

Annual Report 2016



Office of the
Advocate for Children
and Young People

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Hon Don Harwin MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

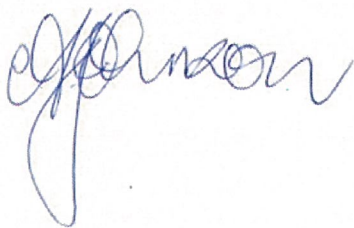
The Hon Shelly Hancock
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

In accordance with section 32 of the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act) I am pleased to present the Advocate's Annual Report for 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016.

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.

Yours sincerely



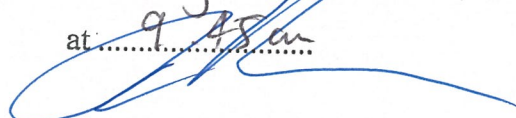
Andrew Johnson

Advocate for Children and Young People Acty President
28 October 2016

Received by me and authorised
to be made public forthwith on

Friday 28 October 2016

at 9:48 am



Hon Don Harwin MLC
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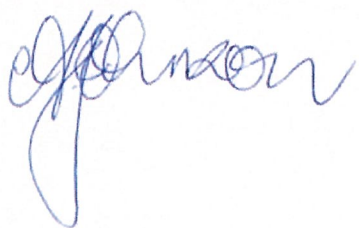
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Andrew Johnson
Advocate for Children and Young People
28 October 2016

*Received on Friday,
28th October 2016 at
9 45 am.
Deke Munro
Acting Clerk*

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We wish to pay our respects to Aboriginal elders – past, present and emerging – and 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	2
Highlights.....	4
About the Office	6
Year in Review, 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016	7
Developing the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in the State	7
Promoting the participation of children and young people in the decisions that affect their lives	9
Encourage government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children and young people	15
Promote the provision of information and advice to assist children and young people	17
Making recommendations on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people	19
Conduct, promote and monitor research into issues affecting children and young people	20
Conduct special inquiries under Part 5 into issues affecting children and young people	22
Committees and Advisory Groups	22
Engaging with stakeholders	24
Responses of authorities to recommendations made by the Advocate	30
Advocate's recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administrative action	30
Office structure and administration	30
Principal Officers	31
Publications	31
Sponsorships	32
Appendices	33
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009	33

Advocate's Foreword



Andrew Johnson, Advocate for Children and Young People.
Photo by ACYP.

It is a pleasure to present the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People's (ACYP) Annual Report for 2015–16.

This was the first full year of ACYP's operations since it was established and it has been a year of immensely rewarding work. We have worked hard on building up a new office while meeting the demands of developing the state's first strategic plan for children and young people and delivering on our other statutory functions.

The development of the draft Strategic Plan for Children and Young People was the most significant piece of work during the year and the highlight was the opportunity to hear from thousands of children and young people across NSW about what they thought the themes and directions of the Plan should be. The *Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Consultation Results Report*, which was released in May, contains a vast amount of rich information from the input of the children and young people who participated in the consultations.

The consultations with children and young people would not have been possible without the support and goodwill of the organisations who work directly with children and young people in their daily lives. Another highlight of the year has been the opportunity to establish and deepen our working relationships with many hundreds of government, non-government and civil society organisations who are committed to the rights and interests of children and young people. Their input on the Plan through the consultations held in the regions across NSW and in Sydney, and their willingness to connect us with the children and young people they work with, was essential to ensuring that the draft Plan was well informed and practical.

This year we have been fortunate to have twelve young people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences as the members of the NSW Youth Advisory Council. The Council's advice to the Minister responsible for Youth, The Hon John Ajaka, MLC, to me, and to other agencies has been invaluable. This advice spanned a wide range of issues, including development of the Plan, youth homelessness, teen pregnancy, privacy and the lock out laws. It was been a pleasure working with the members of the Council.

We have continued to develop our training and resources to assist organisations consult with children and young people and have also utilised a range of different ways to consult with and engage children and young people, including bringing the voices of children and young people into policy and service development through images, video, and digital and online technologies.

The Office has also continued to provide advice on a wide range of NSW Government reports, papers and submissions, that impact on the lives of children and young people we also made submissions and gave evidence to a number of Parliamentary and other inquiries, including the Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children and Young People, and the Independent Liquor Law Review.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Minister responsible for Youth, The Hon John Ajaka, MLC, for his strong support during the year, and the members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People for their assistance and advice.

I would also like to thank the staff of ACYP for their continued commitment to making NSW a better place for children and young people, the many organisations that support and work with us, and finally and most importantly to the children and young people who have so willingly engaged with us throughout the year.

