

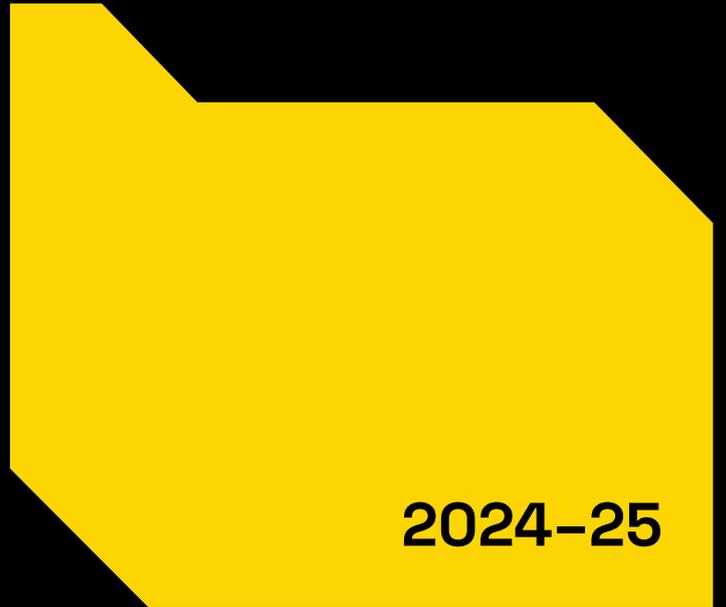
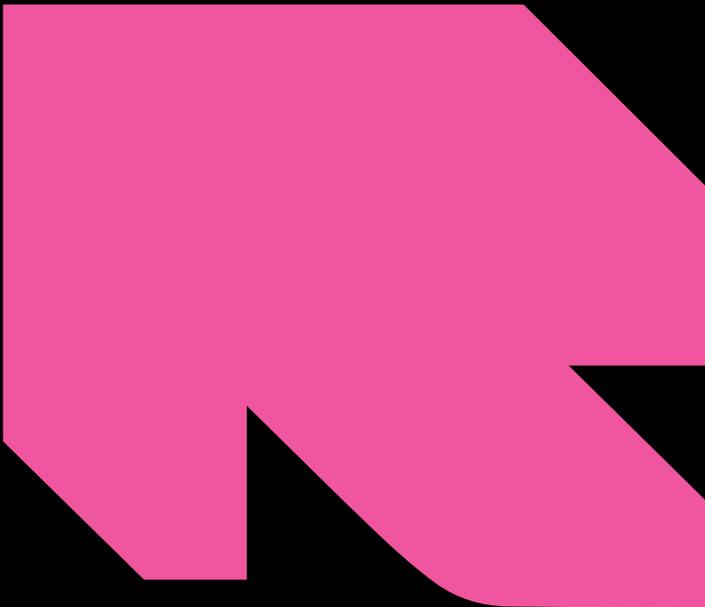
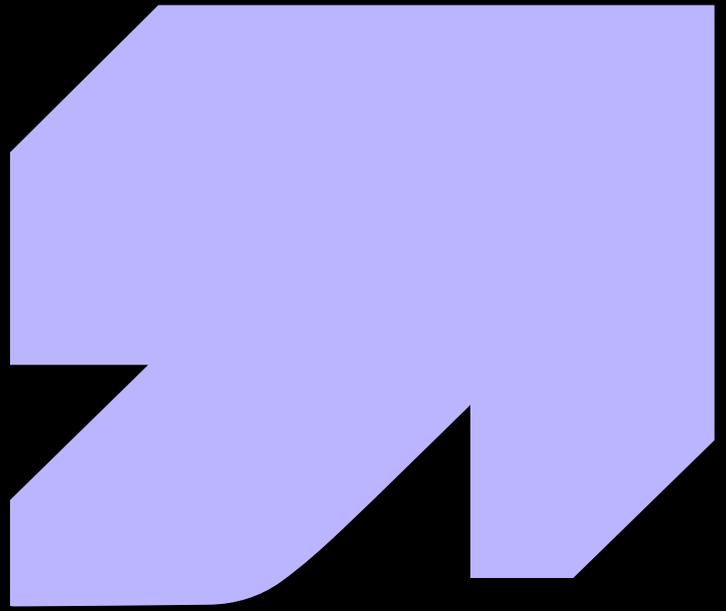


Australian Government



ENGAGE!

Impacts and insights



2024-25



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The document must be attributed as the *Engage! Impacts and insights*.

Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website at pmc.gov.au/government/commonwealth-coat-arms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia where we gather, live, work and stand. We acknowledge all Traditional Custodians, their Elders past and present, and we pay our respects to their continuing connection to their culture, community, land, sea, water and skies.

We extend this respect to all First Nations young people and acknowledge the importance of First Nations young people having a strong connection to their culture and Country. We also recognise and support the right of First Nations young people to self-determination and to share decision-making with the Australian Government.



