

**Submission
No 46**

INQUIRY INTO 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NET ZERO COMMISSION

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Proposal to Create a Youth Advisory Council on Climate within NSW Government

Figure 1 Youth climate strikers: TIME (2019) 'Climate Change is Forever.' Thousands of British Schoolchildren walk out in Environmental Protest. Available at <https://api.time.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/uk-climate-change-protest.jpg> (Accessed on 14 June 2024)



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to Country, land, sea, community and the environment. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that Indigenous Australians have the smallest ecological footprint, but suffer the most from climate harms. We understand that First Nations justice is intrinsically connected to climate justice and treasure the vast depth of knowledge we can, and must, learn from Traditional Owners past and present. Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Indigenous land and it is vital we centre First Nations voices and rights in the pursuit of climate justice.



Figure 2, Map of Australia developed by Indigenous artist, Nakia Cadd: Summer Foundation (2023) Acknowledgement of Country. Available at <https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/acknowledgement-of-country/> (Accessed on 14 June 2024)

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Contributors

Climate Writers and Socially Conscious Youth

‘Climate change is an issue of intergenerational justice because young people emit less than their adult counterparts but will suffer from their actions’¹

‘When we have disconnects, that’s when climate policy fails’ (consultation insight)

‘Democracy is only as good as its spread of information, there needs to be more climate literacy and youth engagement in climate policy’ (consultation insight)

“97% [of people] agree that policies in the present day should take into account the interests of future generations. The urgency for intergenerational policy is building” Professor Susan Harris Rimmer Founder of EveryGen



Figure 3, 2022 Lismore flood: Loomes P. et al (2023) Exhausted! Lismore marks a year since traumatic floods. Available at <https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8102114/exhausted-lismore-marks-a-year-since-traumatic-floods/> (Accessed on 14 June 2024).

¹ United Nations Human Rights Council (2020) Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment. Available at <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g20/001/26/pdf/g2000126.pdf?token=NvKD8hjCkWQ6gabnfp&fe=true> (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Executive Summary

Australian youth are passionate about addressing the climate crisis and given they will inherit the consequences of climate inaction, they deserve a seat at the decision-making table. Children and young people in Australia and across the world are already disproportionately bearing the brunt of the impacts of climate change.² An increasing number of young people are demonstrating awareness of this fact, with Plan International Australia's 2023 youth-led report finding that 98 per cent of respondents were concerned about how climate change will affect them in the future.³



Figure 4. Youth climate strikers: SBS News (2021) Thousands join climate strikes across Australia, angry with the government's gas investments.

Available at:

<https://images.sbs.com.au/dims4/default/77746ee/2147483647/strip/true/crop/4402x2476+0+378/resize/1280x720!/quality/90/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fsbs-au-brightspot.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fdrupal%2Fnews%2Fpublic%2F2021052101543866638-original.jpg> (Accessed 14 June 2024)

The School Strike 4 Climate movement similarly demonstrates the widespread desire of young people to be heard, understood and engaged with by their elected officials in preparing our society for the realities of climate change.⁴

The Commonwealth Office for Youth's recent 'Engage' report found that two-thirds of young people believe that governments, at all levels, should better engage with their concerns about climate change.⁵ Further, the report highlighted that for almost 35 per cent of young people, climate change was their most pressing concern.⁶ However, in successive efforts to urge governments to include them in decision-making that will ultimately impact their futures, young people have been met with harsher protesting laws,

paternalistic language and have been denied a say in climate policy-making.⁷ With youth voices relegated to the sidelines, disillusionment and disappointment have been allowed to fester, to the detriment of political engagement.⁸

Without meaningful engagement from decision-makers and subsequent action on climate change, young people will become further disillusioned by and disengaged from mainstream politics, losing faith in our institutions and officials.

