lift the voices of children in the 2168 Liverpool local government area. The program is funded annually by Mission Australia and Liverpool City Council. Each year, 44 children, from Years 5 and 6 across 11 schools from the 2168 postcode participate in the program. Alongside the Advocate, program ambassadors for 2024 included:

- Mayor Ned Mannoun, Liverpool City Council
- Ms Megan Mitchell, former National Children's Commissioner
- The Hon. Anne Stanley, Federal MP for Werriwa
- Professor Amanda Third, Institute of Culture and Society, Western Sydney
- Mr Nicholas Magriplis, Director, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Public Schools
- Sophie Charles, delegate National Children's Commissioner.

As an ambassador, the Advocate and ACYP team attended Parliament sittings and responded to the issues and proposed solutions raised by the young Parliamentarians.

In 2024, the children's key concerns were community safety and the natural environment in their local community. ACYP responded to these representations by running broader consultations and activities for children and young people around these issues during Children's Week.

Social Media Summit

On Thursday, 11 October 2024, the NSW Government partnered with the South Australian Government to deliver the first two-day, two-state summit focused on exploring and addressing the impacts of social media.

The Social Media Summit brought together experts, policymakers, academics, young people, and community voices to discuss the positive and negative impacts of social media on people's lives and how government can best support digital wellbeing.

Ahead of the Summit, ACYP established a Youth Working Group comprised of seven Youth Advisory Council members and alumni, aged 14 to 25 years, to inform the design and focus of the NSW event.

During the Summit, the Advocate and the ACYP team, and the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC, Minister for Youth facilitated two workshops with 91 young people aged 12 to 25 years.

During this workshop, young people were asked to rank a list of issues in order of priority for governments to focus on and nominate the top three issues they were most interested in designing a solution for. Issues included misinformation, racism, bullying, impact on body image and illicit content. During the workshops, young people collaborated with their peers to brainstorm and pitch solutions to address one of these issues.

Key issues discussed included:

- Impacts of social media on the wellbeing of children and young people
- Online safety
- The role of social media in the spread of disinformation and misinformation
- Addressing online hate and extremism
- How social media is changing the way governments deliver services
- How safe they feel online and safety or harms of different platforms
- The positive and negative impacts of social media on mental health and wellbeing
- Their biggest concern about social media
- The top three social media features with the most negative impact on young people.

The Summit will inform the design and delivery of a range of policies, programs and resources to address the challenges posed by social media.

Youth Summit

On Monday, 18 November 2024, the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC, hosted a Youth Summit under the theme “speak truth to power” with 92 young people aged 12 to 30 attending from across NSW.

In partnership with the Office for Regional Youth, ACYP identified young people to be members of the Youth Working Group to inform the design of this summit. ACYP also financially supported 21 young people aged 14 to 25 from regional NSW to attend the event.

The summit provided an opportunity for 12 Ministers and other key decision makers, including the Advocate, to hear from young people on issues such as the housing and rental crisis, reviving arts and culture and rebuilding nightlife, climate change and responding to its impacts, affordable and accessible transport, belonging in NSW across inclusion, diversity and equity, education, health, wellbeing and mental health, indigenous voices and employment.



ACYP staff facilitated breakout room discussions on these issues exploring:

- What’s good and what is working and why?
- What isn’t working well and could change?

The results were collated and sent to the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC.

Drug Summit

The NSW Drug Summit brought together health experts, police, people with lived and living experiences, drug user organisations, families and other stakeholders to provide a range of perspectives.

The Advocate participated in a consultation at the Griffith summit on Friday, 1 November 2024, and a panel discussion at the Sydney summit on Thursday, 5 December 2024.

In the lead up to the summit, the Advocate engaged with NSW Health to ensure diverse perspectives and views were heard, including those from young people.

The regional forums provided a dedicated space to ensure the unique and valuable experiences and perspectives of people in regional NSW are heard.

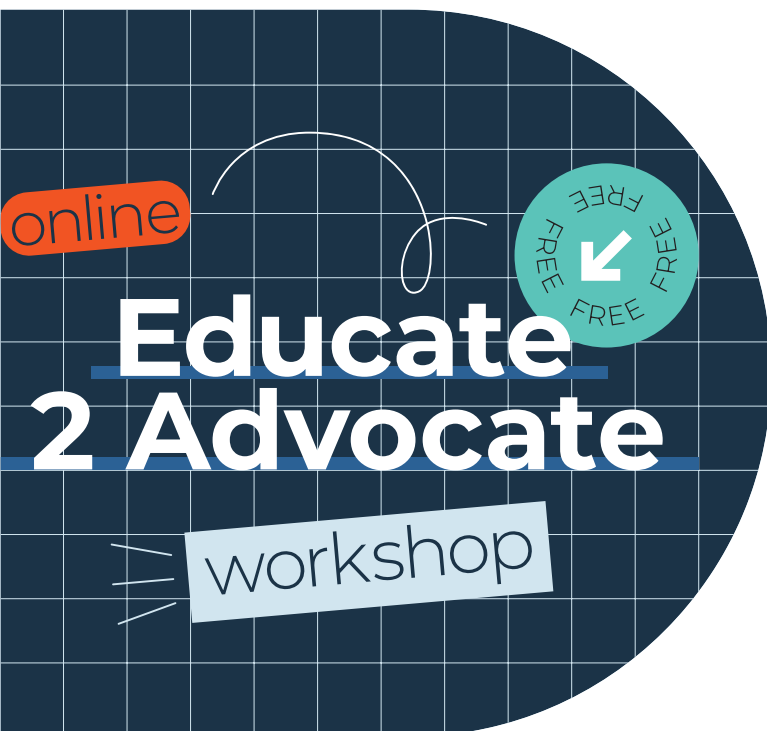
The summit focused on:

- Health promotion and wellbeing
- Equity, respect and inclusion
- Safety and justice
- Keeping young people safe and supporting families
- Integrated support and social services.

Following the summit, a report was written that summarised the key discussions and deliberations and considers the resulting major themes. The report can be accessed here:

health.nsw.gov.au/aod/summit/Documents/2024-nsw-drug-summit-report.pdf.

Training and Internships



Educate 2 Advocate Training

Educate 2 Advocate (E2A) training is a comprehensive and interactive workshop that enhances children and young people's advocacy skills and prepares them to present in front of decision makers.

In ACYP's E2A training, participants:

- Learn how children and young people can be involved in decision making and why their participation is important.
- Learn about the meaning, history and significance of children and young people's rights, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Learn about steps in advocacy processes, how to present their issue and proposed solutions, and how to identify and approach stakeholders and decision makers.
- Build their skills and knowledge of techniques to successfully express their ideas and objectives in daily life, their local community, at school or work, and in political processes.
- Receive a simple advocacy framework to support their own advocacy journey.
- During training, children and young people are given the opportunity to develop and practice an advocacy pitch with their peers. During the reporting period, ACYP conducted two online workshops with 20 participants and two in-person workshops with 25 participants. One of the workshops supported young people to present their advocacy pitch at the Northern Beaches Councils *Have Your Say Day*. The *Have Your Say Day* event is a youth-led forum designed to share youth issues to local, state and federal decision makers.

Work Experience Students

During October and November 2024, ACYP facilitated a one-week Year 10 work experience program for four students from the following schools:



Bonnyrigg High School



Fort Street High School



Northmead Creative and
Performing Arts High School



Homebush Boys High School



The Advocate also supported two social work students from the University of Sydney to complete their three-month work experience placement.

Special Inquiry

- c) *to conduct special inquiries under Part 5 into issues affecting children and young people.*



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

Background

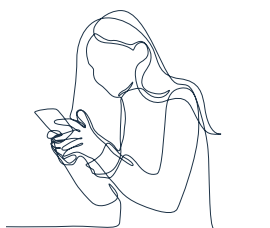
In September 2023, the Advocate launched a Special Inquiry into children and young people in alternative care arrangements (ACAs*) to understand the experiences of those children and young people in their own words. These findings were released in August 2024 in the ACYP report [Moving cage to cage: Final Report of the Special Inquiry into children and young people in alternative care arrangements](#).

The report reflects the overwhelming evidence that ACAs are not appropriate care placements or living arrangements for children and young people.

The key impacts of these arrangements heard through private hearings, workshops, submissions and other evidence include:



Instability



Lack of continuity, supervision and poor standard of care



Inappropriate accommodation and living environments



Disruption to education



Lack of access to therapeutic supports



Isolation and disconnection from friends, family, community and culture

The Special Inquiry featured 21 children and young people through private hearings; 21 submissions were received and two roundtables with academics and caseworkers were held.

As of 30 June 2023, more than 100 children and young people lived in ACAs across NSW, including 26 in hotels and motels, 37 in serviced apartments and 55 in short-term rentals including caravan parks.

