

Why Youth Parliament?



The Y's mission is to amplify the voices of young people. For almost 40 years, **the Y Australia** has been delivering civic engagement opportunities through our **Youth Parliaments** to more than **10,000** young Australians.

Engaged citizens lead to improved societal outcomes. We **want** and **need** young people to feel their voices matter and they are making a difference in our community, engaging with civic processes.

Civic programs should have **equitable** access for all young people, these are key mechanisms in supporting the understanding of our civic duties.

Policy and decision making needs to **include young people in the production and designing stages**, not simply ask for opinions once the product is finalised.



The Y Youth Parliaments



The Y has been providing Youth Parliament as a youth led civics program for over 40 years.

- **Every** state and territory (Except the ACT) run a **Youth Parliament** annually.
- **Youth Parliament** is only offered by **the Y** in Australia and is one of our **flagship programs**.

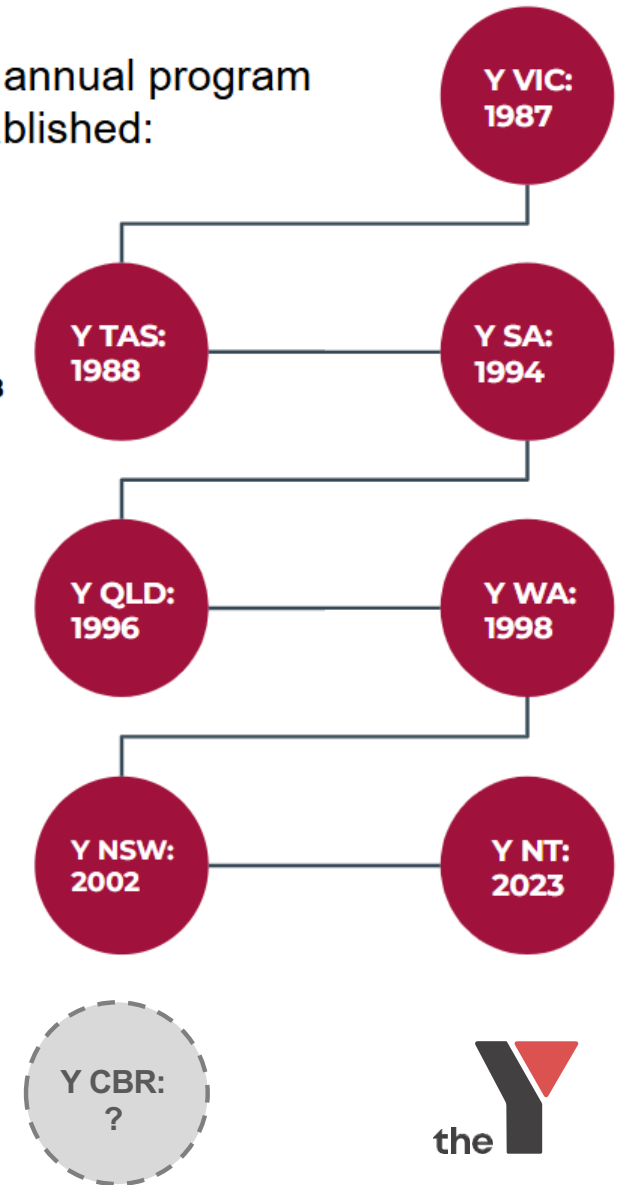
The outcome of the **Youth Parliament** would be in line with our Y Pillar value of a '**Just World**'. The ability for young people to positively impact their own lives and the community around them fosters a lasting effect of **social cohesion**.

In the **Victorian Y Youth Parliament's 35+ year history**, more than **30 pieces** of state legislation have originated from Youth Parliament, including:

- **Roadside drug testing** for drivers
- Over the counter **availability of the morning after pill**
- **Mandatory** wearing of a bicycle helmet
- **Gun reformation** laws

Year the annual program was established:

In the **2023** programs, there were **438** participants.