² National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

³ Babita et al. (2023) For our futures, Plan International Australia. Available at: <https://www.plan.org.au/news/stories/for-our-futures/> (Accessed: 23 June 2024). National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

⁴ Office for Youth (2024) Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make, Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make - Office for Youth, Australian Government. Available at: <https://www.youth.gov.au/engage/resources/engage-our-new-strategy-include-young-people-decisions-we-make> (Accessed: 23 June 2024).

⁵ National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

⁶ National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024) and

⁸ Sundström, A. & Stockemer, D. (2023), 'Age Inequalities in Political Representation: a Review Article', *Government and Opposition*, pp. 1-18.

This is true for both the federal and NSW context.⁹ Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 of the UNCRC makes clear that young people have a right to inform policy that impacts them. This paper proposes that the NSW Government can achieve meaningful youth engagement through:

Implementing a Youth Advisory Council on Climate Change

By implementing a mechanism for youth engagement on climate and environmental policy, young people will become invested in our shared democracy, directly inform policy, and feel empowered with a sense of hope for a better future. The state will also uphold the principles of Article 12 and rightfully treat young people as stakeholders in climate policy. The impact will be a richer democracy for us all.



Young people have the passion, nuance, diversity and knowledge to contribute to a climate-ready-future; access to decision-makers and halls of power increases their ability to contribute to the future they envision.¹⁰

Existing Literature demonstrates how youth participation in climate policy has led to tangible change

Young people play a crucial role in advancing a human rights-based approach to climate change through their lived experiences and expertise. Youth have taken to protesting, legal action and¹¹ international fora to demand the protection of their rights and those of the vulnerable, including Indigenous people, women and people living with disability. In Australia, and globally, young people have been key drivers of climate accountability through legal and legislative processes.

⁹ National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

¹⁰ Sundström, A. & Stockemer, D. (2023), 'Age Inequalities in Political Representation: a Review Article', *Government and Opposition*, pp. 1-18. Ahn S W & Han, H 2020, 'Youth Mobilization to Stop Global Climate Change: Narratives and Impact', *Sustainability*, vol. 20, no. 10, pp. 2147.

¹¹ National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Litigation

Young people seek to address the climate crisis, one way of doing so has been through litigation. Young people have been active litigants in Australia, Canada, Colombia, India, Mexico, Pakistan, and South Korea.¹² Further, young people have filed many more complaints against their country of residence through the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for their failure to reduce carbon emissions and their violation of children's rights to life, health, and a healthy environment.¹³ In Columbia, the court judged in favour of young people who had taken to court over the deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest. The Supreme Court ruled that deforestation and current Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were placing the rights of current and future generations at grave risk.¹⁴ Young Friends of the Earth (Netherlands) was a co-plaintiff in the successful suit *Milieudefensie et al., v. Royal Dutch Shell PLC*. The Hague District Court ruled in favour of young people and ordered the company to reduce its emissions by 45 per cent by 2030, from 2019 levels,¹⁵ to comply with human rights obligations. These examples demonstrate the power of organised young people to create change at the executive level of Government which benefits society at large. Young people are also using litigation to seek definitive legislative action.

Currently in Australia, Anjali Sharma, previous lead litigant in the case of *Sharma Vs. Minister for the Environment*, alongside a group of young Australians, has launched the Duty of Care Bill with Senator David Pocock. This Bill seeks to add two conditions to existing legislation that would require decision-makers to consider the impacts of financing projects that could contribute to the climate crisis and cause harm to young people's health, wellbeing and futures. The *Sharma Vs. Minister for the Environment* case and the Duty of Care Bill signals young people's willingness to inform decision making and policy around climate change in every Australian jurisdiction.



Figure 6 Anjali Sharma and the Duty of Care team: David Pocock (2023) DUTYOFCARE.

Available at

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/davidpocock/pages/1136/meta_images/original/1M1A0091-2.jpg?1690955290

¹² National Library of Medicine (2021) *Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change*. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

¹³ National Library of Medicine (2021) *Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change*. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

¹⁴ National Library of Medicine (2021) *Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change*. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

¹⁵ Decision of May, 2021 *Milieudefensie et al. v. Royal Dutch Shell PLC*, Hague District Court .

