

acyp.

Office of the Advocate for
Children & Young People

Office of the Advocate for Children & Young People

Annual Report
1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020

The Hon John Ajaka MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Hon Jonathan O'Dea MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

In accordance with section 32 of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act) I am pleased to present the Advocate for Children and Young People's Annual Report for 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

The report includes: a description of the Advocate's activities during the year in relation to each of the Advocate's 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 32 of the Act, I ask that you now make this report publicly available at the determined time.

Yours sincerely

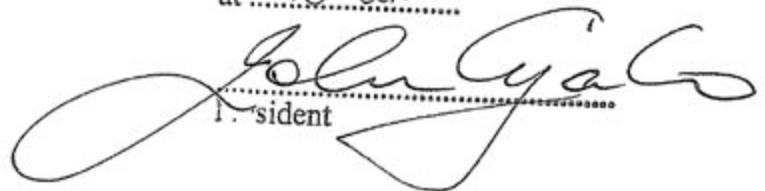


Zoë Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People
19 October 2020

Received by me and authorised
to be made public forthwith on
19 October 2020

at 10:am

President





Advocate for Children
and Young People

The Hon John Ajaka MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Hon Jonathan O'Dea MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

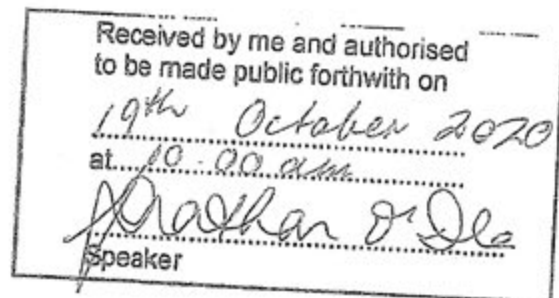
In accordance with section 32 of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act) I am pleased to present the Advocate for Children and Young People's Annual Report for 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

The report includes: a description of the Advocate's activities during the year in relation to each of the Advocate's 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 32 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
19 October 2020



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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

ACYP advises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers this report may contain images of people who may have passed away.

Contents

- *Advocate's Foreword*
- *About the Office*
- *Appointment of the Acting Advocate*
- *Farewell for the Inaugural Advocate*

14 Promoting the participation of children and young people in the decisions that affect their lives

- *Consulting with children and young people*
- *Consultations*
- *Attitudinal surveys*

29 Report Launches

- *What Children and Young people in Juvenile Justice Centres Have to Say*
- *What Aboriginal Children and Young People Have to Say*
- *Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People*
- *Consultations with Children and Young People on Creating Child Safe Organisations*
- *Consultations with Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Young People*

36 Initiatives

- *Digital Lunchbreak*
- *NSW, Through Their Eyes*
- *Solutions Summit – End Violence Against Children and Young People*
- *NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC)*
- *Recruitment for the 2020 NSW Youth Advisory Council*
- *NSW Regional Youth Taskforce*
- *NSW Children’s Week*
- *NSW Children’s Week Parliament*
- *NSW Children’s Week 2019 Awards*
- *NSW Children’s Week Creative Story Competition*
- *Promotion for NSW Children’s Week*
- *NSW Youth Week*
- *Online Platform: Findings from Consultations*
- *Young Thinking Seminar Series*

56 Governance and Administration

- *Enhance Government and Non-Government Training when Dealing with Children and Young People*
- *Childs Rights Training for NSW Teachers*
- *Committee and Advisory Boards*
- *Making Recommendations on Legislation, Reports, Policies, Practices, Procedures and Services Affecting Children and Young People*
- *Parliamentary Oversight*
- *Engaging with Stakeholders*
- *Conduct Special Inquiries under Part 5 of the Act into issues affecting children and young people*

Governance and Administration (cont.)

- *Request for information under Section 13 AA of the Ombudsman's Act 1974*
- *Responses of authorities to recommendations made by the Advocate*
- *Advocate's recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administrative action*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 Requests*
- *Internships and work experience programs*

66 Conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people

- *Research Projects*

71 Promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people

- *Health information videos*
- *Child Protection Campaign*
- *Our Local*
- *ACYP website*

76 Office structure and Administration

- *Staffing*
- *Principal officers*
- *Publications*

Advocates Foreword



It is a privilege to present the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People's Annual Report for 2019 - 2020. As the Acting Advocate for Children and Young People appointed in January 2020, this report reflects not only the work of ACYP since then, but also the great work of the former Advocate Andrew Johnson and the team prior to my appointment.

I want to acknowledge the work and service of Andrew Johnson who always had the best interests of the children and young people of NSW at the centre of the work he and the office did. He brought experience and passion to the role and under his leadership, the team consulted with over 34,800 children and young people across NSW and produced several important reports and policy recommendations. The team and I wish Andrew all the success in his new work.

Since taking on this role in January 2020, the team and I have been busy consulting with children and young people, producing reports, responding to submissions, developing online content and driving change. When taking on this role it was clear to me that the office needed to do something in response to the unprecedented bushfires that impacted so much of our State and our children and young people. The work of the team and the report that was delivered in July 2020 is the

only report of its kind that solely focusses on the voice of children and young people and their experience of disasters.

Together with the consultations with children and young people with disability we have focussed our efforts around work that we haven't done before and that we know is important to deliver.

The work is not possible without the support of the children and young people of NSW and I want to acknowledge the 12 outgoing members of the NSW Youth Advisory Council for all their amazing work. They will present their own annual report that details their work, but I am forever grateful for the guidance they gave me when taking on this role, their strong advocacy and their passion for all children and young people in NSW.

We have been supported this year by a number of young people in new work undertaken as an office. This includes Grace Rowe and Grace Hill who have worked with NSW Health, and with Dr Chant, the NSW Chief Health Officer, to deliver tailored messages for children and young people about COVID-19. In addition to this, I want to also thank the amazing young people who have appeared on our new series, NSW, through their eyes, including Simon Byrnes, Julie Charlton and Bailey Pickles.

All the children and young people who have participated in our consultations and in the Youth Advisory Council recruitment events, continue to share with us their voice and help us drive positive change for children and young people.

All of this work is not possible without the team that is the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. Our team is committed to delivering work that is informed by and supports children and young people in NSW. I want to thank the team for welcoming me into this role, for their ongoing commitment to this work and for the amazing work that has been produced in this past year.

I want to acknowledge the many Ministers, Departments and Agencies that support our projects and who have worked with us to deliver them. It is a true collaboration and together we can continue to have a positive impact on the lives of all children and young people in NSW. In 2020 we have also worked with a number of non-government organisations, business and community groups to deliver the work and I want to acknowledge their support.

Children and young people have a right to be heard, and they have a right to be part of the positive change that is needed to support them in all they do. We look forward to continuing to work with government, business and community to achieve this. And importantly we look forward to continuing to work with children and young people across NSW.

About the Office

The Office of 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 functions of the Advocate as set out in the Act are:



to advocate for and promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24 years



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,



to conduct special inquiries into issues affecting children and young people



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



to conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people



to promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people,



to prepare, in consultation with the Minister, a three year Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in the State.



The Act also establishes the NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) of which the Advocate is an ex officio member. The Advocate is also responsible for providing secretariat support to the YAC.

In undertaking these functions the Advocate is to focus on systemic issues affecting children and young people and to give priority to the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.

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.

Appointment of the Acting Advocate

Ms Zoë Robinson was appointed as the Acting Advocate for Children and Young People in January 2020. Prior to commencing her appointment, Ms Robinson has undertaken a range of leadership roles across multiple sectors including her most recent role with the Department of Premier and Cabinet which focused on breaking disadvantage. Ms Robinson holds a law degree and a Masters of Human Rights. She has previously worked as a solicitor for firms in NSW, for Deloitte in internal strategy and was the CEO of the NSW Peak Body for Youth Homelessness YFoundations. She has also volunteered for an organisation that represented death row inmates based in Houston, Texas.

Ms Robinson firmly believes that children and young people should be given every opportunity to succeed and set themselves up for success and that they should have the opportunity to choose what that means to them. She believes that all children and young people should be heard, listened to and be central to the work done in government, business and community.

When Ms Robinson commenced her role as Acting Advocate, she brought people together from across government and non-government departments to hear more about the work they are doing for children and young people and to look at possible ways of working together.

Ms Robinson led with a focus of wanting to hear from children and young people in NSW who were affected by the recent disasters including the floods, drought and bushfires. This resulted in the delivery of face-to-face consultations with more than 400 children and young people across 28 sites in NSW. A further 1,000 children and young people were consulted through polling. The purpose of this work was to hear children and young people's views and recommendations for disaster preparedness and recovery as well as how to further support them now and into the future.

Ms Robinson together with the ACYP team have continued to hear from children and young people and produce key pieces of work as outlined in this Annual Report.

Farewell for the Inaugural Advocate

On Wednesday 11 December 2019, the ACYP team welcomed guests to a special farewell event to celebrate the work and contributions of the Inaugural NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Mr Andrew Johnson.

Mr Johnson was appointed as the Advocate in 2015 and he brought with him more than 25 years of national and international experience of domestic and global issues affecting children and young people. He continued to be driven towards improving the lives of all children and young people with a special focus on the needs of those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Through Mr Johnson's ongoing dedication in serving the children and young people of NSW, he oversaw the development of the first legislated Strategic Plan for Children and Young People to leading consultations with over 30,000 children and young people, 10,000 of which were face-to-face.

Attendees at the farewell event heard from speakers who worked closely with Mr Johnson including the Honourable Victor Dominello, MP Minister for Customer Service; Gill Calvert, former NSW Children's Commissioner; Julie Hourigan Ruse, CEO of FAMS and Emily Backhouse, Chair of the 2019 NSW Youth Advisory Council. Video

messages with kind words were shared from Gladys Berejiklian, the Premier of NSW and the Honourable Bronnie Taylor MLC, Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women.