In September 2024, following the release of the Final Report, the NSW Government announced it would introduce a ban on the use of unaccredited ACAs within 12 months. As part of this systemic reform, Intensive Therapeutic Care capacity was significantly increased, and additional emergency foster carers recruited.

On Friday, 4 April 2025, the Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon. Kate Washington, MLC and the Advocate announced that following extensive efforts to facilitate transitions to appropriate care arrangements, no child in NSW was living in an unaccredited ACA.

Recommendations and Government Response

Following the launch of the Interim Report, the Hon. Kate Washington MP, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services launched the System Review into out-of-home care. Lauren Dean, Executive Director, Systems Review into out-of-home care (OOHC) and Gelina Talbot, Assistant Commissioner, Systems Review into OOHC conducted the review.

The Review examined the effectiveness of the current hybrid model of service delivery, key issues affecting outcomes for children and young people, and the management of fiscal and contractual arrangements. It also assessed foster care recruitment and utilisation, with a focus on improving value for money and service delivery.

The Special Inquiry made four recommendations to lead systemic reform.

The Department of Communities and Justice has reviewed and accepted all the recommendations of the Special Inquiry Report.

- [Recommendations 1 and 4](#) are accepted in full.
- [Recommendation 2](#) is accepted in principle as implementation of this recommendation has significant resource implications which will need to be considered further by Government.
- [Recommendation 3](#) is accepted in principle as it extends beyond the remit of both Minister Washington and DCJ and requires cross-Government engagement.

Recommendation 1

Adopt and implement recommendation 4 of the Oversight Report. Without detracting in any way from that recommendation, I also recommend that any strategy to end the use of ACAs for children and young people in out-of-home care include the provision of appropriate support for children and young people who have been in ACAs, including health and wellbeing supports and immediate access to therapeutic support to assist their transition into a stable care placement.

Response:

The NSW Government has acknowledged all recommendations of the Oversight Report and is currently working on a final outcomes report on its implementation, due to the NSW Ombudsman by Monday, 1 December 2025. ACYP met with the team at the NSW Ombudsman on Thursday, 6 February 2025 to discuss the ongoing work it can do to assist in the advocacy agenda while the Government responds.

Recommendation 2

Immediately invest in appropriate supports, and services, for the wellbeing of children and young people who are, or who have been in, alternative care arrangements. This should include measures to:

- Facilitate early access to therapeutic support for children who must be removed, even within “therapeutic placements”.
- Prioritise therapeutic resources for children and young people with complex needs to prevent placement breakdowns.
- Enhance remuneration, training, and support for volunteer foster carers to attract more individuals to the sector.
- Supplement volunteer-based foster care with professional care models and therapeutic care models; and
- Improve support and training for foster carers to enhance the quality of care provided, including every carer having mental health first-aid training and trauma support training.

Response:

The NSW Government has committed to ending the use of unaccredited ACAs within a year of the Special Inquiry being published. To achieve this, it has invested significant resources into the recruitment of a foster care workforce and increasing the number of therapeutic placements for children and young people as they transition out of OOHC.

In April 2025, the NSW Government announced that for the first time in more than 20 years there were no children or young people in unaccredited alternative care arrangements.

In the 2025/2026 Budget, the NSW Government invested a record \$1.2 billion into the child protection system. This funding will increase support and protection for children and young people in out-of-home care, significantly increase allowances for carers, and deliver reforms that ensure every dollar spent delivers better outcomes for vulnerable families. This package includes:

- \$143.9 million to increase the Foster Carer Allowance by 20%
- \$797.6 million to continue supporting children and young people in out-of-home care
- \$49.2 million for 44 government owned, purpose-built or upgraded residential care homes that will deliver safe and stable housing for children over 12 years of age with complex needs
- \$10 million to support the Office of the Children's Guardian to continue to oversee organisations and uphold children's rights to be safe.

To ensure the recruitment of more than 200 new caseworkers and retention of 2,126 caseworkers with higher pay and more specialised training, including 100 new leading caseworker roles, \$191.5 million will need to be spent.

Recommendation 3

Invest in an independent complaints and oversight mechanism to ensure children and young people in care arrangements can make complaints and be heard in relation to their care experience. This should include measures to:

- Create an independent complaint function focused on addressing the needs and concerns of children and young people in care with the ability and authority to access information, resolve complaints and require action to meet standards of care and statutory responsibilities in a timely manner.
- Establish an Independent Oversight Mechanism which reports to Parliament and with the power to sit with and review the wellbeing of children and young people in OOHC.
- Ensure the complaints function is genuinely accessible to children and young people, including by investing in an independent socio-legal advocacy service to support and empower children and young people with OOHC experience to advocate for their fundamental needs to be met and rights upheld while in and when leaving OOHC, and to make complaints to raise and address unmet needs where necessary.

Response:

Legal Aid NSW's Children's Out of Home Care Advocacy Service (Your Voice) commenced development in late July 2024 following the receipt of 12 months' funding from the NSW Law Society Public Purpose Fund. Legal Aid NSW was funded to design and establish a specialist socio-legal service providing family law, civil law and youth casework services to children with OOHC experience. The service aims to empower children and young people in OOHC to know and advocate for their fundamental needs and rights, as well as advocating for systemic legal and policy changes.

Recommendation 4

Implement practices and procedures for record keeping and conduct regular reviews of data sharing practices. This should include:

- Long-term agreements and memoranda of understanding between government agencies to ensure the sharing of data across agencies (particularly health, education and DCJ) that relate to any child and young person in care.
- The independent review of case plans and case files (assurance and audit practices) to ensure that the information is accurate, updated regularly and is based on the best interests of the child or young person and their articulated outcomes.
- Increasing transparency of data and placement information, including by regularly publishing data on the number of children and young people in care (including demographics) and the type of care placement; and
- Enhancing support for children and young people transitioning between placements, including by ensuring comprehensive communication of relevant information to new service providers.

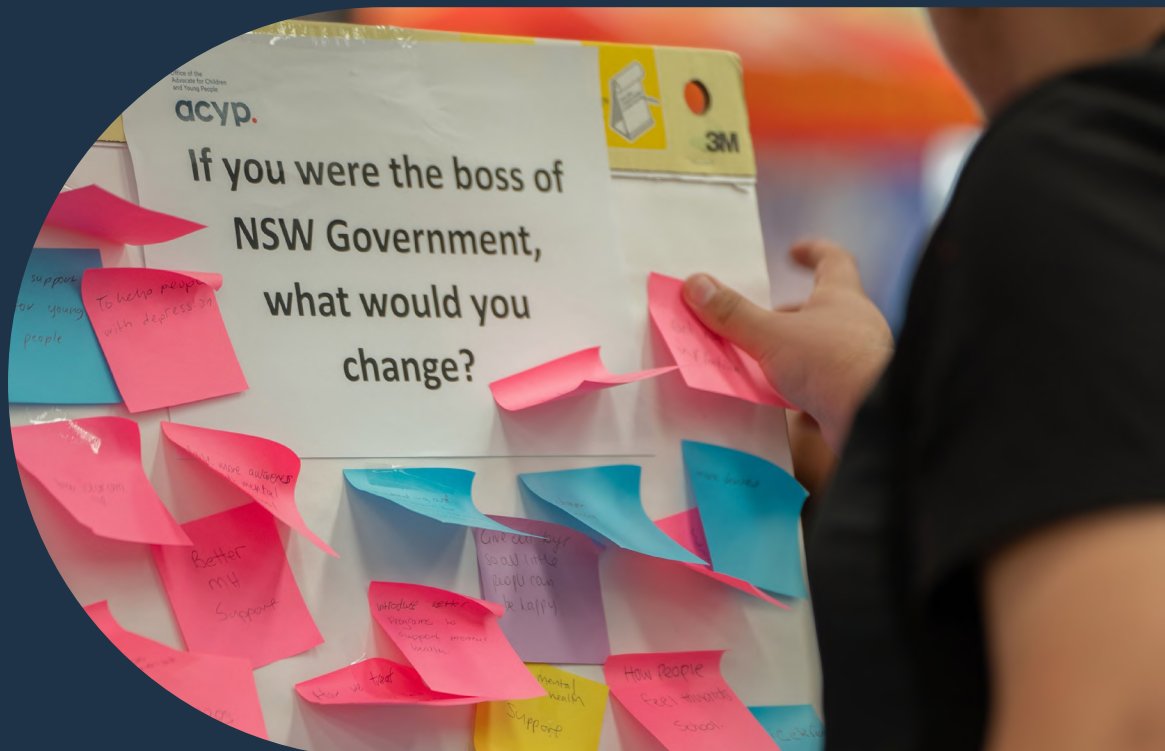
Response:

The NSW Government has accepted the recommendation in full and has committed to working with its partner agencies to develop more comprehensive and transparent record keeping and data sharing.



Recommendations

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



Submissions to Parliamentary Inquiries

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 recommendations made in briefings, submissions and reports 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 to parliamentary inquiries in this reporting period. The following section highlights progress in relation to recommendations made.

Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities

In June 2024, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry into Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities.

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.

On Monday, 24 February 2025, the Advocate appeared before the Committee to answer questions based on their work and the findings outlined in the ACYP submission.

Arts and Music Education and Training

The Committee Report made a number of recommendations which reflected the Advocate's submission, including investment in youth-specific services and early intervention programs, youth hubs that provide holistic support, activities and alternative education, and accommodation for young people.

The NSW Government is yet to release its response to this Inquiry.

In July 2024, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the inquiry by the Joint Select Committee on 'Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales'.

The submission drew on the passion, voices, and aspirations of children and young people highlighted in the 2024 Youth Week Survey, Cost of Living 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*](#) and the [*Postcards to the Advocate*](#) report.

The Advocate's submission highlighted the transformative impact that quality arts and music education can have and the critical need for accessible, clear and accurate information to help children and young people navigate arts and music education and training pathways with confidence.

The Committee made a number of recommendations which aligned with the Advocate's submission, including more opportunities to increase access for children and young people, which was supported in principle by the NSW Government.

Performance Reporting and Wellbeing Outcomes

In July 2024, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry on 'A framework for performance reporting and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW'.

The Advocate drew on the [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024 \(Strategic Plan\)](#), [Strategic Plan Tracking Report 02](#), and 2024 Youth Week Survey. The health and wellbeing commitment area of the Strategic Plan focused on asking about their perceptions of their physical and mental health, how anxious they feel as a point-in-time measure, how resilient they think they are and their confidence to support friends with their mental and emotional wellbeing.

"Children and young people's mental, physical and emotional health is nurtured and supported to enable them to flourish." Health and wellbeing (Strategic Plan).

The submission highlighted that children and young people want to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. To develop an inclusive and effective wellbeing framework, children and young people must be included as co-designers, to ensure that their needs and lived experiences are reflected.

In September 2024, the Advocate was invited to appear before the Committee to provide further information about the submission and the importance of children and young people's voices.

In response to Committee recommendations, the NSW Government committed to prioritise additional and ongoing public consultation.

Increasing Voter Engagement, Participation and Confidence

In August 2024, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' 'Proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence'.

The Advocate drew on Youth Week Survey results from 2022, 2023 and 2024, the [NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024](#) and [The Voices of Children & Young People with Disability](#) report. The submission highlighted that children and young people have an interest in voting and would benefit from additional information about how to engage in civics.

The Advocate provided three practical recommendations for ACYP to support and distribute the work done by the Australian Electoral Commission for children and young people, to increase the participation of young people on boards and advisory committees, and to provide tailored and specific support to ensure that children and young people with disabilities have equitable access.

The Committee's report aligned with the Advocate's submission, with recommendations around the need for civics education, including in the curriculum.

The NSW Government is yet to release its response to this Inquiry.

Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System

In October 2024, the Advocate made a [submission](#) to the Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs' inquiry into '*Australia's youth justice and incarceration system*'.

Prevalence, Causes and Impact of Loneliness

The Submission drew on the Inquiry Into *The Adequacy of Youth Diversionary Programs In NSW, What children and young people in juvenile justice centres have to say* report, Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates Joint Statements on *Isolation in Youth Detention* and *Incarceration of children as young as 10 years of age in Australian youth detention centres is a national shame*.

The submission included seven recommendations in relation to policy, legislation, investment, service delivery, referral pathways and alignment with broader human rights.

Alongside their counterparts within the Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates, the Advocate appeared before the Senate Committee on Monday, 3 February 2025 to answer questions on the submission.

The Committee released an Interim Report in February with the findings aligning with those raised by the Commissioners. The Committee recommended that the Senate be afforded the opportunity to continue its inquiry and that this ongoing inquiry should focus on the specific issues within youth justice highlighted by the Commissioners.

A Final Report was released by the Committee in June, which noted the findings and recommendations of the Interim Report.

The Australian Government response to the Inquiry is yet to be finalised.

In November 2024, the Advocate made a **submission** to the Standing Committee on Social Issues' inquiry into the Prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in NSW.

Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People

The submission drew on the voices of children and young people captured in ACYP consultations and research gathered for the development of *COVID-19 Sentiment Tracking*, the *Back to School: Student insights after lockdown interim report*, 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 *Strategic Plan Tracking Reports 01 and 02*, *Social Media Summit – Youth Workshop Survey Summary*, *Moving cage to cage: Final Report of the Special Inquiry into Children and Young People in Alternative Care Arrangements* and *The Voices of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care Report*.

The submission also included information about the impact that COVID-19, the cost of living, mental health, social media, bullying, and care arrangements have on children and young people's experiences of loneliness.

On 12 December 2024, the Advocate appeared alongside a young person before the Inquiry to respond to questions from the Committee.

The Committee is yet to release its report in response to this Inquiry.

In April 2025, the Advocate made a **submission** to the Select Committee on Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People in NSW's inquiry.

The Advocate's submission elevated the voices of children and young people with disabilities captured in *The Voices of Children and Young People with Disability* report, as well as information from the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024* and data from the *Strategic Plan Tracking Report 02*.

Impacts of Harmful Pornography on Mental, Emotional, and Physical Health

Through this submission, the Advocate conveyed what children and young people with disabilities shared about what is working well for them, what is not working well for them and what changes they would like to see to make NSW a better place for all children and young people. In particular, many children and young people highlighted education as a significant factor that can enable or limit inclusion, and the importance of early intervention and appropriate support.

In June 2025, the Advocate appeared at a hearing alongside two young people to respond to questions and share their experiences with the Committee.

The Committee is yet to release its report in response to this Inquiry.

In June 2025, the Advocate appeared before the Committee alongside Dr Hannah Tonkin, NSW Women's Safety Commissioner and Chanel Contos, CEO and Founder of Teach Us Consent.

At the hearing, the Advocate discussed where children and young people are accessing information around respectful relationships, including their usage of social media and peer networks. The Advocate also stressed that there is a role for adults to model what positive relationships look like and to create spaces where young people can be curious and ask questions.

In addition, the Advocate facilitated eight young people to attend roundtables with the Committee to share their experiences and impacts of harmful pornography. These roundtables were held 'in camera' however, they were critical to bring the voices of young people directly into the Inquiry.

The Committee is yet to release its report in response to this Inquiry.

The Safety and Quality of Northern Beaches Hospital

In May 2025, the Advocate made a submission to the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into the safety and quality of health services provided by Northern Beaches Hospital.

The submission highlighted children and young people's health and mental health outcomes captured in the [*NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*](#), as well as experiences shared by a Youth Advisory Council member. In particular, the Advocate highlighted the need for children and young people to be consulted about their experiences of the Northern Beaches Hospital.

The Committee is yet to release its report in response to this Inquiry.

Early Childhood Education and Care Sector

In June 2025, the Advocate provided a submission to inform the work of this Committee.

The submission highlighted that at the heart of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, the safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity of our littlest learners must be our first priority. Investment in ECEC, while greatly needed, is at risk of being ineffective if we do not intentionally and holistically identify, address and resolve the systemic issues in this sector. Without meaningful reform, funding may fail to deliver on its intended outcomes.

The submission stressed the importance of the first 2,000 days in the development of a child and that ECEC must prioritise providing a safe, nurturing and developmentally enriching experience above all else. This first experience of formal education is a critical foundation for their lifelong learning outcomes.

While positive early experiences lay strong foundations, negative experiences can have lasting impacts.

The submission noted that:

- A weak regulatory framework and a surge in for-profit ECEC providers has resulted in concerns over quality and safety of ECEC services. This impacts vulnerable children and families the most.
- Unaffordable ECEC is a key barrier for re-entering the workforce.
- Young parents expressed a distrust in the safety of care by teachers and educators.

The submission made a number of recommendations around the availability of ECEC, increased funding for ECEC, improved regulatory frameworks to ensure the national standard is met and the need for an independent review that includes the voices of children.

The Committee is yet to release its report in response to this Inquiry.

Other Submissions

The Advocate also made closed submissions to the following:

- Statutory Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018
- IPART – Review of Out-Of-Home Care Costs and Pricing
- ACECQA Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework
- Statutory Report on Operation of Coercive Control Offences Implementation and Evaluation
- Statutory Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018

Cultural Institutions Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

In February 2025, the NSW Government held the first meeting of the Youth Creative Network to hear directly from young people about the challenges they face in the arts culture and creative industry. Out of this Roundtable emerged the need for young people to be included in the decisions of these industries.

In response to this need, the Advocate supported The Hon. John Graham, MLC, Minister for the Arts and Create NSW in the introduction of the Cultural Institutions Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

This Bill amends the governing legislation for certain cultural institution in NSW to create a position for a young person aged 18 to 28 to sit on their board. These institutions include:

- Art Gallery of NSW
- Australian Museum
- Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
- Museums of History NSW
- State Library of NSW
- Sydney Opera House.