Youth Engagement in Legislative Processes

Alongside litigation, young people have demanded better climate policy. Several best practice examples of youth engagement in legislative processes exist globally.

European Commission - The European Citizens Initiative enables organised citizens to directly impact policy that affects them, young people have used this to further climate action.¹⁶ In July 2020, Fridays for Future activists, through the European Citizens' Initiative, proposed legislation for EU member states to adjust their GHG Emissions in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and reach net zero by 2035.¹⁷ The Initiative gathered 89,000 signatures and has been enshrined in the legislation of 15 European Union member states.¹⁸

Following efforts to meaningfully engage young people in policy, in January 2024, the European Commission announced that they will implement a 'Youth Check' to ensure EU policies consider the impact on young people. The Youth Check includes impact assessments to ensure that young people are considered in new policies and laws, climate change is a key area of consideration.¹⁹ The EU will appoint youth experts to support this process, whenever new legislation is produced. The Youth Check complements existing policy dialogues between young people and Commissioners such as the EU Youth Dialogue, enabling youth stakeholders to facilitate exchange with youth organisations, researchers, Member State representatives and other EU institutions.

Canada - The Canadian Environment and Climate Change Youth Council advised on key climate issues for the Canadian Government. The youth council's remit included supporting the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan, ensuring that Canada achieves net-zero emissions by 2050, nature-based solutions to fight biodiversity loss, and participation in international summits. Concerning international climate policy, the Ministry of Employment and Social Development of Canada sponsored the 2023 Local Conferences of Youth. The Canadian Government also established a youth council within the Prime Minister's Office in 2016. In 2023, the Prime Minister, and key ministers, met their Youth Council for a three-day summit, to discuss key youth issues, including climate change.

¹⁶ European Commission (2024) European Citizens Initiative. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_86 (Accessed: 20 May 2024) <https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/en>.

¹⁷ National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024) and Fridays for Future (2021) Actions on Climate Emergency. Available at <https://eci.fridaysforfuture.org/en/> (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

¹⁸ National Library of Medicine (2021) Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change. Available at [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

¹⁹ European Commission (2024) Commission gives young people a stronger voice in EU policymaking as a legacy of the European Year of Youth. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_86 (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Ireland - The Irish Government convened a National Youth Assembly on Climate in 2023. Before the event, the youth delegates voted on the key themes for the assembly. Youth delegates shared their vision for a carbon-neutral Ireland by 2050. They provided recommendations and voted on two recommendations from each of the key themes, for inclusion in the Government's Climate Action Plan 2024.

The above youth consultation mechanisms exemplify best practice youth engagement. Young people being given a prominent voice in decision-making demonstrates how young people are best placed to speak about the issues affecting them and suggest recommendations that seek to create systemic change. Engaging young people in climate policy yields outcomes that directly address their needs.

Current State - Gap Analysis

There is scope for NSW to enhance its current youth engagement model to reflect the best practice examples noted above. Our consultations revealed that young people are passionate about climate change and seek to inform the net-zero transition agenda. Whilst the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) does have a youth advisory council which meets three times a year, young people's interests go beyond environmental protection and extend to the renewable economy. Outside of this, there are limited initiatives that meet regularly to include youth perspectives in environmental policy and decision-making processes within the Government at large. In NSW, there is an absence of a regular, formal mechanism specifically focused on facilitating the active participation of young people in the transition economy and its associated policy process. Given that only 13 per cent of young Australians feel heard by the government, addressing this gap should be a priority of the NSW Government.²⁰

The gap in youth political participation in the transition economy signifies a missed opportunity to harness the innovative ideas and unique lived experiences of young people. A 2023 Mission Australia Youth Survey found that nationally, 13 per cent of young people have been personally impacted by extreme weather events such as bushfires and floods.²¹ This figure is expected to rise with the increasing severity and frequency of these events.²² Children and young people will be disproportionately affected by long-term environmental issues including climate change and biodiversity loss. Findings from a Plan International study showed that of the 1.65 million people impacted by the Black Summer bushfires in NSW, 30% were young people and of this figure, 1 in 10 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.²³



Figure 7: Youth produced artwork on climate change (picture from UNICEF Australia).