The event brought together children and young people, representatives from every part of government as well as CEOs and representatives from peak organisations and non government organisations including regional service providers. Those who attended was a testament to Mr Johnson's strong working relationships and collaborations with many departments and organisations during his time as Advocate. The ACYP team took this opportunity to thank all of those who worked with the office.

A video message from the ACYP team was presented to show their appreciation for Mr Johnson's leadership, guidance and mentoring over the years and to thank him for all that he achieved for the office and children and young people.



**Promoting the
participation
of children and
young people in
the decisions that
affect their lives**

Consulting with children and young people

One of the functions of the Advocate under the Act is to promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives. ACYP undertakes this function through a range of activities with children and young people including face-to-face consultations, programs, initiatives, training, competitions and events. Attitudinal polling is also conducted to complement ACYP's qualitative research.

ACYP focuses on listening to children and young people so that their voices are heard and that they have a say on the matters important to them in their lives. This valuable feedback informs ACYP's advice, projects, reports and publications.

In the reporting period, the total number of children and young people engaged with in face-to-face and online consultations grew to a combined total of more than

34,800 children and young people since 2015. Consultations with children and young people are held across metropolitan and regional NSW to ensure a wide reach of voices are heard. Through face-to-face consultations, ACYP adopts a child rights focused, participatory methodology which includes questions designed specifically to allow children and young people to feel as though they can freely and openly provide responses and share their views.



ACYP has heard feedback from children and young people on a wide range of topic areas including but not limited to:



education



mental health



wellbeing



homelessness



employment



rights



safety



violence



diversity



discrimination



life skills



digital usage



general attitudes



disability



disasters

Consultations

Throughout the reporting year, ACYP worked with government and non-government stakeholders to undertake targeted consultations with children and young people across NSW. These include:



Disability consultations



Disaster consultations



Consultations on the Review of the Melbourne Declaration



Youth Justice consultations



Aboriginal children and young people – Nations of Origin



Schools Spectacular



Pilot anti-bullying program (SHiFT)

Disability consultations

ACYP conducted specific face-to-face consultations with children and young people with disability between 8-24 years of age. These consultations began in September 2019 and continued through until late February 2020. Consultations were held in a range of settings including:

- Schools for Specific purposes (SSP's)
- Support Units within mainstream schools - (IO, IM)
IO (moderate intellectual disability), IM (mild intellectual disability) classes
- OOHC - Out of Home Care
- Disability Employment Services (DES)
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses
- Community Organisations and Services.

ACYP travelled across NSW to conduct these face-to-face consultations and has so far listened to the voices of 372 children and young people with disability. Consultations took place in Ballina, Lismore, Sydney, Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Newcastle, Kempsey and Greater Sydney areas. The children and young people who participated identified as a person with disability. Some of the disabilities specified were: Intellectual disabilities, Learning disabilities, Mental Health Conditions, Neurological conditions; Physical disabilities and Sensory disabilities.

The themes, challenges and hopes that have been raised were largely consistent with those raised by the broader population of children and young people in NSW. These cut across topics such as education, employment, transport, voice, mental health, programs and activities.

Children and young people with disability also identified some issues specific to their experiences and circumstances. These included having greater support in schools and in the community, as well as better access to funding. They were more likely than other children and young people to talk about discrimination, negative attitudes and not being given the same opportunities as other children and young people. The findings from these consultations will be released in a report in 2020.

Disaster consultations

In response to the ongoing drought in NSW and severe 2019/2020 bushfires and floods, ACYP conducted consultations with children and young people (between February and April 2020) to gather their views on what they need to support them before, during and after disaster events.

In total, 404 children and young people aged 5-24 years took part in face-to-face consultations in 28 regional and rural sites across NSW. 56.3% identified as female, 42.6% as male and 1.1% as a gender other than male or female; 16.3% identified as Aboriginal; 16.9% were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and 7.4% identified as living with disability.

Children and young people responded to questions about what had been most helpful to them during the most recent disasters they had experienced; what they would have liked to help them through these disasters and what the government can do to better support children and young people when disasters occur.

ACYP also commissioned a poll of 1,000 children and young people aged 12-24 years across NSW to get a representative sample of young people in NSW to complement the qualitative findings. The questionnaire included similar questions as asked in the face-to-face consultations. A key outcome of this work was the development of a Disaster Resilience Framework specifically for children and young people.

In addition to the face-to-face consultations and polling, ACYP created a dedicated website page so that children and young people could submit their feedback and experiences on these important issues online. An online resources page was also made which lists the support available by different organisations for children and young people. An A4 poster was designed for download and distribution which presented the contact details of organisations offering support including Service NSW, Lifeline, Kids Helpline and AskIssy.

The results and findings from this work will be available in the report Children and Young People's Experience of Disaster in July 2020.

Consultations on the Review of the Melbourne Declaration

In July through to August 2019, ACYP conducted consultations with children and young people to inform the NSW Department of Education review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.

Consultations were held in two schools – one in regional NSW and one in South West Sydney. In total, 184 secondary school students participated in 26 focus groups discussions. Students discussed what was and wasn't working well for them in their schools; what knowledge and skills they think students should develop for the future and what schools need to do to make sure every student is known, valued and cared for.

Youth Justice consultations

During the reporting period, ACYP conducted consultations in Reiby and Riverina Youth Justice Centres. ACYP listened to a total of 34 young people. These form part of a wider series of consultations undertaken in Youth Justice Centres over several reporting periods, which has seen ACYP visit all NSW Centres on multiple occasions listening to 276 young people. Consultations were conducted in small focus group formats at both Centres. Young people responded to questions on what services, programs, and supports they think are helpful to young people prior to coming into custody, whilst they are in custody, and when they return to the community.

Aboriginal children and young people – Nations of Origin

ACYP again attended the PCYC Nations of Origin event held in Raymond Terrace from 16-19 July 2019. Nations of Origin is a multifaceted sport, cultural, education and leadership program which is held annually in proximity to NAIDOC week. Cultural identity is a focal point of the project with all teams consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people and the teams representing their community under their traditional local Aboriginal nation name from their area. ACYP held consultations with young people at the netball and rugby league tournaments.

In total, 144 young people from regional and urban areas across NSW took part in small group discussions about community, culture and child safe organisations. They were asked about what is and is not working well for young people in their communities, what does culture mean to them and what can organisations do to make young people feel safe. The findings from the consultations continue to inform ACYP's work.

Schools Spectacular

On 22 and 23 November 2019, ACYP attended SpecFest as part of Schools Spectacular. Schools Spectacular is a world-class arena show and one of the largest annual events of its type with over 5,000 public school students from across NSW. SpecFest is the outdoor entertainment area for Schools Spectacular and features a line-up of entertainment and activities for families, friends and performers to enjoy before and after the show.

ACYP again took part in SpecFest and set up an area for children and young people to join in on activities. One of ACYP's activities involved an online survey about child rights and child safe organisations. 515 children and young people completed the survey across the two days which included questions such as: What rights do you know that children and young people have? What are the best ways for young people to be told about their rights? If you were unhappy about something in an organisation, what would make you feel most comfortable to tell them about it?

Pilot anti-bullying program (SHiFT)

During Terms 2 and 3 of 2019, ACYP together with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Education, developed and trialled an anti-bullying program in two NSW Government schools (James Fallon High School, Albury and Eagle Vale High School) in Campbelltown. Nine students in Years 8 and 9 from each school participated in the pilot.

The program, called SHiFT, aimed to implement a student-led behavioural and cultural change initiative to reduce conflict and improve the quality of interpersonal interactions among all members of the school. Over five two hour sessions with ACYP staff, students identified conflict areas that they wanted to improve; explored a range of behaviour change strategies and designed their own 'Make Change' whole-of-school initiatives to implement in their schools.

Attitudinal surveys

Each year, ACYP conducts quantitative polling to gain a representative sample and understanding of certain issues raised by children and young people to compliment qualitative methodologies.

ACYP commissioned a number of polling studies in the reporting period which involved children and young people between 12-24 years of age who live in NSW. A poll was organised to hear children and young people's views about life in their area in the lead up to Youth Week. Questions were also asked about the effects the recent floods, bushfires and drought have had on children and young people, how they have been impacted and what should be done to help children their age. This valuable information contributed to ACYP's research into children and young people's experience of disaster. Other polling topic areas include but are not limited to; rights, safety, smart phone usage, domestic violence, environmental concerns, education, health, mental health and general attitudinal questions.

The results obtained are often shared with a range of government departments as a way of informing them about children and young people as beneficiaries and users of their services. Sharing these results with key decision makers helps to inform the development of new policies and practices.

Face-to-face consultations with children and young people often contribute to the formulation of polling topics and questions. At various times, ACYP consults with different NSW Government departments to collaborate on polling questions.



Children and young people sentiment tracking during COVID-19



ACYP undertook polling to explore how children and young people across NSW were feeling as COVID-19 continued to impact their lives. This information has given guidance on how adults, government and organisations can continue to respond to the needs of children and young people.

The polling took place from April to June 2020 and involved more than 2,470 children and young people between 12-24 years of age living in NSW. An initial benchmark poll was completed between 21-28 April and consisted of 511 children and young people with a subsequent four phases with each involving more than 490 children and young people to ensure the appropriate demographic sample sizes were met. Tracking was undertaken approximately each fortnight to analyse behavioural trends as well as allowing government to respond to communication challenges and improve safety messages relevant to children and young people.

Questions covered a range of areas including: How do you think people your age in your area are feeling about life in NSW? Overall, how concerned are you about Coronavirus, if at all? Do you feel like you currently have enough information about what to do in relation to Coronavirus? Children and young people were also asked about their concerns, personal behaviours during this time and how they have been affected.