To support this work, the Advocate committed to:

- Promoting the Board, Council and Trust member vacancies via channels that are best suited to engaging young creative and cultural leaders
- Board training for up to 16 new youth representatives through the Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Training for existing Board, Council and Trust members on how best to engage with young people on governance and advisory entities.

This Bill enables the voices of young people to contribute to shaping the future of NSW cultural institutions and ensuring the institutions remain relevant, innovative and accessible for future generations.

At the end of this reporting period, the Bill had passed both Houses and was presented to the Governor for assent.

Research

- e) *to conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people.*



Annual Youth Week Poll

Ahead of Youth Week 2025, the Advocate commissioned their annual survey, undertaken with SEC Newgate Research, to explore the experiences of young people on topics of importance to children and young people and the NSW Government. Each year, Youth Week Polling data is compared with previous year's results.

The 15-minute online survey was completed by young people across NSW aged 10 to 24 years. The sample comprised of 2,000 participants drawn from a representative sample of NSW, with 1,101 from Greater Sydney and 899 from regional NSW. Quota targets were set on gender, age and location to provide a good cross-section of participants across demographic subgroups. Data was weighted to match ABS Census population statistics on age, gender and location.

The survey looked at a range of topics, including:

- Sentiment towards life in NSW, including sentiment towards life as a whole and 'these days', top-of-mind concerns facing young people and suggestions for the NSW Government
- Views on potential initiatives to address key issues impacting children and young people across NSW, including the cost of living, housing affordability, mental health and challenges related to education and study-related stress
- Future careers and job opportunities including interests in and access to different types of employment opportunities
- Education experiences and access to education and various opportunities
- Services, including usage and access of various service types, and preferences around face-to-face compared to online services
- Transport including preferred modes, public transport usage and alternative options
- Recreation activities, including understanding interests as well as barriers to getting involved in specific recreation activities
- Environment and climate change, including understanding concern levels and preferred sources for learning about protecting the environment with questions designed in partnership with the NSW Environmental Protection Authority.

The key findings of the survey were released to different stakeholders across NSW Government to inform policies and decision making. The findings of the Youth Week Poll will be published at the end of 2025.

Refugee and Migrant Report



During 2024, ACYP continued consultations with children and young people who had arrived in Australia in the last five years as refugees or migrants to understand their experiences and insights about what could help them during their settlement journey. 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'.

Consultations focused on:

- Identity and culture
- Sense of belonging and community
- Hope for the future, in terms of education and employment aspirations.

The report was informed by a total of 276 young people from a refugee or migrant background who participated in 21 focus groups across Greater Sydney and regional NSW.

These young people represented 29 countries and spoke 27 languages. Of the total sample, in this reporting period, ACYP consulted with 107 young people for this research aged between 12 to 24 from Fairfield, Cooma, Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Albury and Beverly Hills.



Film Competition – “Tell us a Story”

ACYP also held a short film competition titled *Tell us a story* which was attended by 30 young people. This competition invited young people aged between 13 to 24 from a refugee or migrant background to tell ACYP about their culture through a two-minute short film.

The Youth Showcase Event, held at the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta on Wednesday, 14 August 2024, was designed to honour the three short film winners and celebrate young people from a refugee or migrant background. This event included the winning short films being screened, an award ceremony, a youth panel, a poetry reading and a cultural dance performance. The young people who attended were also invited to participate in a survey and consultation activities to inform the recommendations of the report.

Report Launch: The Experiences of Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds

In December 2024, the Advocate released the final report, *“Everyone should be heard no matter your race, culture, religion...no matter what.” The experiences of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in NSW.*

This work was undertaken as part of the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People NSW 2022-2024* and aligned with two core commitment areas of the Strategic Plan, ‘Love, Connection and Safety’ and ‘Hope for the Future’.

Many of the young people ACYP spoke to shared ideas about what would help them achieve their goals and support their sense of identity, belonging and connection throughout their settlement journey.

In particular, young people asked for improved accessibility of support services for refugee and migrant children and young people, more community-led cultural education programs, and more free or low-cost spaces and activities for all children and young people to connect with each other.



Recommendation 1

NSW Government and service providers that support children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, develop a simple, accessible communication document and update the NSW Government website to reflect current available services and information that supports children and young people.



Recommendation 2

Grant programs across government and communities should consider the specific needs of the multicultural communities in terms of application forms and requirements.



Recommendation 3

The NSW Government should prioritise greater investment in NSW Government-led programs that aim to assist multicultural communities.



Recommendation 4

Embed the voices of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in decision making processes.

Response

The findings from this report were presented to multiple government forums to inform decision making and integrated into the NSW Settlement Strategy. Findings were also shared with relevant NSW Ministers responsible for providing or funding services or designing policy that impacts refugees and migrants. In a letter from the NSW Minister for Youth Justice dated February 2025, the Minister committed to progressing relevant initiatives to ensure empowerment and support for refugee and migrants in youth justice settings.

Research Supported by the Advocate



School is for Everyone

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

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

During this reporting period, the SIFE research team worked collaboratively with participating school staff and student advisors to co-design a professional learning resource comprised of 8 micro-modules aimed at supporting schools to implement the research findings. This professional learning is undergoing accreditation and will be available to NSW schools from 2025.

Communication

- f) *to promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people.*



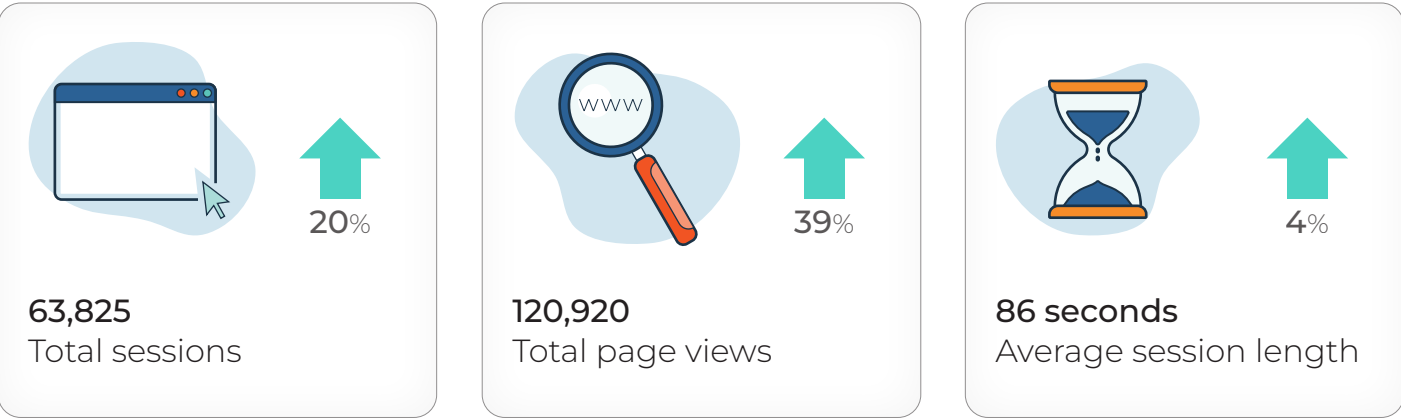
Digital Information

Website Engagement

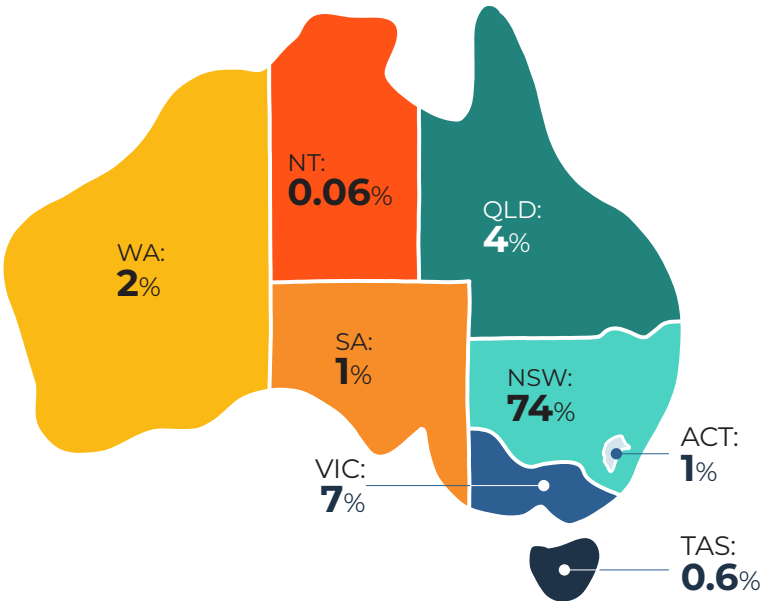
Below is a snapshot of ACYP’s website performance, which shows the count of unique views on content from some of the key web pages during this reporting period.

