



How to have your say

Local governments need their communities to speak out about the issues and concerns they have as residents of the area. Having your say on matters you're passionate about is one way you can help effect change in the community you live in. Young people are not only residents of the community, but they are also the future of the community.

When you have a question, concern or suggestion about your community, environment, safety, or access, you have the right to speak up and be heard. Councils frequently ask for community feedback on a range of issues and projects. As a young person, you can get involved in different ways. These include:

- directly contacting a councillor or the mayor
- participating in community consultation
- starting a petition
- giving a deputation
- joining a youth committee.

If you meet the age criteria you could also:

- vote in your local election
- run as a candidate for the council.

If you have a topic of concern that you feel your council has a responsibility to act on, you can talk to the elected council directly in a council meeting by submitting a deputation request. If consent is given, you can speak at the next council meeting about your concern. Details of how to make a deputation are up to each local government.

Some councils have Youth Advisory Committees (YACs), which are committees of young people that will meet regularly to discuss youth issues. These committees represent the young people of the community and present their issues to the council. You can check online if your local government has a Youth Advisory Committee that you can join or contact.

If you do not have a YAC in your council, you can always suggest your council starts one. Your local government is always looking for more ways to engage with young people and work with you. There are also events and groups available for you to join that you can find online or by asking your local council. Meeting and talking with others in the community are important parts of being involved in local government decisions. Here are some events and groups you can try:

- South Australian Youth Week
- South Australian Youth Action Plan
- Youth Affairs Council of South Australia
- South Australian Student Representative Council



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Australian youth are protected by the Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016. This means you have rights that most countries in the world agree you should have. This gives all children and young people the right to basic things like safety and access. If you are in crisis or need help with issues that you think go against your rights, there are other resources that can help you, such as the Commissioner for Children and Young People. There are also helplines available for any youth who are struggling, such as Headspace, Kids Helpline, ReachOut, BeyondBlue or Lifeline.

Let's recap some key tips for getting involved and advocating for yourself to local government. Here are four things you can start doing today:

1. Learn about your rights as a young person living in Australia.
2. Research your local government's policies or stances on an issue you care about.
3. Contact your local government officials and bring the issue to their direct attention.
4. Participate and get involved in youth events and groups whenever possible.

References:

'Deputations', City of Prospect, Jan 2024, <https://www.prospect.sa.gov.au/council/council-meetings/deputations#:~:text=A%20deputation%20is%20a%20way,What%20can%20I%20speak%20about%3F>

'Deputations', City of West Torrens, Jan 2024, <https://www.westtorrens.sa.gov.au/Council/Meetings/Deputations>

'Publications', Youth Affairs Council of SA, Jan 2024, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/publications>

'Youth Services', Local Councils SA, Jan 2024, <https://www.localcouncils.sa.gov.au/services/youth-services>

'Youth Minister's Advisory Council', Department of Human Services, Jan 2024, <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/about-us/our-department/inclusion-engagement-and-safeguarding/ministers-advisory-councils/youth-ministers-advisory-council>