Key findings as at 30 June include:



on balance, young people have become more positive about life in NSW since this study began in late April. While boredom, tiredness and stress dominated their emotions during this period, happiness has increased over the past month. This has largely coincided with the easing of restrictions across NSW



most young people remain at least somewhat concerned about Coronavirus, although the intensity of concern has eased, with 46% currently saying they are extremely or quite concerned, down from 58% at the end of April. News reports of recent cases in Victoria are likely to have impacted this figure reducing further in the latest wave



the experience of those aged 12-17 has been very different to that of those aged 18-24 years. Similarly, males and females have expressed concerns and responded differently



young people with a CALD background were consistently more concerned throughout the pandemic, and experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety than non-CALD respondents



the economic impacts of the pandemic have been most front of mind for young people, more so than fear of contracting the virus. Indeed, young people across all age and gender brackets have been more concerned about whether their family members might catch COVID-19, than catching it themselves and they are more concerned about the mental health impacts than the physical health impacts.

How are young people feeling your age in your area about life in NSW?

Wave 5 (17th - 29th June)



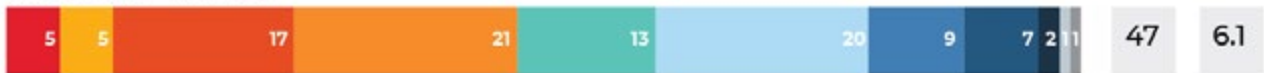
Wave 4 (2nd - 11th June)



Wave 3 (19th - 27th May)



Wave 2 (4th - 12th May)



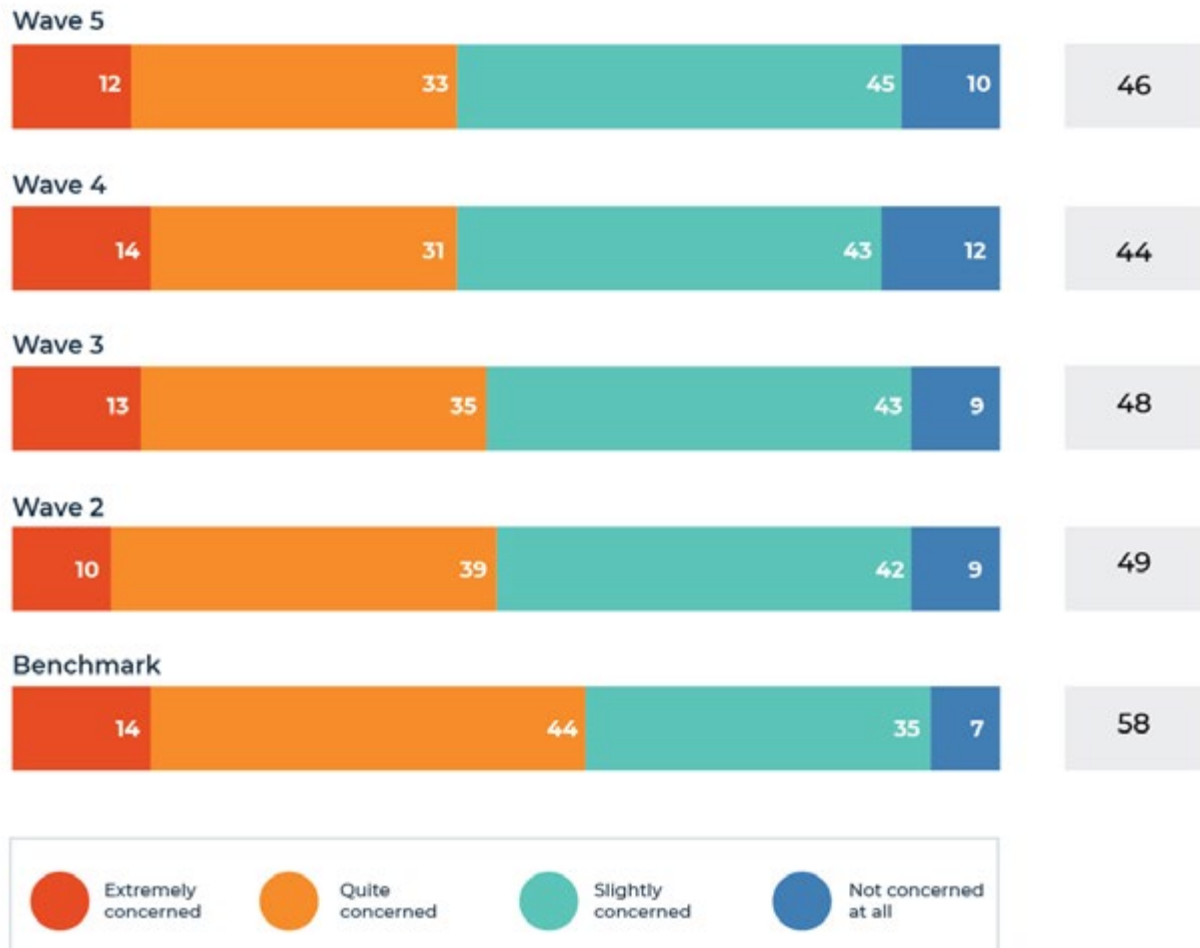
Benchmark (21st - 28th April)



Youthweek Study (6th - 23rd March)



How concerned are you about the current or potential effects of coronavirus?



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about coronavirus?

The Government's coronavirus restrictions are generally fair and reasonable



Male 12-17	Female 12-17	Male 18-24	Female 18-24	CALD	Non-CALD
67	70	58	71	73	65

The Government is taking appropriate measures to protect people's health



65	63	53	70	71	60
----	----	----	----	----	----

The Government has clearly communicated the things people need to do



59	66	56	59	66	58
----	----	----	----	----	----

The Government is taking appropriate measures to support people who lose their job or face financial difficulties



58	56	56	56	56	56
----	----	----	----	----	----

The Government is taking appropriate actions to protect and support young people



45	47	48	50	59	45
----	----	----	----	----	----

The coronavirus restrictions are making my day-to-day life very difficult



43	48	44	41	34	46
----	----	----	----	----	----

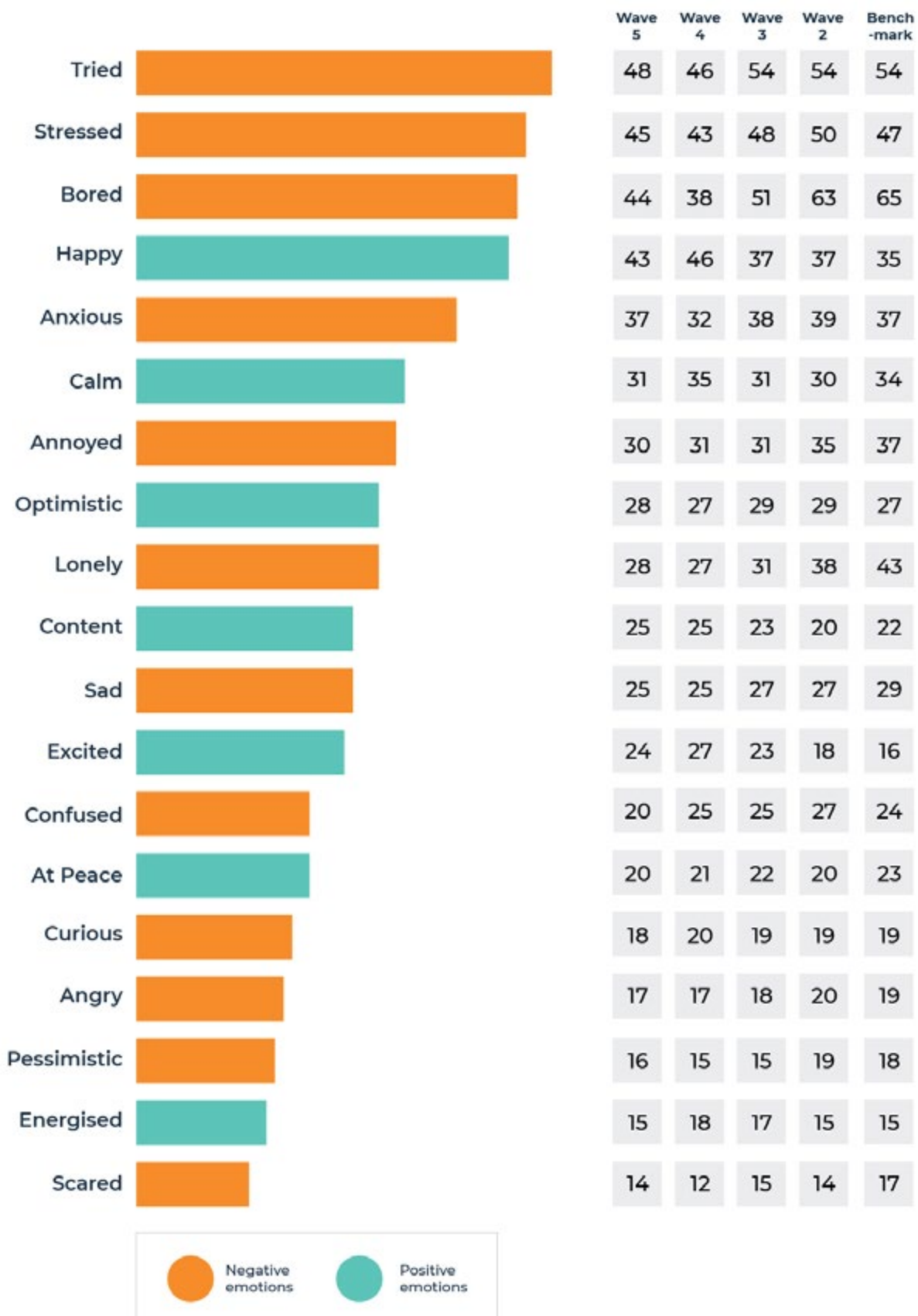
I'm tired of hearing about coronavirus and am not paying close attention to government updates and instructions about it.