Visitation to the website increased this financial year in terms of sessions and number of pages viewed. Organic searches are the highest source of traffic to the ACYP website, accounting for 33,526 sessions.

Website overview as of 30 June 2025:

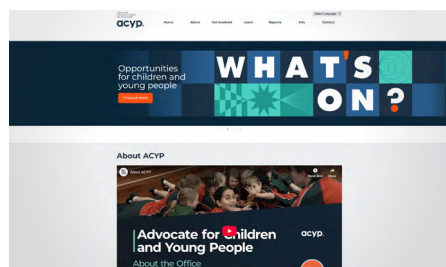


The total visits to the ACYP website were **138,690 viewers**, up **31.99%** since the last reporting period. Visitors were predominantly from the following states:



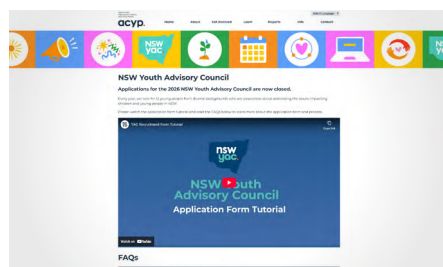
ACYP's top web pages accessed in this reporting period were the:

Homepage



20,976 views

Youth Advisory Application FAQs



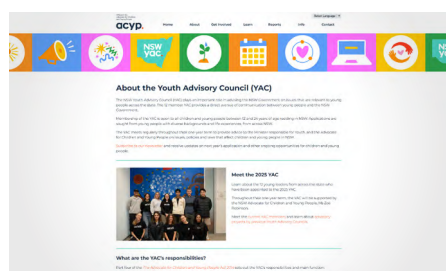
12,395 views

ACYP Newsletter Sign-Up



11,462 views

Youth Advisory Council Landing Page



7,380 views

Children's Week 2024 Art Competition



6,359 views

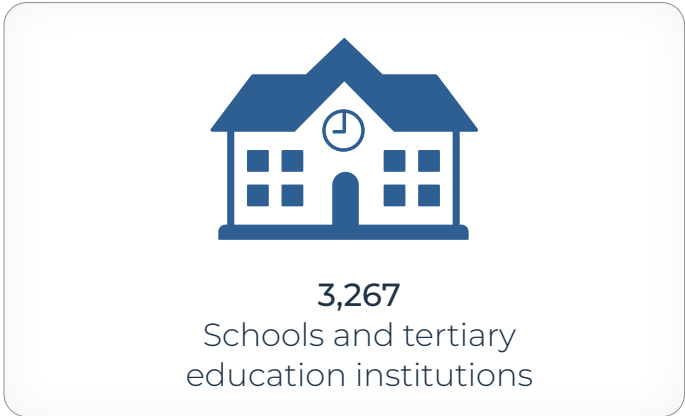
Newsletters, Emails and Social Media

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

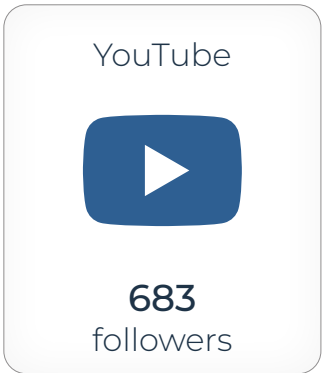
The Advocate regularly updates their network through sharing newsletters, engagement opportunities, reports and events. The Advocate also uses their network to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of children and young people, and to elevate their voice and experiences to decision-makers.

The below figures and statics are accurate at the time of 30 June 2025.

The total number of subscribers to ACYP newsletters and emails is **15,165**, comprised of:



The Advocate is active across several social media platforms:



As of June 30 2025.

News and Recognition

Across the reporting period, the work of the Advocate and ACYP has appeared in the media across a variety of print, radio and TV.

As of 30 June 2025, ACYP and/or Zoë Robinson has been mentioned **611** times in the media in the reporting period.

Top 10 outlets:



Zoë Robinson has conducted 26 one-on-one interviews across radio, print and television in the reporting period. Conversations with media included:

- Special Inquiry
- DCJ assessment report
- Government foster care report
- Submission to Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities
- Close the gap and OOHC
- Youth Advisory Council
- Youth knife crime
- 2025 Youth Advisory Council
- Refugee and Migrant report
- Advocates' Tour
- Ready Fest and the closure of ACYP's
- Recovery Youth Service Support (RYSS)
- Youth Week

Media Releases

During this reporting period, the Advocate has released ten media releases. All media releases are available on the ACYP website, and include:

*Youth Week:
An opportunity to celebrate
the young people of NSW.*

*Recovery Youth Support Service
Evaluation Report highlights
importances of youth-focused
disaster recovery.*

*NSW Government seeks
12 young people for Youth
Advisory Council.*

*The Advocate's 2025 Farewell
Tour: Empowering young
voices across NSW.*

*"Ready Fest" to celebrate
positive impacts of ACYP's
Recovery Youth Support
Service in Northern Rivers.*

*Report highlights what
young people from refugee
or migrant backgrounds need
to help them navigate a new
way of living and secure a
sense of identity, belonging
and connection.*

Top children's officials call for a rethink of social media ban.

Children and young people wanted education and for decision makers to take on the "big guys".

NSW Children's Week 2024: Celebrating the rights and achievements of children.

NSW Government welcomes 12 new voices to the 2025 Youth Advisory Council.

Social media: the way forward must include the voice and views of young people.

Final Report of the Special Inquiry into children and young people in alternative care arrangements.

Strategic Plan

- g) *to prepare, in consultation with the Minister, a 3-year strategic plan for children and young people in the State.*



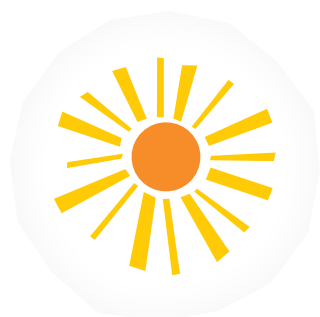
Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024

Under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act), the Advocate is required to prepare, in consultation with the relevant Minister(s), a three-year strategic plan for children and young people in NSW.

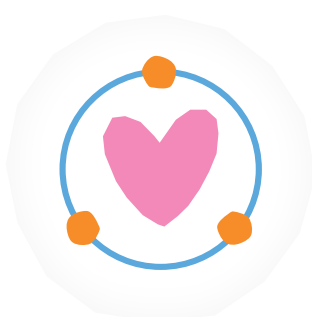
Launched in April 2022 and informed by the voices of children and young people across NSW, the Plan brought together NSW Government initiatives undertaken under six core commitment areas. The Plan concluded in 2024, with an independent evaluation taking place across 2025.

Grounded in the needs and hopes articulated by children and young people, the goal of this Plan was to create a future where all children and young people have the support they need to thrive.

The six key areas include:



Hope for the Future



Love, Connection
and Safety



Health and Wellbeing



A Good Standard of Living



Environments for
Joy and Fun



Respect and Acceptance



The Plan played a key role in bridging the gap between NSW Government policies and initiatives, and children and young people's voices and perspectives. This Plan acknowledged the work that the NSW Government committed to for the benefit of children and young people. It asked the reader to see how they could commit to better serve children and young people in their space, and it aimed to hold us all, government, business and the community, to account for the promises we made to children and young people.

This reporting period saw the conclusion of the Plan and the commencement of an independent evaluation project. To ensure the integrity of the evaluation, this project involved both an internal review and an external review.

To progress and monitor change across the Plan, ACYP committed to:

- Focus on two of the commitment areas each year and encourage collaboration between government, non-government organisations, and the private sector. This included opportunities to highlight significant milestones, support innovation and foster learning.
- Publish an annual tracking report to measure change in both the indicator for over-arching commitments, as well as the goal-specific indicators. This included an annual poll of children and young people's experiences and perspectives against the six commitments areas, as well as analysis of other publicly available data linked to specific goals within the Plan.
- Publish a progress report at the conclusion of the Plan to measure impact across the three years of the Plan.

Tracking Reports

The Advocate committed to undertaking and publishing results from an annual quantitative survey that tracks the experiences and perceptions of young people in NSW across these six key areas of the Plan.

The final [*NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young Report 03*](#) was released in February 2025 and compares data from 2021 through to 2024, highlighting the persistent impact of the high cost of living and ongoing concerns surrounding mental health and wellbeing. The 2024 areas of focus were ‘Hope for the future’ and ‘Love, Connection and Safety’.

The Advocate commissioned SEC Newgate Research to conduct the survey which informed the Tracking Report. The 2024 survey involved 1,010 children and young people aged 10 to 24 years. Quota targets were set to ensure a good cross-section of the population across demographic sub-groups. Data was weighted to ABS population data for age, gender and location.