Andrew Johnson

Advocate for Children and Young People

Highlights

Developed draft Strategic Plan for Children and Young People

- Plan was delivered for the Government's consideration in June 2016

Consultations

- consulted with more than 2,400 children and young people on the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in the reporting year
- consulted with over 500 organisations that work with children and young people
- conducted regional consultations with government and non-government agencies in the Central Coast, Hunter New England, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Far West, and South West Sydney regions

Participation

- tested and utilised different ways to consult with and engage children and young people, including bringing the voices of children and young people into policy and service development through images, video, and digital and online technologies
- worked with government and non-government organisations to increase the participation of children and young people in decision making processes
- produced eight videos highlighting best-practice participation
- hosted a *Participation in Practice* event to mark 2015 Children's Week
- hosted a *Youth Led Initiatives* event to mark 2016 Youth Week
- launched the *Real NSW* photo competition for children and young people to submit photos showing what everyday life in NSW is like for them
- updated online resources for organisations wanting to build their participation practice

Office branding and website

- launched the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) website in July 2015

NSW Youth Advisory Council

- instigated new methods to recruit members of the 2016 NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to ensure wider engagement and broader diversity of applicants
- received more than 300 applications from children and young people to sit on the 2016 YAC

Advice

- the Advocate has been appointed to be the reviewer of the Annual Report on the Institute for Open Adoption
- the Advocate is a member of or is represented on wide range of committees, including the Social Innovation Council, Child Death Review Team, the Committee on the Joint Protocol to Reduce the Contact of Young People in residential Out-of-Home Care with the Criminal Justice System, and Global Citizens Leaders
- the Advocate made submissions and gave evidence to a number of Parliamentary and other inquiries including the Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children and Young People, and the Independent Liquor Law Review undertaken by the Hon Ian Callinan, AC, QC
- the Advocate provided comment on a wide range of NSW Government reports, papers and submissions, including Cabinet submissions, that impact on the lives of children and young people

Launches and publications

- released the *Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Consultation Results* report
- released the *Strategic Plan for Children and Young People - Regional Consultations* report
- released the results of polling on the attitudes of 12–24 year olds in NSW

Stakeholder engagement

- throughout the reporting year the Advocate met with many government and non-government agencies and organisations in the course of ACYP work



Students of Gorokan Public School participate in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo ACYP.

About the Office

Governance and Functions

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People is established under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014* (the Act). The Advocate is an independent statutory appointment oversighted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People.

The Office opened on 9 January 2015.

The functions of the Advocate are:

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



Members of PCYC Nations of Origin Tournament who participated in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

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 that 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.

Year in Review, 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016

Developing the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in the State

Developing the draft Strategic Plan for Children and Young People for the Government's consideration was the most significant piece of work during the year.

The Plan is the first whole-of-government plan in Australia focused on all children and young people aged 0-24 years. ACYP consulted more than 2,400 children and young people across NSW during the reporting year to ensure that they were the first to shape what the themes and directions of the Plan should be.

The consultations employed different methodologies of consulting with children and young people, including group consultations in schools, preschools, youth services, clubs and events, and young people themselves were trained to facilitate group consultations. In addition individual online surveys and postcards were used to involve more children and young people.

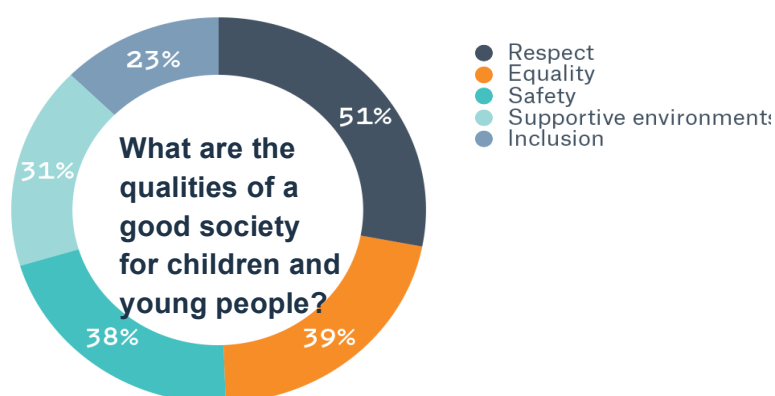


Members of PCYC Nations of Origin Tournament participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

ACYP worked to ensure that a wide range of voices reflective of the diverse backgrounds and life experiences of those living in NSW were included in the process of developing the Plan. Children and young people who do not normally have an opportunity to have a say were actively included in the consultation process. Many organisations assisted the Advocate in reaching children and young people doing it tough, including those who experience homelessness, live with disability or mental illness, are young parents, living in out-of-home care, or who are caught up in the juvenile justice system.

The themes and directions of the Plan were derived from an analysis of the responses to four questions posed to children and young people across the state: what is working well; what is not working well; what are the top priorities for the NSW Government to focus on; and what are the qualities of a good society for children and young people?

The results of these consultations were released in the *Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Consultation Results Report* on 2 May 2016 and is available at www.acyp.nsw.gov.au



Over 500 people who work with and for children and young people were also consulted in co-design forums around NSW which included NGOs and government representatives from state and local governments.

In order to bring the voices of children and young people directly into the room each of these consultations incorporated a video of children and young people from the local area capturing their key ideas and concerns. The regional consultations consistently aligned with the key themes identified by children and young people. In addition they highlighted managing times of transition, making sure all population groups are supported through the provision of strong and joined up services, and the importance of working with the strengths and characteristics of local communities. These consultations were instrumental in framing the guiding principles. The detailed results of these consultations were released in the *Regional Consultations Report* on 2 May 2016 and is available at www.acyp.nsw.gov.au

Government strategies and plans for children and young people in Australia and internationally were reviewed to identify key themes and priorities and innovative and successful practices. This included a comprehensive analysis of NSW Government strategies to ensure the Plan aligned with the direction and focus of the NSW Government and to maximise opportunities for enhanced collaboration. Official data was also analysed to identify the key trends affecting children and young people.