35	32	28	33	30	32
----	----	----	----	----	----



Which of the following emotions represents what you have been feeling in the last week?



Report Launches

During the reporting year, ACYP continued to produce reports which were informed by face-to-face consultations and polling with children and young people.

Each report outlines ACYP's methodology, the number of children and young people consulted with, the questions asked as well as the detailed findings and recommendations made by children and young people. The valuable feedback provided by children and young people is reported directly into Parliament and provided to decision makers.

Organisations and government departments also request ACYP to organise and run targeted consultations with children and young people on specific

topics. The results from the consultations can better assist organisations with the creation, development and implementation of projects, keeping in mind the best interests of children and young people throughout the process.

Once released, the reports are available on the ACYP website so to raise more awareness around the issues affecting children and young people, their experiences as well as their solutions for improving their lives and the lives of other children and young people.



What Children and Young People in Juvenile Justice Centres Have to Say

On Wednesday 30 October 2019, ACYP released the report *What Children and Young People in Juvenile Justice Centres Have to Say*. The report details the findings from face-to-face consultations with 260 children and young people in Youth Justice Centres. The recommendations suggest how Youth Justice Centres can be improved and what can be done in the community to keep children and young people out of the Youth Justice System.

A number of children and young people ACYP consulted with in Youth Justice Centres had experienced multiple disadvantages in their lives such as poverty, violence, neglect, homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health issues. During consultations, children and young people were hopeful, they were optimistic and they expressed the desire for a better future not only for themselves but for others in similar situations. Children and young people in custody expressed that they want to use time in custody constructively to help them rehabilitate and prepare to reintegrate into the community to achieve their life goals.

Children and young people raised a wide range of services and supports that would assist them before coming into custody as well as after their release. These include: supportive workers and services; education supports and life skills; employment supports; accommodation assistance; access to activities and programs; drug and alcohol and mental health services and connection to culture and religion. They said they would benefit from more programs in detention such as: education and life skills; opportunities to gain skills for employment; vocational training; psycho-social health

and caseworker support and preparation for their transition back to the community.

Aboriginal young people said connection to culture was central to their sense of identity and wellbeing. They spoke about the importance of Aboriginal led cultural programs and activities to build their confidence, connect them to Elders, mentors, and other cultural role models in their community to provide guidance and share their knowledge.

The ABC covered the findings of the report in a story published on Wednesday 30 October 2019. The report was also covered across ABC radio stations and the ABC 7pm News shared a story with feedback provided by the Advocate (A. Johnson). The potential reach for online coverage was 26.27m and TV/radio was 1.61m.

What Aboriginal Children and Young People Have to Say

ACYP released the report *What Aboriginal Children and Young People Have to Say* on Friday 20 December 2019. The report is based on the views and experiences of 2,800 Aboriginal children and young people. Their voices were heard through face-to-face consultations across many settings.

The report uncovers comprehensive findings and outlines 38 recommendations across the following topics raised during consultations: connection to culture; racism and discrimination; education; accessible activities and programs; supportive workers and services as well as justice.

Children and young people offered practical solutions and recommendations, some of these include: that services targeting Aboriginal children and young people are designed and delivered by Aboriginal owned and controlled organisations; stronger connection to culture through initiatives; more accessible activities and programs especially after hours and over weekends;

more training for frontline workers and an increase of life skills programs in schools.

Across all consultations, being able to access recreational activities and programs was reported as very important along with maintaining a connection to culture. Children and young people spoke about how they would benefit from more programs and opportunities to connect with culture through Elders and community members. Racism and discrimination were big issues mentioned across all consultations and they discussed what makes them feel unwelcome and welcome in their communities.



Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People

The report *Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People* was released on Friday 20 December 2019. The report details all findings from ACYP consultations and polling relating to the mental health needs of children and young people in NSW. In total, the voices of approximately 12,000 children and young people are represented in this report (10,000 from face-to-face consultations and 2,000 from online polling).

The report outlines children and young people’s recommendations across the following topics: access to information; schools; health and community services and the broader community. The findings are grouped under specific consultations undertaken by ACYP on mental health and wellbeing.

Children and young people provided recommendations that would support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Some of the recommendations include: an online platform be created with information on mental health and how to locate services; ensuring there is access to information and online resources about recognising signs

and symptoms of mental health issues, how to support a friend, when and where to seek help; more opportunities for mental health and other support organisations to provide services within schools.

Children and young people also called for: raising awareness of mental health; more mental health lessons in schools; more investment in mental health and alcohol and drug support specifically for young people; funding youth homelessness refuges; provide free and low cost youth-focused mental health services and more community initiatives and an increase in resourcing for whole-of community programs particularly in regional and Aboriginal communities.



Consultations with Children and Young People on Creating Child Safe Organisations

ACYP undertook focus group consultations with 608 children and young people to hear their views on creating child safe organisations. This research informed the report *Consultations with Children and Young People on Creating Child Safe Organisations* which was released on Friday 20 December 2019.

The consultations involved children and young people from across NSW including Greater Sydney, Hunter, Illawarra-Shoalhaven, North Coast, Central West and Orana. ACYP adopted a two-staged approach with Stage 1 involving focus groups and Stage 2 consisting of a poll with 1,000 children and young people between 12-24 years of age across NSW.

Some of the key findings in the report show that children and young people feel safe in organisations that: make them feel welcome; demonstrate a commitment to child safety; employ friendly and helpful staff and provide regular opportunities for children and young people to voice their opinions. In order to feel comfortable to make a report or recommendation about their safety, children and young people would like a simple and anonymous reporting system; staff that are

approachable and trustworthy; supportive networks to help them through the process and to know that the organisation will take them seriously.

Children and young people reported that safe organisations fundamentally engage children and young people in decision making processes in meaningful ways. They further emphasised that they would be unlikely to make a report in relation to their safety when organisations do not provide ongoing mechanisms to include their voices in decision making or do not take their opinions seriously. In addition to providing opportunities for contributing to organisational decision making, children and young people further reported that they feel safe in organisations that demonstrate inclusiveness and a concern for their mental health and wellbeing.

Consultations with Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Young People

Children and young people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds have been part of many ACYP consultations and events to speak about what is working well, not so well, and the improvements they would like to see in their communities. This feedback was published in the report *Consultations with Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Young People* on Friday 20 December 2019.

In 2018 to 2019, ACYP in partnership with the Coordinator-General for Refugee Resettlement in NSW and the Joint Party Working Group Refugee Youth Sub Group conducted a series of focus group style consultations with 176 young refugees and asylum seekers between 12-24 years of age.

The purpose of the consultations was to hear from young people about what supports and services are working well for young people arriving in NSW and what they think would better help them during the settlement process. These insights were then used to inform the NSW Government's Refugee Youth Policy Initiative.

Young people's discussions about what helped them upon their arrival in Australia could be grouped into two distinct themes. First they spoke about the good things offered in Australia that were not always available in their home countries (e.g. safety, education, transport, free health care). Second, they spoke about the supports and services that were provided to them and their families to assist with the settlement process.

When discussing what could have assisted them even more when they first arrived, first and foremost, all young people reported that not knowing the English language was the most difficult and confusing aspect of arriving in Australia. Above all, young people reported that feeling safe was one of the best things about being in Australia. Young people across all groups reported that their schools had overall been very supportive during the settlement process.

Initiatives

Digital Lunchbreak

On Thursday 16 April 2020, ACYP launched the Digital Lunchbreak website. The website was designed in response to COVID-19 to assist children and young people with finding online resources and activities to do at home in their lunchbreak, around learning hours and on weekends as a result of social distancing measures.

Many government and non-government departments prepared activities and resources for children and young people and these were collated in one place for easy access. Children and young people can learn, create and discover through digital workshops, learning materials, virtual excursions and more. Helpful resources relating to COVID-19 are also available for children and young people if they need and these include support services and information on mental health and wellbeing.

Since the launch of Digital Lunchbreak and as a result of the valuable feedback received, the website has undergone additional updates to include even more activities and resources for children and young people. The activities have doubled in quantity since the initial launch and they have been organised across categories to assist children and young people with exploring the activities available.

The website also includes a feedback section for children and young people under the age of 24 so they can share their voice and let ACYP know

if there is any content or information they would like added to the website.

An updates page can be accessed on the website which includes videos produced by ACYP. The videos are specifically designed for children and young people and cover factual and helpful information about COVID-19. The videos include interviews with NSW Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, NSW Chief Paediatrician, Dr Matthew O'Meara and Professor Rachel Skinner, Senior Clinical Advisor in Youth Health and Wellbeing NSW Ministry of Health, Discipline of Child and Adolescent Health, The University of Sydney, Deputy Director of Wellbeing Health & Youth, Centre of Research Excellence in Adolescent Health and Adolescent Physician, Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. Each share their important advice so that children and young people can learn more about keeping themselves safe as well as those around them. ACYP consulted with children and young people on the design of the new ACYP website and their ideas were also implemented across Digital Lunchbreak.



NSW, Through Their Eyes

On Monday 2 March 2020, ACYP launched the video series NSW, through their eyes. The series presents interviews with inspirational children and young people as well as adults who work with, by and on behalf of children and young people. The A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) interviews guests to hear about their life experiences, current work, main priorities as well as their advice for the children and young people of NSW.

NSW, through their eyes was developed in response to feedback provided by children and young people who said they find short videos to be a useful method for receiving information and that they enjoy learning from other people's lived experiences.