²⁰ Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (2020) National survey of children and young people on climate change and disaster risk. Available at: [National survey of children and young people on climate change and disaster risk](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

²¹ Mission Australia (2024) 6 in 10 young Aussies worry about climate change, many experience extreme weather events first hand, [www.missionaustralia.com.au](#). Available at: [6 in 10 young Aussies worry about climate change, many experience extreme weather events first hand](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

²² Orygen and Mission Australia (2024) Impact of extreme weather events on young people: Findings from the 2023 Mission Australia Youth Survey. Available at: [Impact of extreme weather events on young people](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

This shows how climate change impacts marginalised young people most severely, often magnifying existing inequalities. Therefore, failing to involve young people will be reflected in policies that do not understand or address their intersectional concerns effectively. The time for the NSW Government to demonstrate that it recognises and values youth perspectives is now.

According to Article 12 of the UNCRC, children and young people have the right to express their views freely on all matters that affect them and to have their views given due weight.²⁴ The absence of a formal mechanism to meaningfully engage with young people undermines this right and as a consequence, negatively affects the inclusivity and efficacy of the policy process.

As stated, this gap in rights realisation and policy can be attributed to several factors, including that traditional stakeholder engagement processes overlook or undervalue youth perspectives. This may be exacerbated by the perception that young people lack the expertise necessary to contribute. However, a 2023 report by UNICEF Australia and the Young and Resilient Research Centre found that young people in NSW are seeking more meaningful ways to participate in climate action which enable them to play an active role in shaping their future.²⁵ It is the role of Government to ensure that young people in NSW have sufficient avenues to inform climate policy.

To effectively engage young people in climate policy, the NSW Government should establish a Youth Advisory Council on Climate (YACC) within the Climate Change Network to inform whole-of-Government action on climate change.



Figure 8, The power of engaging youth in the research phase of policy design: Frontiers (2024) The Power of Engaging Young People in Research. Available at <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2024.1356018> (Accessed on 1 May 2024).

²³ Plan International (2023) Real Choices Real Lives: Climate Change and Girl's Education. Available at [Real Lives, Real Choices Climate Change and Girls Education: Barriers, Gender Norms and Pathways to Resilience](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

²⁴ UNICEF (1989) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child> (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

²⁵ Young and Resilient Research Centre, UNICEF Australia and Western Sydney University (2023) The Climate Future Children Want Child-Centred Indicators for Climate Change. Available at: [The Climate Future Children Want](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Recommendation: The Government is to establish a youth advisory council within the Climate Change Network

Young people should be able to meaningfully participate in climate decision-making because climate change adversely impacts their lives and is the defining issue young people in Australia care about. We recommend the Government create a youth advisory council on climate change built upon best practice principles.

The implementation of a permanent advisory mechanism, a Youth Advisory Council on Climate (YACC), would successfully facilitate meaningful youth political participation. A Youth Advisory Council is a group of “young people who work ... to provide advice on programs and policies affecting young people.”²⁶ Implementing a YACC would intentionally involve young people in climate decision-making, by allowing them to both consult on and meaningfully contribute to climate policy. The YACC would sit within the Climate Change Network, giving young people across NSW the opportunity to inform the path towards net zero, one of the defining feats of our lifetime. However, the remit of the YACC should extend beyond net zero and allow young people to inform other climate-related and climate-impacting policies because young people’s interest in climate change is complex, intersecting and multi-faceted.²⁷ The Climate Change Network would also have a duty to ‘close the circle’ with young people by relaying to them what sections of policy their suggestions informed.