*Participants of the South-West Sydney consultation.
Photo by ACYP*

An Interdepartmental Advisory Group (IDAG) of representatives from all NSW Government departments was established to provide oversight and guidance on the development of the Plan.

At the end of the reporting period the draft Plan had been submitted to the Government for consideration.

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

ACYP undertook a wide range of activities in promoting the participation of children and young people in the decisions that affect their lives. This included consulting with thousands of children and young people in relation to the development of the first three-year whole-of-government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW, conducting attitudinal polling, and creating programs and competitions that engage children and young people directly in the work of ACYP.

The NSW Youth Advisory Council is another way that children and young people directly participate in decisions that affect their lives and work directly with the NSW Government.

The development of the first three-year whole-of-government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW encapsulates the breadth of work in this area.

Consulting with children and young people

The Advocate has consulted with thousands of children and young people across NSW.

In the reporting year:

- 2,434 children and young people participated in consultations to inform the themes and directions of the *Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in NSW*.
- 158 children and young people participated in consultations relating to service reforms in the NSW Central Coast area.
- 100 children and young people participated in consultations relating to community inclusion.



Children and young people from Korowal School participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo

Attitudinal Polling

ACYP conducts polling through on-line surveys as one of many methods used to consult with children and young people along with the wider community in NSW.

The Office commissioned Galaxy Research to conduct attitudinal research of children and young people in June 2015.

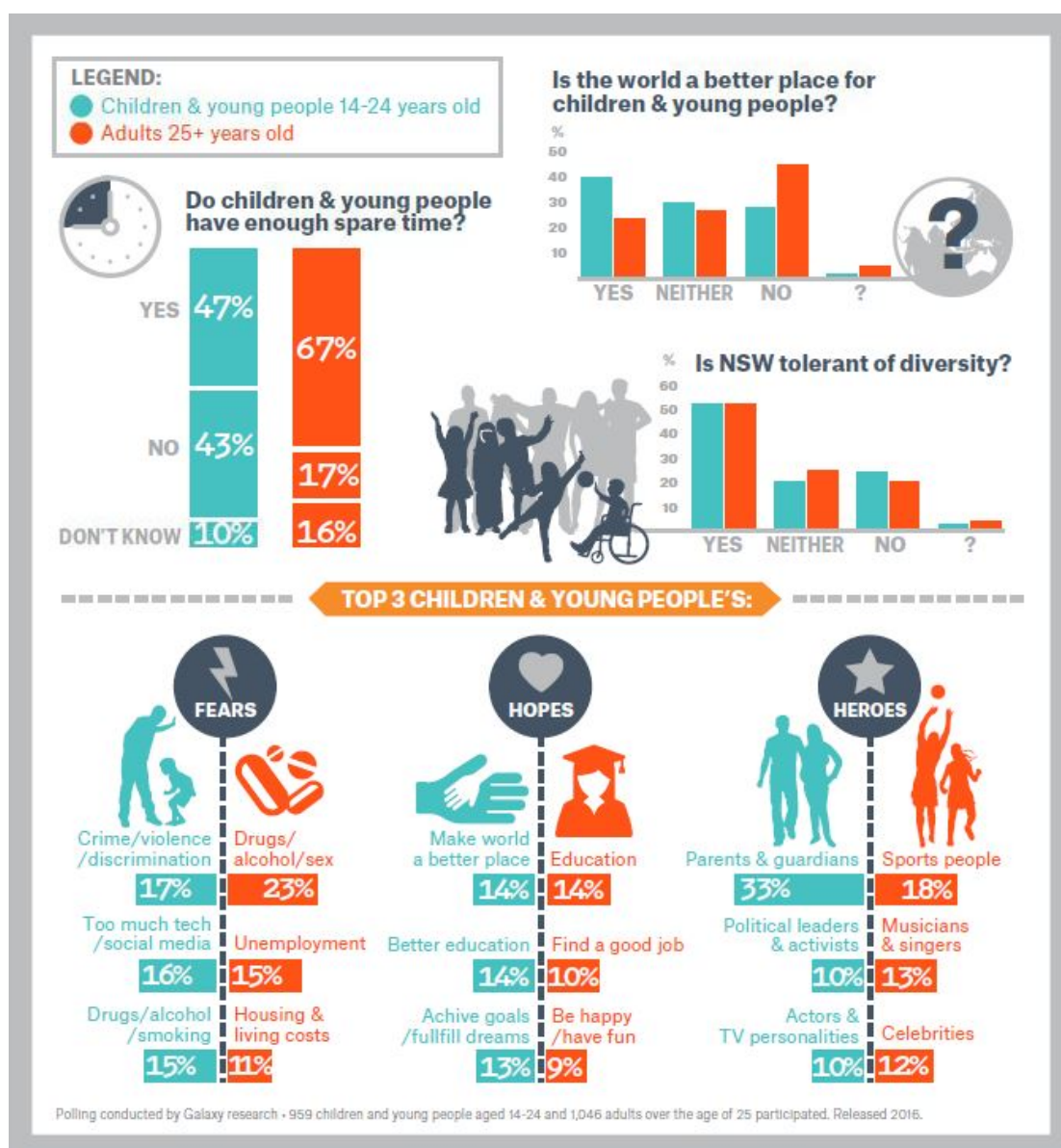
ACYP shared this information with a range of government departments as a way of informing them about children and young people as beneficiaries of their services. Sharing this information with key decision makers allows for information gathered directly from children and young people to inform the development of new policies and practices.