The first interview in the series took place with Simon Byrnes who discussed his experiences of homelessness and his story about overcoming the challenges he faced as a young person. Interviews with young people have followed including Julie Charlton who is a member of the NSW Youth Advisory Council, an advocate for Spina Bifida awareness and Don't Dis My Ability ambassador. Julie spoke about her experiences towards becoming a para athlete. In an interview with 16 year old Bailey Pickles, he spoke about his journey to becoming a composer, his passion for experimental music and his hopes for the future.

The A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) interviewed Joseph La Posta, CEO of Multicultural NSW,

who discussed NSW as being one of the most diverse states in the world as well as community inclusion for children and young people in NSW. Amy Brown, Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery for the Department of Premier and Cabinet took part in the series and spoke about her career journey, successful leadership strategies and how to lead using strengths.

Former NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM who led the charge in fighting one of the most devastating fire seasons ever experienced in NSW over the 2019/20 Summer, shared his thoughts, advice and reflections in his interview. He spoke about how he sources inspiration from the many volunteers he works with and how the dedication and commitment he sees in young people makes him believe that our future is in safe hands. NSW, through their eyes continues to highlight the valuable work being done by and for the children and young people of NSW.



The Solutions Summit - End Violence Against Children and Young People

The Solutions Summit - End Violence Against Children and Young People was held at the SMC Conference & Function Centre on Friday 26 July 2019. More than 130 senior leaders from across government and non-government organisations attended to show their ongoing support for ending violence against children and young people.

Speakers included key representatives from the international movement to end violence against children, national leaders and young people themselves. The Summit built on the International Perspectives Conference at the MCA in 2017 where international experts came together and launched the End Violence Against Children, Now and Forever campaign.

The Summit commenced with a Welcome to Country by Aunty Ann Weldon and

video messages were shown by the Hon Mark Speakman SC MP, Attorney-General, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence as well as Dr. Howard Taylor, Executive Director – Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. A keynote address was presented by international speaker John Carnochan, Former Detective Chief Superintendent at the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit. John discussed his extensive work in reducing violence against children and young people.



Panel Discussions

A series of panel discussions took place and were introduced by members of the NSW Youth Advisory Council. The panels involved government representatives and eminent Australians who were asked questions about their work and contributions towards ending violence against children and young people. Attendees also heard from a panel of children and young people who provided their feedback and recommendations for making their world safer.

First panel:

- William Murphy, Deputy Secretary Customer, Delivery and Transformation at Department of Customer Service
- Amy Brown, Deputy Secretary, Strategy & Delivery at Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Joann Wilkie, Deputy Secretary, Economic Strategy & Productivity Group, Treasury
- Kristina Hickey Deputy Secretary, Transformation at Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Second panel:

- Robert Fitzgerald AM – Commissioner on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- John Pascoe AC CVO, Former Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia
- Gillian Calvert AO – Former NSW Children’s Commissioner
- Megan Mitchell – Former National Children’s Commissioner.

The children and young people panel involved representatives from:

Plumpton High School, James Sgeahan Catholic High School, Malek Fahd Islamic School.

Attendees heard from the Advocate (A. Johnson) who provided up-to-date findings from face-to-face consultations with 2,000 children and young people on their solutions to reduce violence.

Workshops:

The afternoon consisted of solutions workshops which utilised the World Health Organisation’s key strategies and indicators from the INSPIRE report. The workshops looked at what the government is currently doing and focused on key actions that the community, NGO and government sector can progress. Group representatives were then invited to share their solutions with the audience.

NSW Youth Advisory Council - YAC

The NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) plays an important role in advising the NSW Government on issues that are relevant to young people across the state. Membership of the YAC is open to all children and young people between 12-24 years of age residing in NSW. Applications are particularly sought from diverse locations, backgrounds and life experiences.

The 12 member YAC provides a direct avenue of communication between young people and the NSW Government. The YAC meets regularly throughout the year to provide advice to the Minister responsible for Youth and the Advocate on policies, procedures and resources that affect children and young people in NSW.

Members also provide feedback to community groups, government agencies and departments and Ministers on issues concerning children and young people.



The 2019 YAC members included, Chair Emily Backhouse and members: Jayden Redfern, Khyati Walia, Tyrell Neergaard, Luke McNamara, Isha Ahmad, Ashish Thapa, Vanessa Nguyen, Hamani Tanginoa, Lukian Adams, Julie Charlton and Taunoa Bugmy.

The functions of the YAC under the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014 are:



to advise the Minister and the Advocate on the planning, development, integration and implementation of government policies and programs concerning young persons



to consult with young persons, community groups and government agencies on issues and policies concerning young persons



to monitor and evaluate legislation and government policies and programs concerning young persons and to recommend changes if required



to conduct forums, approved by the Minister, on issues of interest to young persons



to collect, analyse and provide the Minister and the Advocate with information on issues and policies concerning young persons.

The 2019 YAC were involved in a range of projects and provided advice to government departments and external agencies, for example:



Safe Work NSW: Safe Young Workers Toolkit



Revenue NSW: Design and messaging of 'Fine and You' presentation for schools



NESA: proposed changes to the NSW school curriculum.

Recruitment for the 2020 NSW Youth Advisory Council

On Wednesday 22 January 2020 applications opened for the 2020-2021 NSW Youth Advisory Council. Applications closed on Sunday 1 March with 625 applications received. The A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) and the Senior Participation Advisors determined a shortlist of 150 applicants.

Shortlisted applicants were invited via email to a one-day recruitment event scheduled to be held on 30 March at Parliament House in Sydney, which was subsequently postponed due to COVID-19 public health orders.

To comply with COVID-19 public health orders, a digital recruitment process was developed for the 150 shortlisted applicants. Individual phone interviews were held for the shortlisted young people during May 2020. An online information session took place on Monday 1 June 2020 in which shortlisted applicants were addressed by the A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) and the Hon. Gareth Ward MP, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

Online group activity sessions were held across three days between 2 to 4 June 2020, with 50 young people allocated to each day based on age to aid the selection process. Participants discussed questions provided by NSW Government Departments. Members of the ACYP team and NGO representatives observed the applicants while they discussed their thoughts and ideas as a group on what they would recommend to the departments.

Following the recruitment event and further analysis by ACYP, the A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) determined 12 candidates to recommend to the Minister. Recommended council members are then presented to Cabinet for approval.



NSW Regional Youth Task Force

The NSW Regional Youth Taskforce was established by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC, Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women in 2019 and provides an avenue of communication between the children and young people of NSW and the NSW Government.

Eighteen young people from across regional NSW have been inducted as members of the NSW Government's Regional Youth Taskforce. As members of the Taskforce, they advise the Minister on issues that affect young people living in regional NSW.

ACYP supported the Office for Regional Youth in the recruitment of the Taskforce and the facilitation of the meetings. ACYP have also provided Advocacy and Consultation Facilitation training to the members. The Taskforce are scheduled to meet four times a year.



NSW Children's Week

Children's Week is an annual event that raises community awareness of the needs, rights and achievements of children and young people. To celebrate Children's Week, many events, programs and activities are available for children and young people across the state.

In 2019, Children's Week was held from 19-27 October. The theme for 2019 was Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: 'Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this'.

During Children's Week, ACYP engages with children, young people and adults through events and initiatives including Children's Week Parliament together with the NSW Children's Week Awards and celebration event. ACYP also works with the NSW Children's Week Council and the NSW Youth Advisory Council who assists with concepts and planning for Children's Week.



NSW Children's Week Parliament

On Monday 21 October 2019, 93 children and young people attended NSW Parliament House during Children's Week. ACYP continued their valued partnership with YMCA to deliver NSW Children's Parliament which provides an opportunity for children and young people to share their voice and bring forward their views on the topics important to them.

This one-day program was offered to children and young people in years 7-10 who came from areas across NSW including Sydney, the Illawarra, Hunter, South East, Riverina Murray, New England, North Coast, West and Far West.

On the day, the Advocate (A. Johnson) provided advocacy training and the CEO of YMCA, Susannah Le Bron gave encouraging and helpful advice to the young people. Members of Parliament, Mr Dugald Saunders MP, Ms Jodie Harrison MP, and The Hon. Natalie Ward MLC attended the event and spoke with the children and young people as part of a panel. The MPs discussed their roles as elected representatives, how they came to be Members as well as the issues they are passionate about.

The young people were also given tours through NSW Parliament House and they learnt about parliamentary and legislative processes. They then participated in consultations and were asked questions about what is working well and what is not working well in their local areas.

Leading up to the day, the young people were asked to prepare a one-minute speech about a topic of their choice and they then rehearsed their speeches together in groups. In the afternoon, they presented their speeches in the Legislative Assembly which was presided over by the Advocate (A. Johnson) and Susannah Le Bron. Children's Parliament continues to be an empowering initiative that gives children and young people a platform to have their voices heard.



NSW Children's Week 2019 Awards

On Wednesday 23 October 2019, ACYP together with the NSW Children's Week Committee held a Children's Week celebration event at the ACYP office.

Guests heard from the Advocate (A. Johnson); the Chair of the NSW Children's Week Council and CEO of FAMS Julie Hourigan Ruse; and famous author and Children's Laureate Morris Gleitzman. The evening involved presentations and performances by young people including Zipporah Corser-Anu, Jack Williams and the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

At the event, the winners of the NSW Children's Week 2019 Awards and the NSW Children's Week 2019 Creative Story Competition were announced and presented with their award and prize. Decided by young people themselves, the Awards were designed to recognise the achievements and contributions of children and young people as well as the adults who make impacts on the lives of children and young people.

Children, young people and adults could nominate an individual, group, service or project under specific award categories. There are seven awards for children and young people under the age of 18 and three awards for adults over the age of 18.