As previously established, the UNCRC outlines that young people have a right to meaningful participation, a NSW YACC would uphold the UNCRC by ensuring the rights of young people are being recognised. Further, facilitating meaningful youth political participation allows for the government to respond to youth needs.²⁸ Importantly, a NSW YACC would institutionalise youth voices into the NSW Government, and form new best practice for other jurisdictions to follow suit, potentially facilitating the meaningful participation of youth in climate decision-making nationally. NSW has a unique opportunity to provide a best-practice example of youth engagement nationally, and also globally should Australia be successful in its bid to host COP31.

²⁶ Department of Education (2024), Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make. Available at: [Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make.](#) (Accessed: 22 May 2024).

²⁷ By this, we mean all policy that can impact climate change in tangible and intangible ways, such as education policy or the push to invest in green skills.

²⁸ UNDP & UNDESA (2013), Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making. Available at: [Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making.](#) (Accessed: 22 May 2024).

To effectively engage young people in climate policy, NSW needs to undertake a best practice approach

To be an effective example of Article 12 under the UNCRC, the Climate Change Network must create a YACC centred upon best practice. According to a UN report on engaging with youth for²⁹ climate action, best practice includes:

1. Sharing power in youth-adult partnerships in decision-making. This involves going beyond consultation activities to influence politics, policies and polity (ie. institutional structures). For example, countries like France, Sweden, Mexico and Peru have youth representatives who negotiate on behalf of their country at COP.³⁰ This allows them to move from being passive observers of climate dialogue to having an active role in advocating for their lived experiences as young people. To this end, a NSW YACC needs to have teeth and be more than a mere consultative body, it must have a tangible and reported impact on policy.



2. Addressing adult-centric structures, structural inequality and systemic discrimination. This involves lowering systemic barriers to youth participation in both government and non-state institutions, and developing ways to engage with different intersectionalities (for example, Indigenous and multicultural youth). In New Zealand, the Auckland City Council engaged with Indigenous youth in the development of their city's Climate Plan. This involved incorporating their feedback and allocating \$6 million to climate initiatives that aligned with Indigenous youth priorities.³¹ This initiative provided marginalised young people with the resources to participate in decision-making. The Climate Change Network is to engage intersectional youth across NSW through the YACC and is advised to allocate funding to address their needs.

3. Securing positive outcomes for young people in the climate crisis. An enabler of positive outcomes is ensuring transparency on the impact of youth inputs.

²⁹ Ingaruca, M. (2022) Elevating meaningful youth engagement for climate action, UNDP. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf> (Accessed: 23 June 2024).

³⁰ (UNDP 2022: 41)UNDP & UNDESA (2013), Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making. Available at: [Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making](#). (Accessed: 22 May 2024).

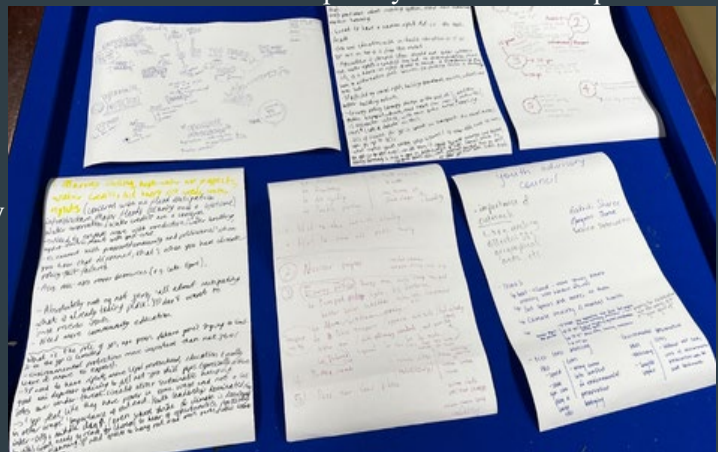
³¹ Cano Buchholz, B. (2024) Six ways governments can meaningfully engage youth in tackling climate change, Centre For Public Impact (CPI). Available at: <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/insights/six-ways-governments-can-meaningfully-engage-youth-in-tackling-climate-change> (Accessed: 23 June 2024).