The results were released in May 2016. This survey included general attitudinal questions along with the four questions posed in the consultations to inform the themes and directions of the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People. In addition to the survey of 935 children and young people, 1,046 adults over the age of 25 were asked the same questions for comparative purposes.

Findings of the polling included:

- One third (33%) of children and young people cite their parents or guardians as their heroes. Whereas adults believed children and young people would name sports stars (18%), musicians/singers (13%) or celebrities (12%) as their heroes.
- 40% of 14–24 year olds believe the world is now generally a better place for children and young people, in comparison only one quarter (24%) of adults over the age of 25 believe that to be the case.
- When it came to their fears, at the top of the list for children were crime and violence (17%) followed closely by the fear of too much technology (16%).
- The biggest fears adults said they had for children and young people today were the dangers posed by drugs and alcohol (23%) and lack of jobs (15%).
- Less than half (47%) of children and young people believe they have enough spare time while the majority of adults (67%) believe that children and young people have enough spare time.
- Only 52% of 14–24 year olds surveyed said NSW is tolerant and embraces multiculturalism. Sydneysiders (58%) are significantly more likely to think that NSW is tolerant of diversity than those living elsewhere in NSW (41%).

Additional polling was conducted in June 2016. The survey asked participants questions on a broad range of topic including internships, safety, connectedness, life skills, wellbeing, participation, online privacy, arts and knowledge of and interaction with Aboriginal culture. The results of this polling had not been released at the end of the reporting period.



Polling info graphic released by ACYP

Real NSW Photo Competition

It is important that the real lives of children and young people are represented realistically in materials presented to them. This competition provided an opportunity for children and young people to participate directly in changing the way they are portrayed.

The Advocate launched the *Real NSW* photo competition in May 2016.

In consultations with the Advocate, children and young people said they did not identify with images portraying children and young people on websites, in magazines and in general. *Real NSW* offered children and young people an opportunity to show how they would like to be portrayed in the media by submitting photos of themselves in everyday situations.

The competition closed in July 2016 and entries will be judged by the Advocate, members of the 2016 NSW Youth Advisory Council and the editor of Australian Photography magazine, Mike O'Connor.

Internships Program

The Advocate offers internship opportunities to young people under the age of 24 years on a six-monthly basis as one way of ensuring that young people are involved in the daily work of the Office and have an opportunity to participate in decision making processes.

This internship program allows a young person to get broad experience of working in a NSW State Government office. This gives them exposure to all teams in the Office including policy, media and communications, digital communications, and participation and research.

The intern also has an opportunity to work closely with and receive mentoring from the Advocate and to participate in, and inform, the work of the Office.



Children and young people from the Far West region participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

Work Experience Program

The Advocate launched a work experience program in 2016. This program provides opportunity for high school students to participate in the work and decision making processes of the Office.

The program offers Year 10 students a five day placement in which they receive advocacy training and get to work on their own advocacy project. They also rotate through the different units in the Office (Participation, Policy and Research, Media and Communications) and receive training and mentoring from the Advocate.

Students from Fairvale High School and Rose Bay Secondary College participated in the ACYP Work Experience Program.

This program is open to all Year 10 students from across NSW.

NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

The YAC is another way that children and young people can have a direct say on the work of NSW Government.

The twelve member YAC is recruited annually. Council members sit on the Council for one calendar year and provide advice to the Minister responsible for Youth, and the Advocate for Children and Young People.

The Functions of the YAC 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.

Recruitment for the 2016 YAC

ACYP conducted the recruitment process for the 2016 YAC. More than 300 children and young people applied to sit on the 2016 YAC.

This year ACYP tested a new way of recruiting YAC members. This recruitment method was employed to assist in ensuring that Council members are broadly representative of the diversity of young people living in NSW, have relevant life experience and a keen interest in issues affecting children and young people.

The application phase was heavily promoted through advertising in metropolitan newspapers and a selection of regional newspapers and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) publications. Promotion also took place through the ACYP newsletter and social media accounts.

The recruitment of the 2016 YAC received strong support from stakeholders such as the Department of Education and many NGOs who promoted nominations through their networks.

These strategies ensured that a great number of children and young people across NSW had the opportunity to apply for the YAC.

At the close of applications the Advocate and members of the ACYP office shortlisted applicants who were invited to a one day recruitment event at The Mint in Sydney's CBD.

At the recruitment event, the Advocate conducted advocacy training and attendees took part in a citizen jury relating to volunteering. Participants worked in groups and presented their final findings to the Advocate and the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth Affairs and Homelessness, Ms Tanya Davies MP on behalf of Minister Ajaka.