For the 2019 Awards, children and young people decided to add a Teacher Award which recognises a teacher who continues to improve the lives of children and young people and helps them reach their goals. Many nominations were received showing the incredible work that individuals, groups, services and projects are doing for children and young people all across NSW.



Community Art Award

For those who inspire through art including painting, drawing, digital art, photography, performance, dance and music. Isabel Hathorn - nominated by Ruby Hathorn.

Act of Kindness Award

For those who have or continue to offer acts of kindness by helping and supporting those around them. Winner: Taya Johanson-Burns - nominated by Harriet Stewart.

Newly Arrived Migrant or Refugee Award

For those who have made a positive contribution to their local community, region or state. Winner: Monir Roumieh - nominated by Jacqueline Brown.

Bravery Award

For those who demonstrate a single act or ongoing acts of courage, strength or determination. Winner: Travis Newman - nominated by Deb (on behalf of the Primary class).

Giving Back to the Community Award

For those who give up their time for their community through volunteering, programs and every day behaviours. Winner: Ariba Omar - nominated by Saba Nabi.

Environmental Award

For those who help support the environment through a range of acts, decisions and initiatives. Winner: Shalise Leesfield – nominated by Shannon Murphy.

Voice Award

For those who use their voice to bring change, inform others, and raise awareness. Winner: Amber Kelleher – nominated by Darren Mumford.

Inspiring Mentor Award

A person or group who supports, encourages and guides children and young people. Winner: Penny Lamaro - nominated by Vanessa Kubunavanua.

Foster Parent / Guardian Award

A person committed to helping the lives of children and young people in Out of Home Care. Winner: Kerren Hopkins – nominated by Harriet Stewart.

Teacher Award

A teacher who continues to improve the lives of children and young people and helps them reach their goals. Winner: Francis Floresca - nominated by Frederick Floresca.



NSW Children’s Week Creative Story Competition

ACYP invited entries for the NSW Children’s Week 2019 Creative Story Competition which was open to all children and young people up to the age of 18 living in NSW. The competition recognised the importance of writing and the imagination.

Children and young people were asked to use their imagination and write a creative story (200-500 words) about an issue that is important to them and to other children and young people in 2019. More than 800 entries were received making the selection process incredibly difficult. The entries showed the strong passion that children and young people have for the issues they find important.

One winner from each age group was selected (0-5, 6-11 and 12-18). The winning stories were decided by famous author and Children’s Laureate Morris Gleitzman, together with the Advocate (A Johnson), the NSW Youth Advisory Council and the NSW Children’s Week Council.



0 to 5 category winner

The story 'Clean Oceans' by the Senior Preschool Class was a collaboration between 26 preschool children aged five years. The story discusses the importance of a clean ocean through the perspective of a dolphin who frees sea creatures from plastic. The dolphin then finds a person who can help spread messages about the importance of keeping the ocean clean.

6 to 11 category winner

The winning entry by Avalon Vowels focuses on a friendship between a character and a whale called Migaloo. Through the story, Avalon describes the results of climate change and how this is affecting Migaloo. The story observes the surrounding environment as the character and whale head to Antarctica. After realising the effects of climate change, the character decides to travel around the world to help solve this issue.

12 to 18 category winner

'The Custodian' by Makayla Gilbert takes the readers on an afternoon walk through the property at Koorawatha - a country town in the South West Slopes region of NSW. Also known as Wiradjuri country, the story follows Makayla's walk with her mother and father as she looks to connect with her country and learn about the history of her ancestors, the trees, the major rivers and creeks.

Promotion for NSW Children's Week

ACYP promotes NSW Children's Week to reach and involve as many children and young people as possible. During the reporting period, ACYP promoted Children's Week through the:



management and ongoing updates of the NSW Children's Week website



creation and distribution of promotional digital assets including videos, posters, website banners, social tiles and posts



publishing of regular direct emails to stakeholders, schools and children and young people



inclusion of information across stakeholder websites and newsletters.

NSW Youth Week



Youth Week is a time for young people between 12-24 years of age to celebrate and participate in a variety of activities, opportunities and events across the state and in their local area. The theme for NSW Youth Week 2020, ‘Speak up. Be involved. Get connected. Have fun’ was decided by the 2019 NSW Youth Advisory Council. Youth Week was held on 1-9 April 2020.

To celebrate the start of Youth Week, ACYP released a video as part of the NSW, through their eyes interview series. The A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) spoke with 20 year old Julie Charlton, member of the NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC), an advocate for Spina Bifida awareness and Don’t Dis My Ability ambassador. Julie discussed her passion for sports and equal opportunities for all children and young people. Julie spoke about her experience and achievements and offered some inspiring words to children and young people.

Each year, ACYP encourages children and young people to take part in Youth Week. Due to COVID-19 public health orders, ACYP’s annual NSW Youth Week Forum did not take place along with many other Council run events. Children and young people could still get involved in Youth Week through online events and activities that were listed on the NSW Youth Week website.

In order to encourage children and young people to celebrate NSW Youth Week, ACYP continued their ongoing involvement in:

- maintaining and updating the NSW Youth Week website which was developed by ACYP
- NSW Youth Week branding and digital assets which were provided to NSW Councils
- the design and distribution of merchandise to NSW Councils
- online digital campaigns which were shared across social media channels.

Online Platform: Findings from Consultations

ACYP developed an online platform located on the ACYP website which shows the findings from consultations with children and young people since the office opened in 2015.

Through the platform, people can find out more about ACYP's face-to-face consultations and surveys by accessing an interactive map of NSW which contains information specific to different areas across the state including: Central Coast; Central West and Orana; Far West; Hunter; Illawarra-Shoalhaven; Greater Sydney; New England North West; North Coast; Riverina-Murray; South East and Tablelands.

By selecting areas of the NSW map, people can discover how many children and young people ACYP consulted with, the topics discussed as well as some of the key findings and recommendations made

by children and young people. Through the platform, people can access graphs, flip books, videos as well as ACYP's reports which are available for download.

Key Information is grouped under topics that children and young people have provided feedback on, these include: homelessness; Out of Home Care; health and mental health; violence; Youth Justice; education; Aboriginal; disability; refugee and asylum seeker; child safety; bullying and general attitudes.



Young Thinking Seminar Series

On Thursday 12 March 2020, ACYP hosted the first in a series of joint seminars with the Children and Youth Research Network at UNSW. The Young Thinking Seminar Series is designed to bring together the academic, NSW Government and non-government sectors to discuss and progress issues relevant to children and young people. Seminars are free events and are open to anyone who works in the children and young people sector.

The first seminar focused on children and young people and the Built Environment and involved more than 60 attendees. The A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) delivered an opening address and the following speakers discussed the planning, design and creation of cities from a child rights perspective:



- Associate Professor Kate Bishop, Discipline Director, Landscape Architecture UNSW and Convenor Children and Youth Research Network
- Yvette Andrews, Manager Strategic Engagement and Community Relations, City of Sydney
- Jane Threlfall, Principal Urban Designer Government Architect, Department of Planning and Environment
- Fiona Robbé, Director, Landscape Architects.

Attendees were given the opportunity to ask the speakers more about their work and the areas addressed during the seminar.

Governance and Administration

Enhance Government & Non-Government Training when Dealing with Children and Young People

ACYP conducts training for government and non-government organisations to better assist them with engaging with children and young people. ACYP's training is designed to show organisations how to respectfully engage with children and young people and involve them in decision making processes.

ACYP delivers face-to-face training on but not limited to child rights, meaningful participation and engagement with children and young people, advocacy and media training.

During the reporting period, ACYP delivered training to organisations including, SLHD Aboriginal Mental Health, Northern Sydney LHD Youth Advisory Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Youth Justice.

The training covers areas including but not limited to: how to involve children and young people in decisions that affect them, child rights perspectives and considerations, information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and findings from consultations. ACYP has developed tools and modules which are also used as part of the training.

During the reporting period, ACYP presented key information to more than 2,500 people at more than 30 speaking engagements, keynotes, training and events.

Presentations included the: Network of Community Activities Conference; WISA 2019 Conference: CPR (Connect, Protect, Respect); Association of Independent Schools: Reimagining Learning, and YMCA After Lockdown: Young people re-imagining their future.

Child Rights Training for NSW Teachers

ACYP held the second Child Rights Training course for NSW teachers on Thursday 7 November 2019. More than 25 teachers attended the training which was delivered by the Advocate (A. Johnson).

ACYP's free Child Rights Training course contributes five hours of NESA Registered PD for NSW Teachers maintaining at Proficient Teacher. Through the training, teachers gain an understanding of the history of the child rights movement, the major rights embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the ways in which these rights have been incorporated into policy and law, including the NSW Education Act and other pieces of legislation.

The training was designed to provide attendees with an understanding of how these rights translate into every day practices and how to see situations with a child rights lens and approach which can improve student engagement, participation and wellbeing, as well as promote a safe and respectful learning environment.



Committee and Advisory Boards

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People

Under the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014, one of the core functions of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People is to monitor and review the exercise by the Advocate of the Advocate's functions.