The Tracking Report highlighted a number of case studies which demonstrate best practice in the community. For ‘Hope for the Future’ this included the Lismore Library Youth Space in co-designing space with children and young people to enhance their interests and education. For ‘Love Connection and Safety’, this included the Northern Rivers Organisation Plan C which is leading work on working with children and young people to increase their sense of identity and belonging.

The Tracking Report gave children and young people the opportunity to write about the main issues that they faced. In 2024, the top 10 issues were:



33%
Financial stability
and high cost
of living



23%
Mental health
and emotional
wellbeing



15%
Education, school
or home schooling



14%
Bullying



13%
Affordability
of housing



13%
Unemployment
and access
to jobs



10%
Social wellbeing
or quality of life



8%
Social media

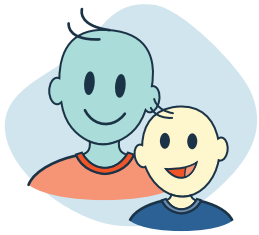


7%
Pressure to
meet societal
expectations
or trends



7%
Screentime
addiction

Findings from the Tracking Report 03 include that:



In 2024, the area with the highest positive rating was children and young people's feelings of being able to confide in someone. 93% of children and young people felt they could confide in someone.



Although positive, extra attention should be made to those who felt they had no one to confide in which were males aged 18-24 (13%), those struggling financially (12%) and those who identify as CALD (11%).



In 2024, there were significant positive increases in children and young people's overall perception of their physical and mental health. Those rating a positive 7+/10 in relation to their physical health went from 68% in 2023 to 72% in 2024 and those rating a positive 7+/10 in relation to their mental health went from 58% in 2023 to 64% in 2024.



Across NSW, children and young people felt relatively positive about the quality of relationships, particularly with their immediate family (84% rating a 7+/10), the people they lived with (83% rating a 7+/10) and with their friends (81% rating a 7+/10). Although children and young people rated their relationships with others in their community significantly lower compared to other relationships, with only 59% rating a 7+/10.

Overall, there has been a decline in the feelings of safety at work for young people with 78% rating a 7+/10 down from 84% in 2023. Children and young people are also feeling less safe online with 67% rating a positive 7+/10, down from 70% in 2023. In 2024, the high cost of living was still the number one issue highlighted by children and young people in NSW, with 33% mentioning it. Continuing from 2023, 35% of children and young people indicated they have some or a lot of financial difficulty in 2024.

Evaluation

To deliver an evaluation of the Plan, ACYP engaged Baringa Management Consultancy. The objective of this evaluation was to independently and objectively evaluate the impact of the Plan and ACYP's role in driving positive outcomes for children and young people because of the Plan.

The scope of the review included the following activities:

- Developing questions to shape the evaluation and where feasible identifying metrics to measure progress against the six core commitment areas of the Strategic Plan
- Conducting a desktop review to identify available data, assess its relevance for measuring impact, and consolidate relevant evidence
- Engaging external stakeholders through interviews to gather qualitative insights on ACYP's influence and the implementation of the Strategic Plan
- Requesting updates from the government agencies that had commitments included in Strategic Plan, to provide transparency on their delivery
- Reviewing and updating the indicators outlined in the Strategic Plan to reflect current data and progress made.

The approach ACYP takes has been critical in achieving outcomes over the period, and several themes emerged in the research carried out to show how the approach of ACYP has contributed to the achievement of the Strategic Plan.

These themes included:

- Youth voice and engagement are at the heart of ACYP's work
- The style and leadership of the Advocate has been critical in setting the tone for how ACYP operates
- ACYP has facilitated meaningful connections between people and organisations
- ACYP lifts youth voice to decision makers and is seen as a reliable source of truth
- ACYP is highly responsive to the needs of children and young people and their pragmatic approach to advocacy can drive real change.



Hope for the Future

The aim was to build a NSW where:

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

What ACYP had heard from children and young people:

Young people value education and see it as key to their future, but they are also overwhelmed by academic pressure and want more focus on practical life skills and flexible learning. Many feel unprepared for life after school and are unsure about how to access meaningful job opportunities. They are calling for better career advice, more pathways beyond university, and stronger support through the transition to adulthood.

“Too much pressure at school, everything is busy and fast and it is hard to find quiet time.”
Male, 12 years old

“Finding a job, it's hard to get a job at times because many employers are looking for a person with experience or certifications, it's hard to start somewhere.”
Female, 20 years old

ACYP have delivered all five actions committed to within the Strategic Plan, including:

- Equipping young people with real-world skills
ACYP co-designed four life skills videos and a supplementary website based on direct input from young people, covering career, finance, and independent living based. These were launched on the ACYP and Department of Customer Service websites, and have been viewed over 1,800 times.
- Boosting pathways to employment
ACYP helped promote Skillsroad, a platform designed to empower young people, parents, and educators by offering tools, advice, and job listings tailored to young people.

See Appendix A for a full list of actions committed to within the Strategic Plan.

ACYP have delivered additional activity outside of the commitments in the Strategic Plan, including:

- Supporting youth resilience through connection
Mobilising the ACYP Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS) team to provide essential support, community engagement, and advocacy for wellbeing of children and young people in the flood-affected Northern Rivers regions in NSW.
- Supporting inclusive learning pathways
ACYP contributed to NESAs's Alternative Schools Setting Approval Board to support efforts to engage young people who had otherwise disengaged from mainstream education.

7% of children and young people were optimistic about their future.¹²

64% of children reported a moderate to a lot of study-related stress.¹³

Priority Areas for Action	Goals	Indicator included within Strategic Plan	Baseline	Update	Changes	Commentary
Stress and anxiety related to school or study	Decrease the level of stress and anxiety related to school or study	% of young people reported they experienced a lot or a moderate amount of stress related to their studies	64% (2021)	63% ¹² (2024)	➡	
Lack of practical life skills for young people	Increase access to practical life skills resources	Number of downloads, views and dissemination of ACYP Practical Life Skills Resources	N/A	1,718 webpage views ¹⁴ 2,570 total video views ¹⁵ 10,279 received resources via email ¹⁶	➡	No baseline was included in the Strategic Plan.
Lack of employment opportunities for young people	Decrease difficulty for young people in finding work	Nationally the median length of time spent looking for work for those aged 15-24	15 weeks (July 2021)	9 weeks ¹⁷ (Dec 2024)	➡	
	Increase the number of young people in employment, education or training	In NSW, how many young people aged 15-24 reported having difficulty in finding work % young people aged 15-24 are either fully or partially engaged in some form of employment, education, or training	48,143 ¹⁸ (2022) 89% (2020)	49,127 ¹⁹ (2024) 92% ²⁰ (2024)	⬆️ ➡	Baseline has been updated to be NSW and for February 2022.

Negative change

Positive change

12 ACYP NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People, Tracking Report 03, ACYP website 2024, accessed 23 June 2025

13 ACYP ACYP data shared in email correspondence, accessed 30 July 2025

14 ACYP ACYP data shared in email correspondence, accessed 30 July 2025

15 ACYP ACYP data shared in email correspondence, accessed 30 July 2025

16 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Tiesheet: Median Duration of job search by state, territory and duration of job search (State and Labour Force, Detailed, ABS website, accessed 30 July 2025

17 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Table 5: Mean difficulty in finding work by age of unemployed person (State and Territories, ABS website, accessed 23 June 2025)

18 ABS

19 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 5. Employment in employment and/or study, Table 10 (State and Territory)

20 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 5. Employment in employment and/or study, Table 10 (State and Territory)

- Importantly, the evaluation also identified several challenges to the delivery of the Plan. These included:
- There are perceived conflicts for ACYP having to advocate for change under the umbrella of the Department of Communities and Justice, raising questions to the degree of independence the Advocate has
 - The Advocate has a high ability to influence, but limited authority to deliver or implement services or programs
 - Greater collaboration and planning between organisations and across sectors would support a more coordinated response leading to actionable and realistic policy change
 - A plan that is more targeted will help ACYP prioritise activity to shift the dial on key areas, particularly for those cohorts who face more disadvantage
 - Succession planning at the end of the Advocate's term is crucial for continuing the positive impact of ACYP
 - ACYP's advocacy could be amplified by greater use of quantitative data, supplementing the rich qualitative insights.

The findings and insights explored in the evaluation are critical, as they will be taken into consideration throughout the development of the next Strategic Plan.

The report will be published in August 2025.

Recovery Youth Support Service

- h) *such other functions as are conferred or imposed on the Advocate by or under this or any other Act.*



Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS)

Northern Rivers Youth Consultation

This year, the ACYP RYSS team focused their consultation efforts specifically on the young people in local schools and those living in the temporary pod villages. This included:

- Working with Richmond Tweed Regional Library to design and conduct consultation of high school students on their priorities for development of a Youth Space as part of post-flood refurbishment of Lismore Library.
- Collaborating with Ballina Council on the design of a youth survey as part of a community consultation around their Community Strategic Plan, and conducting the survey with more than 394 children and young people – leading to arrangements for the Advocate and ACYP team to facilitate a Youth Forum for Ballina Council in May 2025.