#CBR = Student Civics Economic Input:

For many students visiting Canberra, being at the **heart of Australia's government** brings it to life, and allows them to make real connections. First-hand experiences for teachers and students creates a more powerful understanding of the facts, and their relevance to us as a nation.



Each year, the Canberra Region welcomes over **160,000 students and young people** to the Nation's Capital to undertake **Civics and Citizenship Education**.

2024 PACER ZONES WITH ADDITIONAL LOADINGS

FOR SCHOOLS WITH ICSEA 1000 OR LESS AND REGIONAL OR REMOTE SCHOOLS



ZONE	DISTANCE (KM'S)	STANDARD REBATE PER STUDENT	50% ADDITIONAL REBATE 2024	ADDITIONAL LOADING SCHOOLS ICSEA 1000 OR LESS	ADDITIONAL LOADING TO ATTRACT PARTICIPATION FROM REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS		
					50% ICSEA 1000 or below	150% Outer regional	200% Remote
0	0 - 149	\$5	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1	150 - 499	\$20	\$30	\$15	\$45	\$80	\$75
2	500 - 999	\$30	\$45	\$22.50	\$117.50	\$90	\$117.50
3	1000 - 1499	\$60	\$90	\$45	\$135	\$180	\$225
4	1500 - 1999	\$100	\$150	\$75	\$225	\$300	\$375
5	2000 - 2999	N/A	\$300	\$150	\$450	\$600	\$750
6	3000 +	N/A	\$510	\$255	\$765	\$1,020	\$1,275

NOTES:

* Zone 5 includes all students from Tasmania because of air/sea travel expenses.
Remote islands get an extra \$120 for additional costs.
The additional 50% rebate amount still applies as shown in column 4 of the table.

Civics education should be accessible to all **Australian students** no matter their background, or where they live. The Commonwealth Government help to reduce the financial barrier to visiting Canberra via the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER), whereby students that who travel from an area with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1000 or less, or are from a Regional or Remote School receive subsidised travel.





Building together not against:

There are current programs and opportunities for young people to engage in civics.

There is **not a need to replace** these programs **or deny their positive impact** on our community, but to help **build upon these and strengthen community connection.**

Current programs in spaces **designed by and for adults**, fail to connect and provide the best ability to **capture** and **inspire** safe and open conversations on civics.

Young people are engaged in politics and civics without knowing how deep their connection is.

To engage **young people** in to civics is to **highlight their personal connections with society and their community.**

For **politics and civics is everything** from the roads we drive on, the colours of our buildings, the plants in our neighbourhoods and the media we consume.



Great Canberra Programs, but still Gaps



Existing Efforts

- ACT Government-sponsored, Youth Advisory Group.
- ACT Government-sponsored, Legislative Assembly School Programs.
- MoAD hosted Annual National Schools Constitutional Convention (NSCC)
- National Assessment Program Civics and Citizenship Curriculum (NAP-CC), *62% of Australian students in Year 10, not met proficient national standard*

Opportunities and Gaps

- ✓ **Young People's Safe forum for Youth Voice:** A culturally safe, inclusive, community-based program designed 'with and for young' people.
- ✓ **Helps reach the 'Hard to Engage' Young People:** softer, relatable, community, entry-point to civics, particularly for low-trust priority groups.
- ✓ **Outreach Opportunities:** NFPs can reach young people on their terms, in a non-school, non-institutional/'adultist' setting.
- ✓ **Peer-based, Connection & Capacity building programs:** Outreach programs that enhance the 'practice of civics' including digital literacy. Peer-based spaces to enhance story-telling and IRL connection.



Existing Issues Surrounding Young People

32% of young people in Australia reported that the government in Canberra could be trusted to do the right thing almost always or most of the time.¹

Young Australians fear their voices are not only represented poorly, but are ignored in political discussions, in part due to their lack of representation in government and policy decisions. Due to this many have stopped trying to be heard.