As at 30 June 2020 membership of the Committee was made up of:

Chair:

- The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox
(LIB, LC Member)

Deputy Chair:

- Mr Peter Sidgreaves
(LIB, LA Member) (from 18 June 2020)
- Ms Felicity Wilson
(LIB, LA Member) (until 16 June 2020)

Members:

- Ms Abigail Boyd
(GRNS, LC Member)
- The Hon. Greg Donnelly
(ALP, LC Member)
- Ms Jodie Harrison
(ALP, LA Member)
- Ms Robyn Preston
(LIB, LA Member)
- Mr Dugald Saunders
(NAT, LA Member)

The Advocate or an ACYP delegate holds membership or provides council to a number of government and non-government entities, some of which are listed below:

- Australian New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG)
- Child Death Review Team (CDRT)
- Children and Young Person Injury Prevention Working Group
- Youth Justice Coalition
- Law Society of New South Wales Children's Legal Issues
- UNICEF - Advisory Group to support the NSW Youth Summit on Living with Drought
- Joint Protocol to reduce contact of young people in residential care with the criminal justice system within the residential care and new Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) service systems Steering Group
- Youth Justice Advisory Committee
- Young People and Train fines working group
- NSW Mental Health Commission Community Advisory Council
- Sector Roundtable on Families and Communities
- Domestic and Family Violence Strategy Working Group
- Youth Week 2020 Reference Group
- Voice2Action: Steering Committee
- State Recovery Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee
- Property Industry Foundation - NSW Beneficiary Review Committee (BRC) Meeting
- Commonwealth Bank Australia Customer Advocacy Panel
- NSW Children's Week Council
- Regional Youth Steering Committee
- Women Strategy Working Group
- Fairer Fines Program Steering Committee.

Making Recommendations on Legislation, Reports, Policies, Practices, Procedures & Services Affecting Children and Young People

The Advocate prepares reports, papers and submissions relating to children and young people in NSW, including through the E-Cabinet process.

During this reporting period, the Advocate provided submissions to the following Government inquiries:



Education Council - Review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training



Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People Inquiry - Support for Children and Imprisoned Parents in NSW



Council of Attorneys- General – Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group Review



Department of Communities and Justice - Disability Inclusion Act Review



Revenue NSW - Fines Reduction Guidelines



Department of Communities and Justice and NSW Police Force - Young Offenders Act Review.

Parliamentary Oversight

Under Section 37 of the Advocate's governing Act, a responsibility of the Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People is to monitor and review the Advocate for Children and Young People as it exercises its function, including examining the Advocate's Annual Report. On Friday 6 March 2020, Ms Zoë Robinson (Acting Advocate) Mr Michael Shaw (Director) and Ms Emily Backhouse (Chair, Youth Advisory Council 2019-2020) appeared before the Committee to discuss the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Annual Reports. The Hearing acknowledged the work of the former Advocate, Mr Andrew Johnson, and welcomed the Acting Advocate.

The Committee chose to focus on how the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (the ACYP) has performed its functions under the Act, with particular attention given to its engagement with children and young people.

This engagement included children and young people experiencing disaster, children and young people living in regional and rural areas, children and young people within Youth Justice, children with lived experience of disability, children and young people with experience of Out of Home Care, children and young people with refugee, asylum seeker or migrant backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people and Aboriginal children and young people.

The Committee found that the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People is fulfilling its functions and following the principles governing its work specified by the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014. The Committee considered that the creation of the ACYP as an independent statutory office in 2014 has benefitted the children and young people of NSW.


It has provided support and advice to the Government and to public sector agencies on issues and policies affecting young people. The Committee supported the ongoing value of having a Youth Advisory Council and recognises that the ACYP is successfully managing the recruitment, training and support of the YAC.

The Committee recommended that the Advocate for Children and Young People, the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women prioritise the evaluation of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2016-2019 and the development of a new Strategic Plan under Section 15(1)(g) of their Act.

The Committee recommended that the Advocate for Children and Young People, the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth report to the Committee on the work done by other government sector agencies that are given responsibility for implementing the new Strategic Plan.

Engaging with Stakeholders

The Advocate regularly holds and attends meetings to establish and deepen working relationships with the many government, non-government and civil society organisations who help protect and promote the rights and interests of children and young people. The Advocate also works closely with organisations and collaborates on projects, events and initiatives.



During the reporting year, the Advocate (A. Johnson) attended or held 172 meetings, forums, seminars and related events.

During the reporting year, the A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) attended or held 298 meetings, forums, seminars and related events.

Conduct Special Inquiries under Part 5 of the Act into issues affecting children and young people

A request was made to undertake a Special Inquiry under part 5 of the Act in relation to children and young people experience of disasters. Following further conversation, it was agreed that the existing powers under the Act were sufficient to undertake this project.

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

A request was made on behalf of Fairness in Religions in School (FIRIS) Section 13 AA of the Ombudsman's Act 1974 on 16 August 2019. A response was provided within the required timeframe.

Responses of authorities to recommendations made by the Advocate

No independent recommendations were made during the reporting period outside of the government's usual consultation process, the public release of ACYP's consultation reports and recommendations and the tabling of the Annual Report.

Advocate's recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administrative action

No independent recommendations were made in the reporting period outside of the Advocate's usual government consultation processes.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 Requests

No requests were made to ACYP under the GIPA Act during the reporting period.

Internships and work experience programs

ACYP's Work Experience Program offers Year 10 students a five day placement in which they receive advocacy training and mentoring. They are also involved in developing their own advocacy project. During the program, the students meet with the Advocate and experience time working in the different units in the office including the Participation, Policy and Research and Media and Communications units. This program is open to all Year 10 students from across NSW. ACYP employed an intern in June 2020 who worked primarily in the Policy and Research team of ACYP part-time. This position is remunerated in line with ACYP's Internship Policy.

**Conduct, promote
and monitor research
into issues affecting
children and young
people**

ACYP is involved in a number of research initiatives and projects which include focus groups that are aimed at understanding the attitudes, thoughts and experiences of children and young people in NSW.

ACYP conducts research projects and develops information graphics which demonstrates comprehensive statistical data in a clear and informative way.



Research Projects

A child-rights focused stocktake of current NSW legislation

– *Dr Kath McFarlane*

This paper has been prepared in response to the need identified by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, for a child-rights focused stocktake of current NSW legislation.

As such, it identifies:



inconsistencies and limitations in existing NSW legislation applying to children and young people;



inadvertent consequences resulting from the application to children, of legislation prepared primarily to respond to issues affecting or generally committed by adults; and



disparities between the approaches taken by NSW compared to other Australian and/or international jurisdictions to matters affecting children and young people



the first part of the paper explores the various legislative approaches to childhood, including the terms and provisions that act protectively, paternalistically or punitively, depending on children's ages and whether the child is seen as being in need of care and protection, or as an offender. This section also contains a number of case studies that illustrate the various issues arising from adopting a child rights perspective in relation to child offenders. The following chapters examine specific legislative provisions as they impact on the aspects of the child as a patient, consumer, student, and employee. The final part of the paper examines specific child-rights issues relevant to children for whom the State has special responsibility, that is, children in Out Of Home Care (OOHC).

Disaster Recovery for Children and Young People

– *Deloitte Australia*

As part of the A/Advocate's (Z. Robinson) project focused on the disaster impacts on children and young people, the A/Advocate (Z. Robinson) commissioned Deloitte to undertake desktop research. The purpose of this research was to place children and young people at the centre of the disaster recovery journey.

It focuses on:



a quantitative analysis of the impacts and profile of children and young people affected by the 2019/2020 NSW bushfires



a qualitative understanding of the impacts of previous disasters on children and young people, including case studies on best practice



the factors that enable children and young people to remain resilient or present more vulnerable to the impacts of disasters



previous responses to disasters targeted towards children and young people.

The research found that children and young people experience disaster in a manner that can be quite different to adults. While it can have significant impacts on their environment and wellbeing, children and young people also demonstrate they have a desire to be deeply involved in the prevention, preparation and recovery aspects of a disaster.

The project developed a Disaster Resilience Framework including factors that lead to increased resilience in the event of a disaster and environments that are key to enabling this resilience. This framework provides an outline for how government, business and the community sector can continue to support and involve children and young people in the preparation and aftermath of disasters.

Children and Young People in NSW Vocational Education and Training – *Dr Phillip Toner, University of Sydney*

An outline of research that is to be undertaken in advance of proposed consultations with children and young people undertaking study at Vocation Education and Training (VET) providers. The research will be a desktop review utilising existing published data and literature.

The objectives of this research are:



to provide information on potential policy initiatives in VET that have been successful in other jurisdictions. Children and young people may be consulted on these initiatives



to provide evidence, especially quantitative evidence, on relevant issues that will not be covered in consultations. This evidence may be used in the consultation report to provide contextual information. The evidence may also be used to support a case for action on the recommendations from the consultation



to provide information on areas that may be useful to address in questions to children and young people in VET. This information may be used to inform how questions are designed.

**Promote the
provision of
information and
advice to assist
children and
young people**

Health information videos

ACYP continued to focus on the needs of children and young people and worked closely with government agency colleagues and the social and community sectors to present factual information about COVID-19 to children and young people.

In a series of video interviews, questions are answered and helpful advice is provided so that children and young people can learn more about COVID-19, the ways they can keep safe and how to best protect themselves and those around them. ACYP worked with NSW Health and NSW Police to create specific videos to further assist children and young people with navigating public health orders. The interview questions were sourced directly from children and young people.

Hosted by young people Grace Hill and Grace Rowe, five interviews have been published between April and July 2020. Interviews have involved NSW Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant and NSW Chief Paediatrician, Dr Matthew O'Meara who provided up-to-date health advice on areas including: how do people get COVID-19, what the symptoms are, how to best protect yourself and others, and how to safely social distance. Professor Rachel Skinner,

Senior Clinical Advisor in Youth Health and Wellbeing NSW Ministry of Health, Discipline of Child and Adolescent Health, The University of Sydney, Deputy Director of Wellbeing Health & Youth, Centre of Research Excellence in Adolescent Health and Adolescent Physician, Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. addressed questions that children and young people have asked about looking after their mental health and wellbeing.