Northern Rivers Youth Advocacy

A key outcome of the program was to build young people's confidence in self-advocacy. Throughout this work, young people spoke about the confidence and skills they gained in identifying their own strengths and needs and advocating for themselves.

At a broader systemic level, RYSS worked with the NSW Reconstruction Authority to ensure that children and young people were represented in the development of the Disaster Adaptation Plans, evaluation of the evacuation centre model, and local council Community Engagement Strategies.



Northern Rivers Youth Community Engagement

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

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 and the Department of Primary Industries in remote communities, such as Coraki and Wardell
- Engaging in existing programs, such as the Children's Week Colour Run in Ballina
- Supporting the development of Ballina Shire Council's first ever Youth Forum.

Ready Fest 'Empowering Young People Through Disaster Preparedness'

In January 2025, Ready Fest hosted by the Advocate welcomed 143 children, young people, and their families affected by floods in the Northern Rivers, with a particular focus on those living in temporary pod villages. Ready Fest is a regional event designed to strengthen disaster resilience, celebrate recovery, and support transition for children, young people, and families.

The event was delivered in partnership with a wide range of government and community organisations across the emergency services, health, youth, and not-for-profit sectors. Their contributions were central to ensuring the event's success and relevance to the local context.

The full-day program featured:



Hands-on simulations with emergency services.



Practical disaster preparedness workshops.



Introductions to local youth services



What was the impact?

- Promoted confidence, leadership, and practical knowledge in disaster preparedness;
- Strengthened relationships between young people, families, and local services;
- Provided a safe and uplifting space for shared experience and connection;
- Supported the transition of families from temporary supports to ongoing community-based services; and
- Linked children and young people with local service providers, and local emergency management authorities.

The event illustrated the importance of including children and young people in disaster planning and community recovery, not just as recipients of services, but as active, informed participants in their own futures.

Northern Rivers Workforce Capacity Building

As the RYSS program was ceasing, the team focused on community capacity building for services that currently or will work with children and young people. The RYSS team conducted a training needs assessment with staff working throughout the pod villages to identify any gaps in training that could be addressed to positively support their work with children and young people.

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

The ACYP team continued to work with the Temporary Pod Village Engagement Working Group 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 Brief Intervention Support Service

The 'supported care pathway' disaster recovery support was the primary service activity of RYSS, comprising (but not limited to):

- Individual relationship-based support guided by the child or young person's agreed goals and action plan
- Information and referral, facilitating access to material support, financial assistance, and psycho-social support including mental health services and any other services required in recovery
- Immediate emotional support and psychological first aid.

Following initial consultations with local children and young people on what kinds of disaster recovery support would work best for them, ACYP delivered flexible support that followed children and young people on their disaster recovery pathway.

This guaranteed continuity of care during periods of rapid change at personal, family and community levels. Referral pathways and eligibility criteria were intentionally broad within the target age range of eight to 24 years. Between August 2023 and March 2025, RYSS delivered direct support to 70 children and young people who were referred primarily from local schools and community housing providers. The most common reasons for referral were for support with matters related to mental health and education, followed by employment, trauma, and disability support.



Evaluation of the Service

As the program drew to a close, the Advocate engaged Insight Consulting Australia to undertake an evaluation of the program. This drew on 20 interviews with staff, service participants and providers, as well as document and data review.

The independent evaluation found that RYSS made a significant contribution to post-flood recovery in the Northern Rivers, addressing critical gaps in disaster response for children and young people following the 2022 floods. Operating within a system that had insufficiently considered the unique needs of young people, RYSS demonstrated the value of a flexible, child-focused model that prioritised wellbeing, advocacy, and engagement.

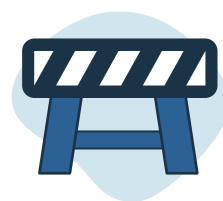
The RYSS program enabled:



Positive social engagement in temporary housing environments marked by displacement and isolation



Reconnection with essential supports such as education and the NDIS when families were unable to advocate effectively



Identification of broader systemic gaps, including transport barriers and the absence of child-appropriate spaces in disaster recovery settings.

The program underscored the importance of delivering targeted support to children immediately following disasters, and the need for more stable, child-friendly housing solutions in recovery efforts.

While stakeholders acknowledged that future services should be led by local organisations, there was strong interest in maintaining access to ACYP’s expertise in disaster recovery and community development. The program’s outcomes support the RYSS model as a best-practice, cohort-specific approach to disaster recovery — one that may also be adapted for other vulnerable populations.

The complete evaluation can be found here:

www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/evaluation-report-ryss

Ongoing Work

Despite the RYSS closure in March 2025, ACYP continues to support the communities in the Northern Rivers throughout its broader work. In the longer term, the Advocate will be supporting the Plan C NextGen Navigator Program through the Multicultural NSW Compact Grants Program until 2028.

Recognising that the departure of the RYSS program would leave an immediate gap in the sector, the Advocate committed funding to a number of local service providers to provide support to children and young people as they recover from Cyclone Alfred.

Donee	Amount excl. GST	Description
Smiling Minds	\$50,000	The Advocate has funded Smiling Minds to provide the Smiling Minds Primary School Program to five schools in the Northern Rivers who have been impacted by floods and housing uncertainty. This funding will engage approximately 1,250 children, teachers and family members. The Smiling Mind Primary School Program is co-designed by psychologists and educators to help students build mental fitness skills. Aligned with the Australian Curriculum, it offers ready-to-implement lessons and resources, while also providing tailored training for teachers, school leaders, and wellbeing coordinators.

Donee	Amount excl. GST	Description
NRL	\$10,000	The Advocate has funded the NRL to provide the Inspire Workshop to five schools in the Northern Rivers and the Get in the GAAME Program to three schools in the Northern Rivers engaging approximately 600 students. The Inspire Program focuses on respect, health and wellbeing and inclusion/diversity. The aim is to Inspire primary school-aged children to develop and apply the knowledge and understandings, skills, attitudes and values that are central to these three focus areas. The Get in the GAAME Program aims to provide participants with the skills and confidence to provide support to a person experiencing mental health problems, and to help them to access appropriate support if needed.
Banish	\$10,000	The Advocate has funded Banish to deliver sustainability workshops in the Northern Rivers. The workshops will upskill students in key environmental practices, including waste reduction, recycling, circular economy principles, and actionable steps to live more sustainably.
Thread Together	\$10,000	The Advocate funded Thread Together to provide their Mobile Wardrobe in Lismore, Coraki, Woodburn, Wardell and Ballina Pod Villages. Thread Together focuses on providing unsold new clothes to vulnerable communities rather than these items ending up in landfill.

Donee	Amount excl. GST	Description
Plan C	\$10,000	The Advocate funded Plan C to provide 240 safety kits to the participants of the NextGen Navigator Programs. Plan C seeks to build the resilience and regenerative capacity of the Northern Rivers in the face of disasters and crises. The Program seeks to support young people to understand what to do before, during and after a disaster and to gain practical skills that equip them with real-world capabilities.
The Family Centre	\$4,000	The Advocate funded The Family Centre to deliver the Take a Stand Program for Year 8 students and Year 10 Peer Leaders at Ballina Coast High School focusing on self-respect, values, personal boundaries, peer pressure, staying safe around alcohol and other drugs, sexual expression, violence and bullying. The Family Centre provides holistic therapeutic supports to youth and families in the Tweed, Byron and Ballina Shire.
TOTAL		\$94,000

Management, Accountability and Financial Statements

- f) *to promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people.*



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

No requests for information under Section 13AA of the Ombudsman's Act 1974 were received during the reporting period.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 Requests

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

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People

ACYP 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 A/Director Xanthe Foster appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on 2 July 2024 for an additional hearing 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* found that the Advocate was continuing to fulfill its functions under the Act.

This Report drew attention to the Advocate's impactful work, of the Special Inquiry into Alternative Care Arrangements and the Vaping Report, in creating systemic change for children and young people across the State.

The Committee made note of the Advocate's diligence in operating within their funding scope and highlighted it was important to ensure that Statutory Officers receive adequate funding to fulfill their mandate. The Committee dedicated to continuing to monitor ongoing investment.

The Committee commended the members of the Youth Advisory Council who had served during this reporting period, with the report highlighting the importance that Committee Members identified from having children and young people participate in hearings and other opportunities.

The Committee made the following recommendations to increase the transparency of the Advocate's work and ensure it remains representative of the lived experience of children and young people in NSW:

- In future annual reports, the Advocate for Children and Young People should provide more detail on its sources of funding, including from state and federal governments, and how that funding is spent.
- That the Advocate for Children and Young People include data about diversity in its reporting, including in annual reports, that includes cultural diversity and the percentage of children and young people from regional, rural, and remote areas, and other marginalised and underrepresented groups.