A quote from a participant in the 2024 Australian Youth Barometer: Understanding the young people in Australia today.

"[Governments] always have a little group of people that can talk, but they never really actually listen, which I find is a thing, they do it just for show ... it just gets to a point where even when we're begging for someone to listen we just get shut down at that point."

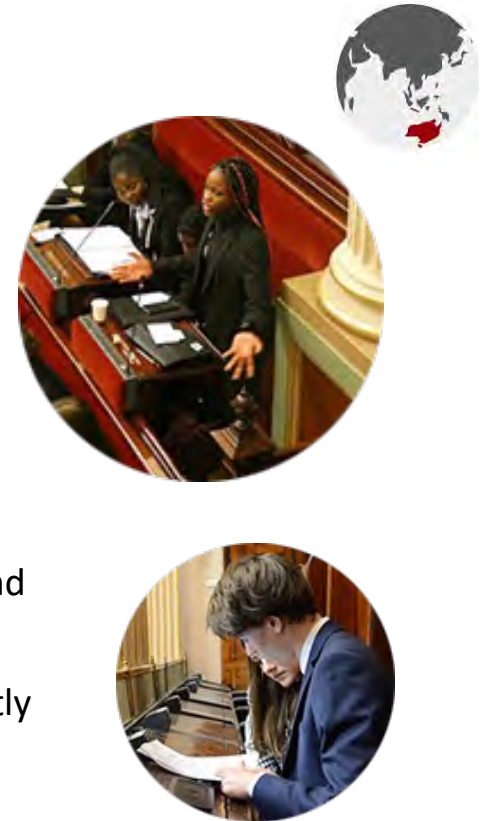
Non-binary person, 18, Tasmania



Young People: Engaged in civics

- Studies find that the usage of terms like **'Youth Disengagement'** are paradigms that support the exclusion of youth on political and civic participation. **It fails to accept that young people do not engage and interact with traditional political bodies.**
- The view of **young people** being disengaged or apolitical, but then frustrated and cynical are consequences of previous policies and public opinion **painting youth as a threat to democracy** and public order.²
- Scholars argue that **young people** do not hold disinterest for politics, they simply engage differently that are often overlooked by governing institutions.²

There is an understanding that **young people engage differently** with civics and their identity as citizens. On one hand politicians are introducing measures to educate and train **'future citizens'**, young people are simultaneously excluded from **political participation**. Civic engagement policies are criticised for placing responsibility on young people to become involved in politics rather than inspiring, motivating, enabling, mobilising and engaging **young people**.²





Young people and media

Young people interact with politics, civics, ideas, organisations, movements etc. through online outlets. The civic engagement of **young people** today is **inseparable between offline and online**, digital media allows a degree of agency and connection that young people often do not feel on offline and institutional spaces.³

- **Online media has provided a space for young people to connect with those in the community they may not have been able to communicate with due to barriers such as geography.**

In 2019 **young people** united globally in the School Strike for Climate Action movement, this was a global effort by young people in nations across the globe to voice their concerns to governments about the limited responses to climate change.

A Prime minister in power at the time said:

“What we want is more learning in schools and less activism in schools.”

“...we do not support our schools being turned into parliaments”

In a digital world, **young people** have adapted to use media to tell their stories and share their struggles. The civic engagement of **young people** cannot be separated from online spaces



Youth Parliamentarians:

Youth Parliament would consist of up to 25 members, representing the community of the Canberra Region.

Applicants would have a focus on the age groups of 16 to 18, although The Y would aim to include young people up to 25. As all young people are diverse and unique, the program would not require the young person to be a student.



Press Gallery:

The Youth Parliament Press gallery will have up to 10 young people creating media of the events, discussions and ideas formed on the Youth Parliament process.

Young people use media in creative ways that other media outlets do not capture. Young Press will be able to report on what matters to young people by young people.