PCYC's 2017 Young Achiever of the Year, Ankit Bailwal interviewed Paul Simpkins, Acting Commander, Youth and Crime Prevention Command and Crime Prevention Support Unit with NSW Police who offered advice to children and young people on how they can work with NSW Police to limit community transmission of COVID-19. Videos are continuing to be made and can be accessed through ACYP's social media platforms and Digital Lunchbreak website.



Child Protection Campaign

In April 2020, a Child Protection Campaign was established in response to COVID-19 to increase awareness of the importance of child protection during this time. The campaign, led by the Hon. Gareth Ward MP, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, focused on the important message that child protection is everyone’s responsibility. ACYP supported the campaign by producing four videos to share key messages as well as information on the Child Protection Helpline for those needing to speak with someone.

One of the videos was developed for children and young people, parents and carers with personal messages by the A/Advocate (Z. Robinson), the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and the Children’s Guardian. The video emphasised that children and young people have the right to feel safe and that they can reach out to services if in need of assistance. ACYP also arranged a video with NRL Legend Brad Fittler who shared a valuable message with the people of NSW about how keeping kids safe is everyone’s responsibility.

Two posts in this campaign were promoted on social media, the four video campaign was seen by more than 748,500 people in NSW and prompted more than 150 unique calls to Kids Helpline. ACYP supported a sector led component of this campaign, primarily working with FAMS, Adopt Change and BackTrack together with a broader sector reference group.

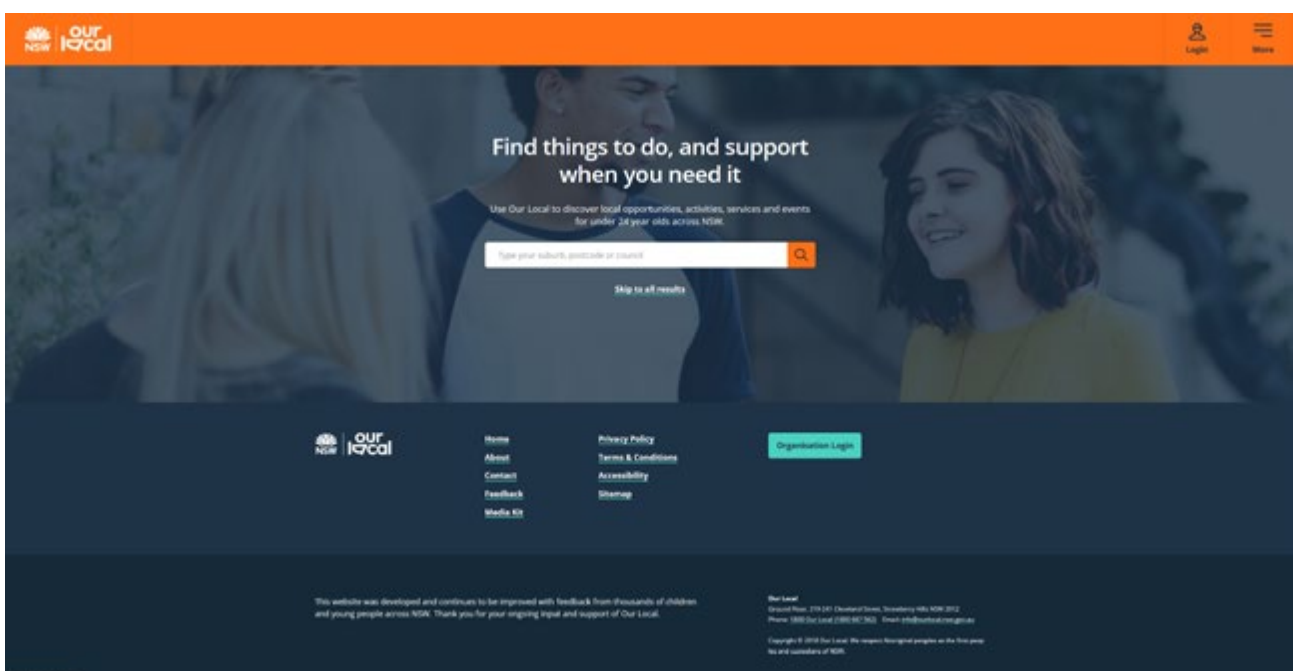


Our Local

Following the launch of Our Local in February 2019, the directory website has reached a milestone of over 200,000 page views in the reporting period. Our Local was co-designed with children and young people under the age of 24 in NSW to help them find local and state-wide opportunities, activities, services and events. Children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds, interests and experiences expressed the need to have an easy way to access local and state-wide opportunities, activities, services and events.

During the reporting period, the website has undergone a series of updates including additional filters for Active Kids and Creative Kids to help children and young people use their vouchers. Major functionality improvements were introduced for organisations, including batch edits, imports, and exports in order to make it easier for organisations to upload their information and keep their activities and details up to date.

Organisation hierarchy and roles were also implemented to provide more autonomy for organisations and to improve security. Our Local is continuing to provide children and young people with up-to-date information to help them find what they need.

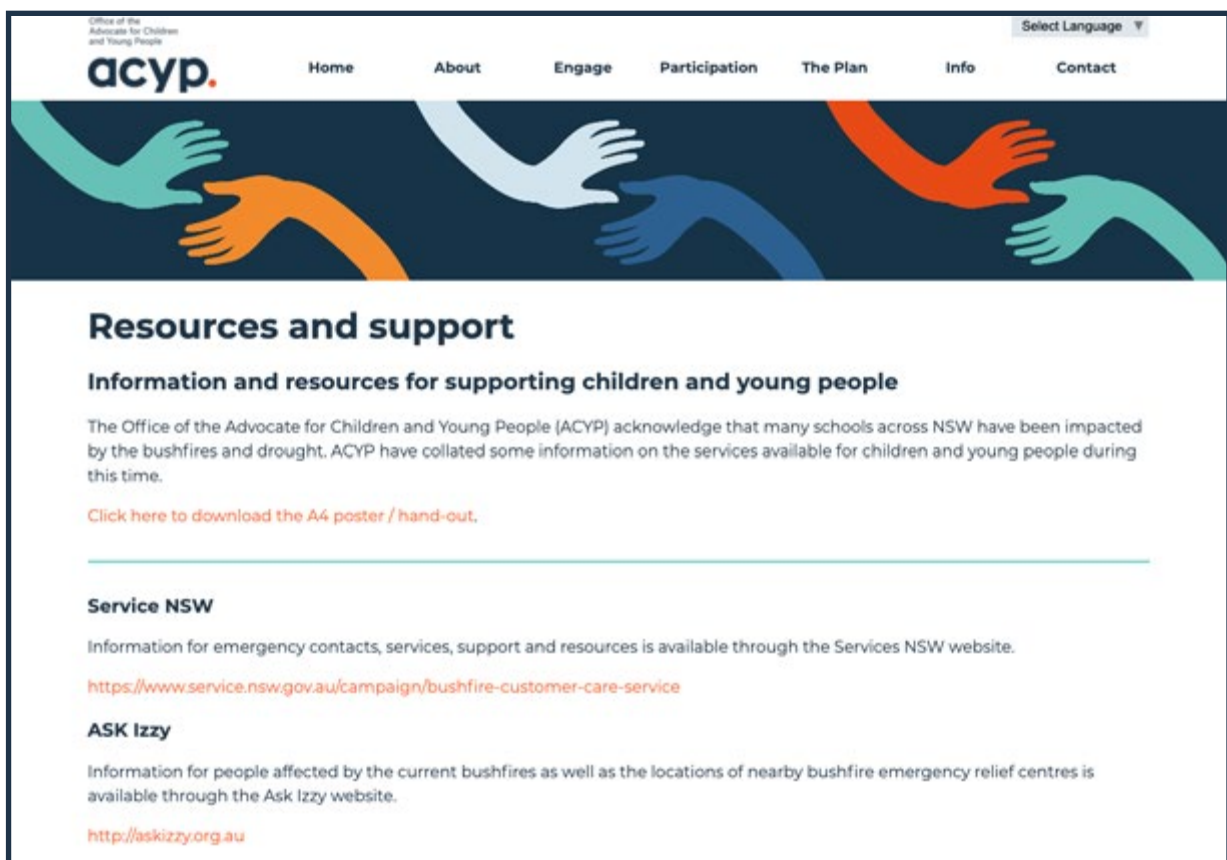


ACYP website

The ACYP website is regularly updated to inform children, young people, organisations and adults about ACYP’s projects, campaigns and initiatives and have their voices heard. This information is available on the website through videos, flip books and downloadable resources.

People can access and learn more about ACYP’s work including face-to-face consultations, detailed findings and the data collected. Information is also available for children and young people so that they can engage and get involved in different initiatives with ACYP.

Key pieces of work were uploaded to the website during the reporting year which provided helpful information to children and young people including COVID-19 videos, support resources and findings from consultations. ACYP is in the process of developing a new website to further improve how the content is accessed. Children and young people have provided feedback for the new design of the website.



Office Structure and Administration

Staffing

As at 30/6/20, there were a maximum of 16 full time staff and 4 part-time staff, employed against a staff establishment of 23 positions

Principal officers

- Ms Zoë Robinson, BMedia, LLB, MHR GAICD, A/Advocate for Children and Young People
- Mr Michael Shaw, B. Comms, PGCertSS, PGCertPP, Director

Publications

The following publications have been released by the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People throughout the reporting year:

- What Children and Young People in Juvenile Justice Centres Have to Say
- What Aboriginal Children and Young People Have to Say
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People
- Consultations with Children and Young People on Creating Child Safe Organisations
- Consultations with Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Young People



acyp.

**Office of the Advocate for
Children and Young People:**

Ground Floor, 219-241 Cleveland Street
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2012

ABN: 36 433 875 185

Phone: (02) 9248 0970

Email: acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au

Website : www.acyp.nsw.gov.au