In the Local Climate Change Plan of Lima, the government engaged with 33 youth organisations in a series of workshops that integrated their perspectives into the 2050 vision of their plan.³² Using this as an example, the Climate Change Network (the Network) is to ensure that young people’s interests are embedded in climate policymaking through the YACC. The Network is to directly report to the YACC and detail what their inputs informed.

4. Challenging the status quo that creates the climate crisis, and proposes alternatives for a net-zero carbon and just society. The Wales Future Generations Commission is enshrined under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015). This legislative backbone strengthens the Commission’s authority and ensures a long-term commitment to youth voices, allowing them to challenge the status quo. The Network is to ensure that the YACC is consulted with for climate-related policies that will impact the future of young people, this can include education, health or transport policy aimed at building knowledge on climate change and encouraging green decisions.

5. Embedding youth participation in all dimensions, all cycles and all levels of governance and multi-stakeholder settings. In Peru, youth participation is legislated in their national climate change policy. This means that climate policy would be required to consider youth outcomes in the same way it would include gender or

Indigenous peoples.³³ The Climate Change Network, through the YACC, is to implement this methodology by considering its duty of care to young people. The Network should do this by consulting the YACC on climate-related policies.



6. Ensuring diversity of lived experience and representation of intersectional identities. Climate change affects marginalised communities most severely, magnifying pre-existing inequalities and injustice. Young people have intersectional identities that contribute to a range of lived experiences with climate change. In our consultations, we heard “youth leadership is dominated by inner-city, middle-class young people. Government needs to reach out to more diverse cohorts of young people and spread opportunities.” Therefore, for the YACC to be successful and represent intersectional youth identities, it must incorporate the voices of marginalised and minority populations. We recommend the YACC be made up of 12 candidates, 10 of which are to represent the regions of NSW which are the Hunter, North Coast, Central Coast, Metropolitan Sydney, Illawarra, South East & Tablelands, New England/North West, Central West and Orana, Riverina Murray and Far West. It should also have a spread of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, Indigenous young people, young people living with disabilities and those that have had limited capacity to engage in leadership initiatives.

³² Ingaruca, M. (2022) Elevating meaningful youth engagement for climate action, UNDP. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf> (Accessed: 23 June 2024).

³³ Plan International (2023) Real Choices Real Lives: Climate Change and Girl’s Education. Available at [Real Lives, Real Choices Climate Change and Girls Education: Barriers, Gender Norms and Pathways to Resilience](#) (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Figure 10: Youth Consultation Insights (picture sourced internally).

Remit of YACC

- The YACC is to sit within the Climate Change Network and primarily advise on net zero policy, but should also advise on priority climate-impacting policy.
- The YACC should be consulted with on key climate-impacting policies that could potentially affect young people. This is to ensure young people are set up for success and are not left behind as the economy transitions to net-zero.
- The YACC should be responsible for co-designing :
 - town halls and consultative events with young people.
 - media (traditional and social) for NSW DCCEEW and engagement with other young people to discuss the climate policy.
 - a regional youth conference on climate change where decision-makers directly liaise with the state's young people.
 - outreach by the Climate Change Network or DCCEEW to marginalised young people in rural and remote communities.
- The YACC is to write a yearly submission to Parliament to be tabled by the Minister for the Environment. Further, each year, the YACC is to write a review on the extent to which they perceive the Department to have modelled best practice youth engagement.
- The YACC should report to the Minister for the Environment and provide advice to the highest levels of the NSW Government.
- The Climate Change Network is to record the meeting minutes for each YACC gathering and make them publicly accessible.
- Successive YACCs are to inform a 2050 NSW net zero plan and climate education curricula.