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Image (Left): Attendees at the 2024 National Youth Forum held at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.



A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR YOUTH

It is such an honour to serve as the Minister for Youth and work alongside young Australians on significant issues impacting them and their futures. I would like to acknowledge and thank my predecessor and colleague, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, for her incredible leadership and devotion to elevating the voices of young people in government decision-making. I am committed to furthering this work by supporting young people to be involved in the issues that matter to them, and I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

The youth engagement strategy, *Engage!*, is the Australian Government's commitment to ensure that young people have opportunities to be included in government decision-making and help shape the future of our country.

Over the past year, the Australian Government, through the Office for Youth, has focussed on implementing *Engage!*. This report illustrates how our vision, that young people are empowered, valued, and contribute to government decision-making, is becoming a reality. Through a range of programs, young people have been working alongside government departments and agencies to positively influence the work they are doing. As seen in this report, the inclusion of young people in government decision-making has generated significant influence on the policies and programs that impact them.

From contributing to the Net Zero Plan, to informing digital mental health services, First Nations education and initiatives related to youth employment, young people have played an active role in government decision-making.

Engage! Impacts and insights highlights how the Australian Government has worked closely with young people from all walks of life to deliver on the priorities in *Engage!*. Thank you to all of the young people who eagerly shared their experiences, insights and ideas to the different programs they contributed to. Your invaluable input and feedback continue to make this work possible.

A special thank you to the members of the Youth Steering Committee and the Youth Advisory Groups whose insights and feedback continues to inform the work of the Office for Youth. I look forward to connecting with you at events this year.

Together, we are building a more inclusive, responsive, and future-focussed country—one that values and respects the views of young Australians.

I am excited to progress this important work.

Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh
Minister for Youth

Image (Top): The Minister Youth, Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh.

A MESSAGE FROM THE YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE

This past year has been all about connection, collaboration, and change with, for and by young people. As the Youth Steering Committee, we've seen firsthand the value of youth voices shaping national policy and strategy and just how much can be achieved when young people are involved.

We are 14 passionate young people from across the country, committed to using our experiences and community knowledge to build a more inclusive future. Since 2022, we have worked with the Australian Government to design and deliver the actions in *Engage!*. In 2024-2025, we worked alongside the Office for Youth to build on the previous committee's work by providing feedback on initiatives like the social media age restriction and shaping projects such as the Youth Engagement Toolkit and the National Youth Forum.

A highlight this year was seeing how young people can be meaningfully engaged in the decision-making process. We have been part of the conversation from the very beginning, co-designing forums, providing direct advice to policymakers, and creating spaces for other young people to share what matters to them.

These opportunities have built our confidence, strengthened our skills, and created strong connections. The past year is proof that when young people feel heard, valued and supported, we're empowered to step up, speak out and create positive change.

In 2025-26 we're excited to continue to refine the National Youth Forum and explore new ways to gather feedback from diverse communities. It is a privilege to continue to work on behalf of young people in Australia to improve the way their voices and experiences are heard in decision-making.

Members:

- Armani, NT
- Billie, SA
- Brodie, WA
- Caleb, NSW
- Charlotte, ACT
- Donella, NT
- Emily, QLD
- Isabel, TAS
- Isabella, SA
- Jet, TAS
- Rachel, VIC
- Ruben, WA
- Sebastian, QLD
- Taihan, VIC



Image: Members of the 2024-25 Youth Steering Committee.