Following the recruitment event the Advocate presented recommendations to the Minister. Recommended Council members were then presented to Cabinet who gave approval in early 2016.

Secretariat support for the YAC

ACYP provides the secretariat support for the YAC and also provides training to YAC members on policy processes and government relations.

From 30 June 2015 to 1 July 2016, ACYP organised and provided support for five YAC meetings.

ACYP also prepared briefs for the YAC to assist them with their work. ACYP provided information to the YAC on the following topics:

- homelessness
- lock-out laws
- teenage pregnancy
- violence against children
- internships



*Minister responsible for Youth, Mr John Ajaka with several members of the 2016 YAC.
Photo by ACYP*

Participation Training and Resources

ACYP provides training, mentoring and on-line resources to children and young people and to organisations seeking to engage children and young people in decision making.

Training

ACYP provided training to children and young people on understanding the policy process and government relations. Training sessions were held with the YAC, those who applied for the YAC, and with children and young people in regional NSW.

The Advocate provided tailored face to face training with several organisations throughout the reporting year on engaging with children and young people, including with the sports and arts sectors.

Resources

The ACYP website hosts a rich source of information and tools to assist organisations in engaging children and young people in decision making. Resources and information can be found on the ACYP website. These resources include guides and information on the following areas:

- Understanding and Supporting Children and Young People's Participation
- Ethical considerations
- Consent
- Participatory rights
- Checklist for planning participation
- Evaluation
- How children and young people benefit through participation
- How organisations benefit through children and young people's participation
- Top ten tips for children and young people's participation
- Video cases studies:
 - Coonamble High School
 - Touched by Olivia Foundation
 - Uniting Care Burnside
 - YMCA Youth Parliament
 - The Bright Minds Project
 - Top Blokes Foundation
 - Wake-Up – Change starts with you

Children's Week

Children's Week is marked annually on the third week of October and is an opportunity to celebrate a child's right to enjoy childhood.

The Advocate was invited to be the Ambassador for NSW Children's Week in 2015 by the NSW Children's Week Committee.

ACYP supported NSW Children's Week in a variety of ways including supporting the call for award nominations, event managing the NSW Children's Week Awards Ceremony, producing four award winner videos along with communications and media relations support.

To mark Children's Week and encourage organisations to engage with children and young people ACYP held a Children's Week event to highlight *Participation in Practice*.

ACYP produced four *Participation in Practice* video case studies highlighting the benefits of best-practice participation and positive outcomes of children and young people's participation in decision making.

The videos captured case studies of participation at Coonamble High School, Uniting Care, YMCA's Youth Parliament and the Touched by Olivia Foundation.

Representatives from each of the four organisations introduced their ACYP-produced video. Video case studies are available on the ACYP website at <http://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/participation-resources>



2015 NSW Children's Week Award Winners with His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) and Mrs Hurley. Photo by ACYP

Youth Week

Youth Week is marked annually in April and is an opportunity for young people to express their ideas and views, act on issues that affect their lives, and create and enjoy activities and events.

ACYP supported NSW Youth Week in 2016 by speaking at the NSW Youth Week Forum and mentoring members of the 2016 Youth Advisory Council who ran consultation sessions at the Forum.

During NSW Youth Week, ACYP in partnership with Youth Action and YFoundations hosted a *Youth Led Participation Showcase* to celebrate Youth Week.

In keeping with the theme of 2016 National Youth Week – it starts with us – the event focussed on three organisations that were started by young people and who work in the interests of other young people.

Following an opening address by the Minister responsible for Youth, The Hon John Ajaka, attendees watched three videos showcasing the Bright Minds Project, Top Blokes Foundation and the Wake Up Foundation, and the work they are doing to positively impact the wellbeing of children and young people in NSW. Representatives from each of the four organisations spoke about their work.

The videos can be viewed at <http://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/youth-led-initiatives>

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

ACYP website

In July 2015, the Advocate launched the ACYP website www.acyp.nsw.gov.au

Children and young people participated in the design process of the website, initially giving feedback on how the site should look and function. Children and young people were involved in creating the brief for the website.

Children and young people continued to be engaged throughout the development of the website; they gave feedback on the design and navigation of the website.

The website features the new ACYP brand along with three key navigation areas:



1. **Engage.** In this section users will find ten ways to participate with the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.
2. **The Plan.** Information and updates on the development of the three-year whole-of-government Strategic Plan can be located in this section.
3. **Info.** Contains a diverse range of information including publications and useful links.

ENewsletter

ACYP regularly updates a list of subscribers on the work of the Office via an electronic newsletter.



Children and young people from the Hunter New England region participating in a consultation with the Advocate for Children and Young People. Photo by ACYP.

Making recommendations on legislation, reports, policies, practices, procedures and services affecting children and young people

ACYP prepares reports, papers and submissions relating to children and young people in NSW, including submissions to Cabinet.

ACYP also prepared a major submission to the NSW Parliamentary Joint Committee for Children and Young People's inquiry into the sexualisation for children and young people at which the Advocate gave evidence.

The Advocate's submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee for Children and Young People addressed the role of pornography in the sexualisation of children and young people and made recommendations to the Committee addressing current concerns in this area. The submission was based on a comprehensive literature review commissioned by the Advocate and undertaken by the Burnet Institute, an independent, not-for-profit organisation that links medical research with public health action.