The Y Canberra: Youth Parliament

Activities:

Youth Parliament will have opportunities to build and develop in debating, networking, bill writing, public speaking, peer connection etc.



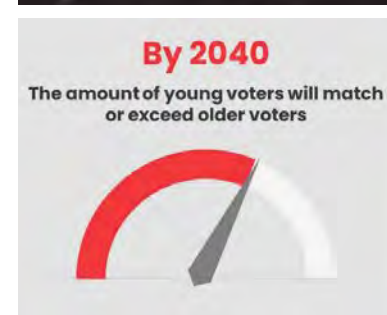
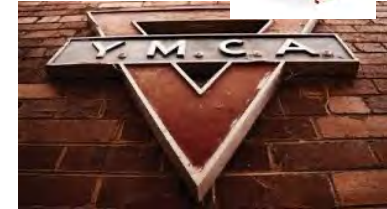
Outcomes:

Youth Parliament will provide outcomes of leadership opportunities, civics understanding, forming personal identity, personal expression, governmental youth voice and connectedness.



Why The Y? YMCA

- YMCA was founded by 22 year-old George Williams in **1844**, **worried about young people.**
- The Y is the largest and oldest Youth Movement – **120 Countries**
- **Y = Youth Civics & Wellbeing** – even a ‘Second Home’ of Dr King.
- In **2025**, we are **worried about young people.**
- Y Australia’s Youth Parliament Program has been running since 1987.
- A Y youth parliament is in every state and territory, except Canberra.
- Student tourism & civics program is worth over \$150M p.a. to the ACT economy. The Y host 18,000 students a year in two sites.





National Y Youth Parliament Infrastructure Proposal:

The Y proposes building Australia's, first Y Youth Parliament for Australia with National support.

This innovative proposal is a concept only the **YMCA**, as the largest, **oldest charitable youth movement** is placed to propose.

We seek to transform our existing 150-bed student accommodation site at **Bush Capital Lodge, O'Conner** (just **10 minutes** away from **Parliament House**) into a purpose-built youth parliament, with flexible education spaces, and student amphitheatre, and 300-bed student Accommodation Lodge.

Over **44% of young people** under the age of **40 years**, will be voting in the coming elections, yet only **2.6% of current Australian parliamentarians are under the age of 30 years**. The medium age of a Federal Member of Parliament is **51 years old**.

The Y has formed a unique partnership with the BCBA Studio, Architects specialising in Socially Sustainable Design, to design costed proposal for the new site.

The Y believes having a sensitively designed and managed, inclusive, and generationally-appropriate **public realm**, is a critical determinant in enabling **young people** to have a true sense of belonging and engagement in civic life.





Requested Commitment

We are seeking ACT Government funding to establish a youth-led, community-based **Y Youth Parliament program for Canberra.**

- ✓ The YMCA believes in the power of inspired young people.
- ✓ The Y, is a non-government, grassroots charity, with global links, well-placed to engage young people on civics and community belonging.
- ✓ This is a nationally run program, and Canberra is the exception, every State and Territory in the Country support the Y program.
- ✓ The Y Canberra will be requesting the Commonwealth to support building a National Y Youth Parliament at O'Connor, ACT.





Resources:

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- 1 . Walsh, L. et al (2024) *The 2024 Australian Youth Barometer: Understanding young people in Australia today*. Available at: <https://www.monash.edu/education/cypep/research/the-2024-australian-youth-barometer-understanding-young-people-in-australia-today>
- 2 . Brady, B., J. Chaskin, R. and McGregor, C. (2020) *Promoting civic and political engagement among marginalized urban youth and three cities: Strategies and challenges*. Available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740920303078>
3. Cho, A., Byrne, J. and Pelter, Z. (2020) *Digital civic engagement by young people*: available at https://participationpool.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/UNICEF-Global-Insight-digital-civic-engagement-2020_4.pdf

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