- That, in future annual reports, the Advocate for Children and Young People consider including data from its new tracking mechanism monitoring the implementation of recommendations to stakeholders.
- That the NSW Government consider amending section 21(3) of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* so that all 12 members of the Youth Advisory Council are persons under the age of 25 years.

In their response to the Committee, the Advocate supported all the recommendations either in full or in principle. For the last recommendations, while supporting the recommendations in-principle as this is existing standard practice for the Youth Advisory Council recruitment, the Advocate noted that any change to legislation is at the discretion of the NSW Government and referred this matter to the Minister for Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC.

In May 2025, the Government provided their response to the Committee recommendations. In their response, the Government supported all recommendations and has introduced legislation into Parliament to amend the Youth Advisory Council membership requirement for all members to be under the age of 25. The Advocate and members of the 2024 and 2025 Youth Advisory Council appeared before the Committee on Friday, 9 May 2025 for the 2025 review of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Children's Guardian.

At the time of writing, the Committee was finalising the findings from this appearance.

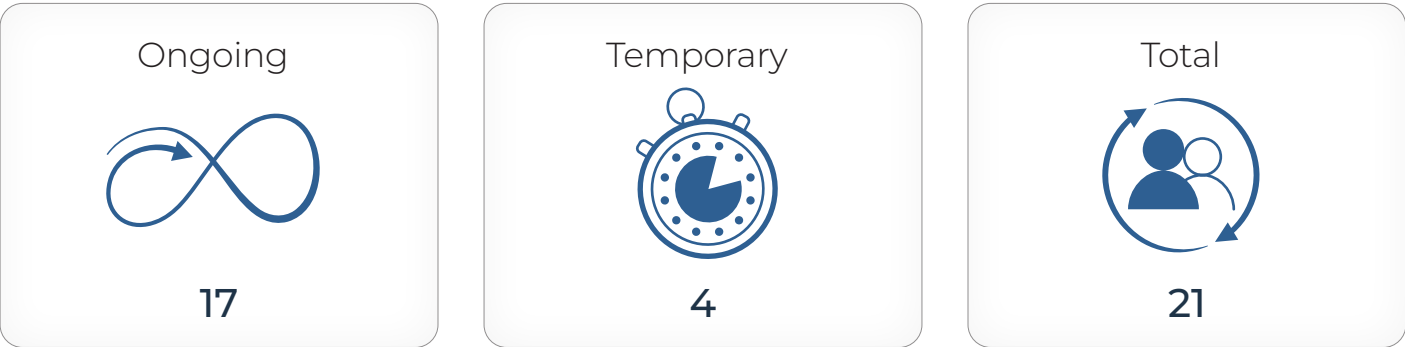
In addition to their annual oversight through the Parliamentary Joint Committee, the Advocate has had the opportunity to promote the work of the Office through appearing alongside the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Youth, at [Budget Estimates 2024-2025](#). During this reporting period, these appearances have taken place on Monday, 9 September 2024 and Friday, 14 March 2025.

Staffing

As of 30 June 2025, the Advocate employed 21 employees on either a full-time or part-time basis against an establishment of 22 employees.

This excludes the Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS), which had three staff members prior to the conclusion of the Service on Monday, 31 March 2025.

Number of employees by employment category as of 30 June 2025:



Budget

Within the reporting period, the Advocate received two sources of funding. Their core budget was provided by the Department of Communities and Justice. The Budget for the work of the Recovery Youth Support Service was jointly provided by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

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. Members of the Youth Advisory Council are remunerated in accordance with NSW Government Boards and Committees Remuneration Framework with the Chair receiving a \$350 sitting fee and members receiving a \$220 sitting fee.

Core Budget

The Advocate receives core funding from DCJ to support them in meeting their statutory functions. The Advocate's funding is included in DCJ financial statements. In the 2024-2025 reporting period, the core budget for the Advocate was \$4.4 million, which included \$3.3 million in Employment Related Expenses (ERE) and \$1.1 million in Operating Expenses.

Year	ERE Budget	ERE Actual	OPEX Budget	OPEX Actual	Total Core Budget	Total Actual Spend	FTE Budget	FTE Actual [^]
2024/2025	3,290,567	2,861,994	1,149,529	1,309,202	4,440,096	4,171,195	22.0	20.4

Recovery Youth Support Service Budget

In 2022, the Advocate entered into a funding agreement between the Commonwealth and State Government, under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, receiving approximately \$2.2 million to support the work of the Recovery Youth Support Service over the 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 financial years. The below table displays funding received for the reporting period.

Year	Agreed ERE Funding	ERE Actual	Agreed OPEX Funding	OPEX Actual	Agreed Total Funding	Total Actual	FTE Budget	FTE Actual [^]
2024/2025	\$786,681	\$598,629	\$112,768	\$352,542	\$899,449	\$951,171	6.0	3.0

Note: 'FTE Actual' excludes staff on parental leave, leave without pay and secondment.

Consultancies

Supplier	Amount excl. GST	Description
Sec Newgate Communications Pty Limited	\$128,289	The Advocate engaged Sec Newgate to undertake their quantitative research for the Strategic Plan Tracking Survey, Youth Week Survey and School Stress Survey.
Baringa Partners LLP	\$70,000	The Advocate engaged Baringa to undertake an independent evaluation of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024.
Insight Consulting Australia	\$33,100	The Advocate engaged Insight Consulting to undertake an independent evaluation of the Recovery Youth Support Service. This funding was provided under the Recovery Youth Support Service Budget.
TOTAL		\$231,389

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

Supplier/Donee	Amount excl. GST	Description
MyStrengths Australia	\$2,633	The Advocate funded MyStrengths to deliver the MyStrengths Program to Cobham Youth Justice Centre and Reiby Youth Justice Centre.
TEDxSydney	\$2,500	The Advocate provided sponsorship to TEDxSydney Youth Event in August 2024, to support the participation of young people at the event.
Adopt Change Ltd	\$3,900	The Advocate provided sponsorship to the Thrive National Permanency Summit for 10 young people to attend.
Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council	\$5,000	The Advocate provided a donation to the Yilaan.gaal Dhina program. The program was trialled over 16 weeks in late 2024 and was shown to be successful in tackling youth crime statistics and providing career pathways support for young people at risk of becoming entrenched within the justice system. The program is based around employment skills, and personal and family support, framework and was designed in partnership with young people within Youth Justice case management.
Youth Koori Court	\$5,000	The Advocate provided a donation to the Youth Koori Court to support their ongoing work.
Boys to the Bush	\$5,500	The Advocate sponsored a table at the Boys to the Bush Charity Fundraiser.

Supplier/Donee	Amount excl. GST	Description
The Daily Aus Holding Pty Ltd	\$10,000	The Advocate provided funding for The Daily Aus to run two Politics in the Pub events in the lead up to the 2025 Federal Election. One event took place in Sydney and another in Wollongong.
LeaderLife Ltd	\$5,000	The Advocate provided a donation to Leaderlife to support their ongoing work through community-based Youth Programming in Dubbo.
Smiling Minds Pty Ltd	\$50,000	The Advocate has funded Smiling Minds to provide the Smiling Minds Primary School Program to a further five schools across the State. This funding will engage approximately 1,250 children, teachers and family members.
Australian Institute of Company Directors	\$60,000	As part of their partnership with the Minister for the Arts and Create NSW on the Cultural Institutions Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, the Advocate is providing funding for 16 young people to undertake the Company Directors Course in preparation for their role on the boards of the State's Cultural Institutions.
The Hatchery	\$10,000	The Advocate provided funding for 10 young people to attend the Hatchery Child Protection Conference 2025.
Redfern Jarjum College	\$10,000	The Advocate provided a donation to support the College's Student Transport Program which offers safe, consistent and supportive transportation to and from school, leading to an increase in school attendance.

Supplier/Donee	Amount excl. GST	Description
University of Newcastle	\$20,000	The Advocate provided funding to support the expansion of the <i>Now.See.Hear! Visual Conversation Toolkit</i> to develop a suite of supports for two additional cohorts: Pasifika youth and adolescent and young adults with cancer.
AbSec NSW	\$6,818	The Advocate provided sponsorship to support the 2025 AbSec NSW NAIDOC Family Fun Day.
TOTAL		\$196,351

Principal Officers

Ms Zoë Robinson

B Media, LLB, MHR, GAICD,
Advocate for Children and
Young People

Ms Una O'Neill

B.A (Hons) Marketing,
MA PR, Director

Ms Xanthe Foster

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

Ms Sophia Finlay Melville

B.A Social Science, Sociology
and Anthropology, A/Direction
(8 July 2024 – Friday, 26 July 2024)



Office of the Advocate for
Children and Young People

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Office of the Advocate for Children
and Young People

Report:
2024-2025 Annual Report

Date:
October 2025



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