The Advocate for Children and Young People's recommendations include:

- continued research to fill the gap in Australian knowledge about young people's attitudes and responses to sexualised media, including pornography
- promotion of credible and evidence based websites and materials to educate and assist children and young people and parents
- strengthening the effectiveness and implementation of educational materials and programs aimed at equipping children and young people with the skills and knowledge to develop healthy attitudes to sexuality, including pornography and sexting
- collaborating with the National eSafety Commissioner to explore opportunities to reduce children and young people's exposure to online pornography.

Key findings of the Burnet Institute research include survey results showing:

- 100% of males and 81% of females aged 15–29 years have been exposed to pornography.
- On average, males first see pornography at 13 years, and females at 16 years.
- Young people aged 15–29 years most commonly view pornography by streaming or downloading on a computer (47%) or viewing on a phone (33%).
- On average young Australians are first exposed to pornography two to three years before their first sexual encounter.

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

ACYP is involved in a number of research initiatives. These include surveys and focus groups aimed at understanding the attitudes, thoughts and experiences of children and young people in contemporary NSW that are described elsewhere in this report. It also includes the development of infographics aimed at presenting a wide range of statistical information relating to children and young people in a clear and dynamic way.

The Office is also involved in a number of longer term research projects which are outlined below.

Research projects

The Advocate is an industry partner for two Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grants. These research projects inform longer-term policy development in the areas of young people's material deprivation, student voice and participation in schools.

Improving Wellbeing through student participation at school

This study is investigating the extent to which student participation in school decision making is linked to young people's social and emotional well-being.

Activity that has been carried out under this study includes an extensive policy analysis to identify what current NSW and Commonwealth education policy says about student participation.

Focus groups have been conducted with students (Years 7-10) as well as interviews with teachers, principals and education policymakers to ascertain what types of decision making students are currently taking part in.

An on-line survey measuring student participation using the information gathered in phase two was developed with students in NSW secondary schools.



Children and young people from Blue Haven Public School participating in a consultation with the Advocate for Children and Young People. Photo by ACYP.

By the end of 2016, secondary school students across NSW will have the opportunity to take part in the final on-line survey, which will test the links between student participation and wellbeing.

Deprivation and Exclusion among Young People

The Deprivation and Exclusion among Young People project aims to better understand the different ways that young people experience poverty and other forms of social disadvantage. The research is in its second stage which is a survey of the circumstances and views of young people conducted through schools and services for young people. Young people will be asked about the items they have, and – if they don't have certain items –whether or not they would like to have them. It will also ask young people about their overall well-being and life satisfaction, including asking about some basic information about themselves, their family and friends, their neighbourhood and social networks. The information will be used to develop indicators of deprivation and exclusion that are relevant to children and young people.



Children and young people from the Illawarra Shoalhaven region participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

Conduct special inquiries under Part 5 into issues affecting children and young people

No inquiries were conducted in the reporting period.

Committees and Advisory Groups

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.

The members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People are:

Chair:	Ms Melanie Gibbons (Lib, LA Member).
Deputy Chair:	Mr Damien Tudehope (Lib, LA Member).
Members:	Ms Jodie Harrison (ALP, LA Member)
	Mr Michael Johnson (Nat, LA Member)
	The Hon. Greg Donnelly (ALP, LC Member)
	The Hon. Paul Green (CDP, LC Member)
	The Hon. Bronnie Taylor (Nat, LC Member)

Interdepartmental Advisory Group on the Strategic Plan

Members of the IDAG included senior representatives from:

- NSW Department of Justice
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services
- NSW Department of Transport
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Treasury
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment
- NSW Department of Industry
- Office of Kids and Families NSW Health
- NSW Department of Finance, Services and Innovation



Young people from Macarthur Disability Services participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians

The Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ACCG) group aligns to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of strategic advocacy to promote and protect the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people in Australia, particularly the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.

The Advocate is a member of the ACCG group and attended one meeting throughout the year.

Advocate for Children and Young People Participation Advisory Committee

This committee meets periodically to advise and support the Advocate in ensuring the participation of children and young people in decision making processes.

The committee met twice in the reporting year. Members of the committee include:

- Ms Gillian Calvert, AO
- Ms Peta Gillies
- Prof Anne Graham
- Ms Samia Michael
- Dr Tim Moore
- Mr Jono Nicholas
- Ms Lynne Searle
- Ms Robyn Munro-Miller

The Advocate is also represented on a number of external groups and committees.

Child Death Review Team (CDRT)

The Advocate is a statutory member of the CDRT. The CDRT reviews the deaths of children in NSW. The purpose of the CDRT is to prevent and reduce child deaths.

Global Citizens Leaders (GLC)

The GCL mission is to establish greater learning opportunities for all young people to engage.

The aim is to create change at individual, local national and international levels by improving how we think and mobilize to address local/global social issues.

Social Innovation Council

The Advocate is a member of the Social Innovation Council, which is a partnership between NSW Government agencies and NGO leaders, established to drive sectoral reform in human service delivery.

Institute for Open Adoption Studies

The Advocate was appointed as the reviewer of the Annual Report on the Institute for Open Adoption Studies.