Financial Considerations of the YACC

To reflect best practice, the financial considerations of the YACC include a liaison, lived experience compensation and travel expenses in addition to remuneration costs. Remuneration is vital to ensuring poverty and disadvantage do not hinder participation. Food and refreshments will also be provided at in-person meetings in keeping with the best practice example set by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People Youth Advisory Council (NSW ACYP YAC). Financial considerations include:

- **Department Liaison:** It is suggested that one officer from a department within the Climate Change Network is dedicated to leading the YACC, planning and running meetings and being the main reference point. They are also to oversee budget management, payment processing, organisation selection, and attendance tracking. Their role facilitates smooth operations, enables an impact-driven YACC, ensures financial transparency and aligns expenditures with goals.

- Lived experience compensation: The YACC should be compensated in alignment with other current state government youth advisory groups.
 - Members are expected to dedicate approximately 3 hours per month for a half day of meetings. Members can also take ad-hoc calls, meetings and media opportunities in addition to this.
 - We recommend that members have an initial in-person two-day training weekend and subsequently gather online for all other meetings.
 - There will be the provision to fill out timesheets reflecting their meeting and working hours.
 - Following best practices utilised by the Victorian Government's Youth Congress, the compensation is set at the SCHADS Award Level 2, pay-point 1, casual rate of \$40.27 per hour. This remuneration structure ensures equitable compensation for the valuable contributions of YACC members while adhering to established standards in youth engagement initiatives³⁴.
- Flights, food and accommodation for training weekend: The Climate Change Network is to cover the cost of flights, food and accommodation for all YACC members to attend the training weekend. Please note, the NSW ACYP YAC has an approximate expenditure of \$5,000 per one-day YACC session inclusive of flights, accommodation, food and remuneration. We expect the training weekend to cost around \$10,000.
- YACC Chair: The YACC Chair will be responsible for co-designing meetings with the Department liaison. Roles are to include setting agendas, facilitating meetings, and executing meaningful youth engagement strategies. They will play a pivotal role in fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment where the voices of young people are heard and valued.
- Budget allocation for YACC representation: The Climate Change Network should consider covering the cost of YACC members attending national and international conferences, events, and initiatives relating to climate change and youth empowerment. Examples of this include national youth conferences and the COP climate conferences in an observer capacity.

It is advised that NSW Government budget a conservative estimate of \$25,000 for the YACC.

³⁴ Jobs Australia (2023) Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010. Available at <https://www.ja.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/SCHADS-Pay-Table-July-2023.pdf> (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, to bridge the disconnect between young people and the NSW Government, the Climate Change Network must adopt a YACC premised on the principles of best practice. Given the longstanding nature of the youth climate movement and the current lack of meaningful youth engagement avenues for climate policy, there is an urgent need for greater youth engagement. The establishment of the Climate Change Network across NSW Government provides an opportune time for young people to inform the path to net zero and other climate-impacting policies, ensuring climate policy works in the best interests of young people and considers their needs long into the future. A YACC is the best way to achieve this. For the YACC to be successful, it must play an active role in end-to-end policy creation. We believe that a YACC that fulfils the recommendations laid out in this proposal would be a best-practice example of this. NSW has an exciting opportunity to enforce Article 12 of the UNCRC and set a model for youth engagement on climate policy across the nation.



Figure 11: Intergenerational climate protest at COP28 (picture sourced internally).

Endorsement

This policy proposal has been endorsed by the following organisations:

Save The Children

Youth Action

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership- ANU

The Committee of the Hunter

Climate Writers

UN Youth Australia- New South Wales Division

This policy proposal has been endorsed by the following individuals:

Councillor HY William Chan, City of Sydney

This policy proposal has been endorsed by the following youth advisory councils:

Amnesty International



Save the Children



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



**UN
youth
australia**



**climate
writers.**

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