The Institute is working to increase the number of open adoptions from care in NSW. While adoption is not appropriate for all children in out-of-home care (particularly Aboriginal children), more can be done to ensure it is considered as an option when it is in the best interests of the child.

Joint Protocol to reduce the contact of young people in residential out-of-home care with the criminal justice system steering committee

The Advocate is an advisor to the Committee on matters related to engagement of young people.

Technology and Wellbeing Roundtable

The Roundtable works to better understand young people's everyday technology practices and promotes the positive potential of technology use for young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Healthy Eating and Active Living Executive Implementation Group

This multi-agency Group reports to the Social Policy Committee of Cabinet on implementation of the NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2013-2018.

Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW Alternative Education Assessment Panel

The Panel assesses applications for equivalent and alternative courses of study to mainstream schooling.

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.

Meetings with government

- Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Multiculturalism
- Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing
- Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation
- Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Medical Research, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- Parliamentary Secretary for Youth Affairs and Homelessness
- Department of Premier and Cabinet

- Department of Treasury
- Department of Education
 - Learning and Wellbeing
 - Communities Policy and Programs
 - Learning and Business
 - Learning Systems
- NSW Ministry of Health
 - NSW Kids and Families
- Department of Family & Community Services
 - Department Secretary
 - Deputy Secretary
 - District Representatives
 - Social Innovation Services
- Department of Planning and Environment
- Department of Industry
- Department of Finance Services and Innovation
 - Service and Digital Innovation
- Department of Justice
 - NSW Police
- Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People
- Premier's implementation Unit
- Services Commissioner
- The e-Safety Commissioner
- Information and Privacy Commission
- Clinical Excellence Commission
- Director of School Education, Coffs Harbor
- Ombudsman
- NSW Kids and Families
- Local Government NSW
- Independent Liquor Law Review Council
- Multicultural NSW
- Audit Office of NSW
- North Coast Regional Director, Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Aboriginal Affairs
- City of Sydney
- The Office of the Children's Guardian
- NSW Children's Court
- Office of Preventative Health
- The e-Safety Commissioner



Students from Trinity Catholic College participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP

Meetings with non-government organisations

- AbSEC
- AlphaBeta
- Australian Theatre for Young People
- Barnardos
- Benevolent Society
- BOSTES
- Catholic Education
- Child Safeguard
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)
- Coffs Harbour High School
- Coffs Harbour PCYC
- Create Foundation
- Early Childhood Interventions Australia (ECIA)
- Foundation for Young Australians
- Girl Guides
- Great Western Sydney Giants
- GWS Giants
- Headspace
- International researchers on the Right to Play
- Kudosknowledge
- Life Without Barriers
- Midnight Basketball Australia
- Mission Australia
- Mount Druitt and Blacktown Youth Services Network (MBYSN)
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
- Museum of Contemporary Art
- MYAN
- NAPCAN
- National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)
- NCOSS
- NRL
- NSW Business Council
- NSW Taxi Council
- NSW Unions
- Optus Rocks Corps
- PCYC



Members of PCYC Nations of Origin Tournament participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

- PlayGroup NSW
- Police Aboriginal Advisory Council
- ReachOut
- Relationships Australia
- SDN Children's Services
- Southern Cross University
- Student Edge
- Sydney Living Museums
- The Smith Family
- Toormina Public School
- Tribal Warrior
- UNICEF
- Uniting
- University of Gloucestershire
- UNSW, Youth Wellbeing Project
- UNSW, Research Practice Guidelines
- Vivid Ideas
- WebWire
- Work Ventures
- Wundarra Services
- YFoundations
- YMCA
- Youth Action
- Youth Safe
- Youthie



Young people from Macarthur Disability Services participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

Meetings with Children and Young People

- Blue Haven Public School
- Broken Hill High School
- Broken hill PCYC
- Budgewoi Public School
- Burke Ward Public School
- Canley Vale High School
- Central Coast Student Voice Alliance
- Coffs Harbour High School
- Coffs Harbour PCYC
- Coniston Public School
- Cooks Hill Big Picture Campus
- Corrimal Public School
- Dove Cottage, Uniting



Children and young people from South West Sydney participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

- EpiCentre
- Fairvale High School
- Fletcher Playgroup
- Foundation of Young Australians
- Gorokan High School
- Gorokan Public School
- Gosford High School
- Gosford Public School
- Gosford, Regional Youth Support Services
- Granville Boys High School
- Holy Spirit College
- Islamic College
- Korowal School
- Lambton Public School
- Lansvale Public School
- Macquarie University
- Mission Australian Youth Advisory Group, Canterbury Bankstown
- MLC School
- Moriah College
- MYAN NSW Youth Summit
- Northlakes High School
- Northlakes Public School
- Participants of the PCYC Nations of Origin tournament
- PCYC Leadership Camp
- Smithfield Public School
- SSI
- Stonecutters Little Echidna's Playgroup
- Sylvania High
- Tamworth High School
- Toormina Public School
- Toukley Public School
- Trinity Catholic College
- University of Sydney
- WEA Alesco
- Wollongong PCYC
- YMCA Youth Parliament

Speaking events

The Advocate spoke at the following events:

- AbSec Workers' Conference
- ACWA Forum
- Australian Council for the Arts Youth Summit
- Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference
- Australian Social Policy Conference
- Department of Education – Public Schools
- Department of Sports and Recreation Forum
- ECI Manager's Forum
- International Youth Day
- Mount Druitt and Blacktown Youth Services Network (MBYSN)
- NAPCAN, Play Your Part Awards
- National Carers' Awards
- NCOSS Children's Services Forum
- NCOSS Steering Committee
- NSW Catholic Secondary School Principals' Conference
- NSW Catholic Secondary Schools' Conference
- NSW Kids and Families, Our Health Our Way
- NSW Police – Youth Advisory Group
- NSW Police, Operational Programs Information Day
- NSW Secondary Deputy Principals' Association
- PASAC Conference
- Pittwater Council Youth Consultations Meeting
- Port Stephen Youth Sector meeting
- RYDON Conference
- SAMAG, The Next Generation Youth Engagement in the Arts
- Sports and Recreation Forum
- Uniting Conference
- What's Up West, Youth Conference
- Youth Action, Youth Work Conference
- Youth Week 2016

Responses of authorities to recommendations made by the Advocate

No recommendations were made in the reporting period.

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

No recommendations were made in the reporting period.



Children and young people from the Mid-North Coast participating in a consultation with the Advocate. Photo by ACYP.

Office structure and administration

During the reporting period, as part of Machinery of Government changes, the office transferred from the Department of Education to the Department of Family and Community Services.

The Office also relocated from 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills to 219-241 Cleveland Street, Strawberry Hills.

The office undertook substantial work to ensure a smooth transition to new finance, human resources and ICT systems and to new premises while maintaining its support for the Advocate's statutory functions.

Staffing

The Advocate is an independent statutory officer supported by a small team of staff within FACS.

The Advocate's budget is part of the FACS operating budget and is reported as part of that department's Annual Report.

As at 30 June, there were 14 full time equivalent staff employed against a staff establishment of 20 positions, with recruitment underway for the remaining positions.

Principal Officers

As at 30 June, our senior management team was:

Andrew Johnson, BA LLB MSW
Advocate for Children and Young People

Gregor Macfie, BA (Hons) LLB
Director

Publications

Publications by the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People released throughout the reporting year:

- The Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Consultations Report
- The Strategic Plan for Children and Young People – Regional Consultations Report
- Understanding and Supporting Children and Young People's Participation

Sponsorships

ACYP supported three organisations in 2015-2016 via sponsorship.

Operation Art

Operation Art is an initiative of the Children's Hospital at Westmead in association with the New South Wales Department of Education and supported by ANSTO (Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation).

This project showcases artworks created by students across the state that contribute to the total healing environment at the hospital.

NSW Police Legacy – Child Safety Handbook

ACYP supports the production of the Child Safety Handbook by placing a small colour ad in the printed book.

Australian Social Policy Conference 2015

The Australian Social Policy Conference is a biennial event for the discussion and dissemination of social policy. It aims to bring together researchers, practitioners and policy makers from across disciplines to provide an opportunity to explore research and practice.



*Students from Sylvania High School participating in a consultation with the Advocate.
Photo by ACYP.*

Appendices

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Under Section 7 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA), agencies must review their programs for the release of government information to identify the kinds of information that can be made publicly available. This review must be undertaken at least once every 12 months.

ACYP received no requests under the GIPA Act during 2014-15.

Table A: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information readily available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Sector business	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not-for-profit organisations or community groups	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (application by legal representative)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (other)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table B: Number of application by type of application and outcome

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Personal information applications*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications that are partly other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*A personal information application is an access application to personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual)

Table C: Invalid applications

Reason for invalidity	Number of applications
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act)	0
Application is for excluded information of the agency (Section 43 of the Act)	0
Application contravenes restraint order (section 110 of the Act)	0
Total number of invalid applications received	0
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	0

Table D: Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure – matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Act

	Number of times consideration used*
Overriding secrecy laws	0
Cabinet information	0
Executive Council information	0
Contempt	0
Legal professional privilege	0
Excluded information	0
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0
Transport safety	0
Adoption	0
Care and protections of children	0
Ministerial code of conduct	0
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0

Table E: Other public interest considerations against closure- matters listed in table section 14 of the Act

	Number of occasions when application not successful
Responsible and effective government	0
Law enforcement and security	0
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	0
Business interests of agencies and other persons	0
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	0
Secrecy provisions	0
Exempt documents under interstate freedom of information legislation	0

Table F: Timelines

	Number of applications
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	0
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant)	0
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0
Total	0

Table G: Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)

	Decision varied	Decision upheld	Total
Internal review	0	0	0
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	0	0
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of the Act	0	0	0
Review by Administration Decisions Tribunal	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0

*The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions, but can make recommendations to the original decision maker. The data in this case indicates that a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision has been made.

Table H: Applications for review under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)

	Number of applications for review
Applications by access applicants	0
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see section 54 of the Act)	0

Table I: Applications transferred to other agencies under Division 2 of part 4 of the Act (by type or transfer)

	Number of applications for review
Agency-initiated transfers	0
Applicant-initiated transfers	0

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