A YEAR IN REVIEW



Here is a snapshot of some of the key achievements since the launch of *Engage!*

ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

124 young people engaged in Office for Youth programs

Demographic breakdown of program participants

36%

First Nations

16%

with disability

27%

from Regional,
Rural and
Remote areas

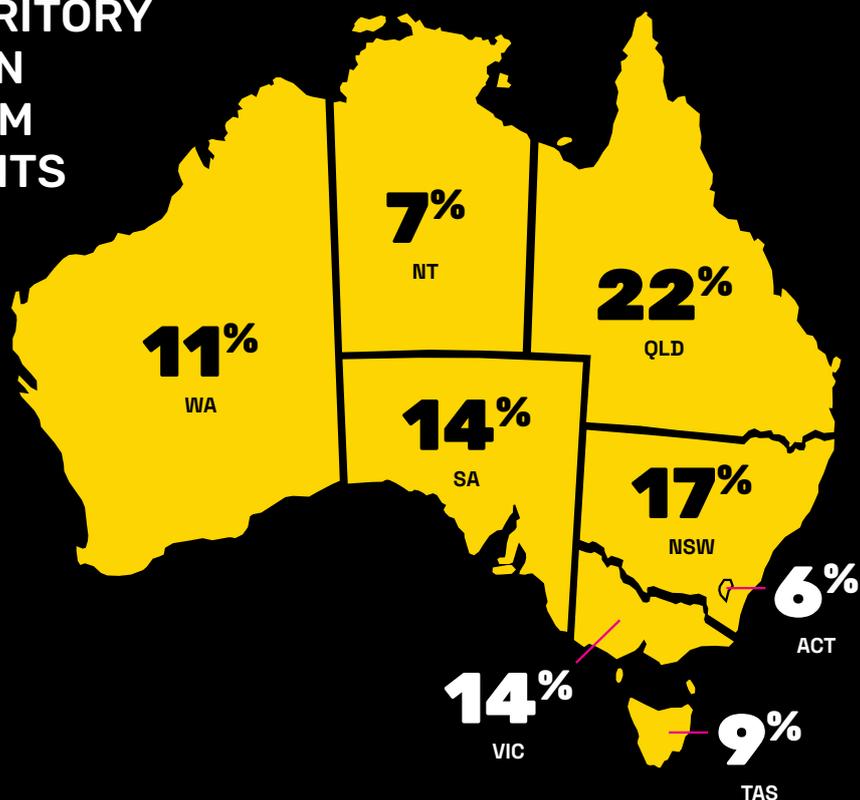
30%

LGBTIQ+

25%

Culturally and/
or Linguistically
Diverse

STATE/TERRITORY BREAKDOWN OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES ENGAGED

Through a quarterly working group, 21 Australian Government agencies engaged with the Office for Youth to consider youth initiatives and policies.

The Office for Youth also worked directly with 11 Australian Government departments and agencies through our programs over the last year:

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Department of Education

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Department of Home Affairs

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the Arts

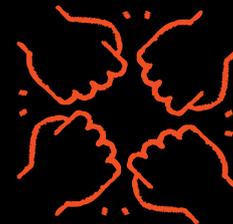
Department of Social Services

National Children's Commissioner - Australian Human Rights Commission

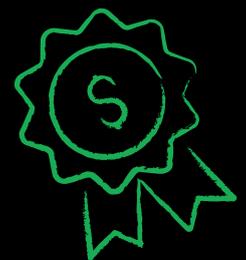
National Emergency Management Agency

National Indigenous Australians Agency

KEY STRATEGY ACTION UPDATES



The Digital Youth Hub was launched



The new youth engagement grants for First Nations and Regional, Rural and Remote young people were implemented



The Youth Engagement Toolkit was launched and is being shared across government





INTRODUCTION

It has been over a year since *Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make* was launched. The strategy is a three-year action plan to provide young people aged 12-25 in Australia with opportunities to contribute to government decision-making.

Since its launch, the Australian Government's Office for Youth has been working alongside the Youth Steering Committee to implement the strategy and its actions.

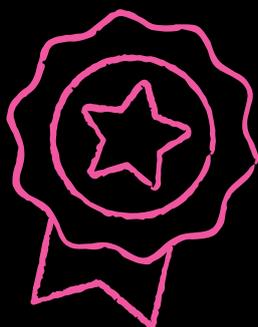
Engage! Impacts and insights reports on the 9 measures of *Engage!* and reflects on the progress of the strategy since the launch in March 2024 to June 2025. The report demonstrates what the Australian Government has achieved, together with young people, and how implementation of the strategy is influencing real outcomes in policy and program design.

Image (Left): Young people arriving at the 2025 National Youth Forum at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

STRATEGY AT A GLANCE: ACTIONS TO IMPACTS

VISION:

Young people are empowered, valued, and contribute to government decision-making.



PRIORITIES

1. WE WILL RECOGNISE AND LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE

ACTION AREAS / INITIATIVES

1.1 COLLABORATING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Initiatives

- National Youth Forum
- Youth Advisory Groups
- Youth Steering Committee

1.2 RECOGNISING YOUNG PEOPLE

Initiatives

- National Youth Week
- Young Australian of the Year Awards (funding and support)

MEASURES

- Percentage of program participants who felt they influenced a government policy or program.
- Percentage of young people who report a positive experience at a government event or program.
- Percentage of program participants who feel they are recognised for their contributions in the community.

2. WE WILL EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE TO ADVOCATE AND ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT

2.1 CONNECTING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Initiatives

- Digital Youth Hub
- Social media

2.2 EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Initiatives

- First Nations youth engagement grant
- Regional, Rural and Remote youth engagement grant

-
- Percentage of young people who engage with the Digital Youth Hub and social media channels.
 - Percentage of young people who were able to access the government information they needed on the Digital Youth Hub.
 - Percentage of First Nations young people and underrepresented young people participating in a program who feel more confident to engage with the government.

3. WE WILL SUPPORT GOVERNMENT TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

3.1 LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Initiatives

- National Youth Survey

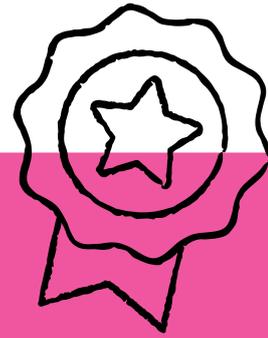
3.2 BUILDING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Initiatives

- Youth Engagement Toolkit (and associated workshops/training)

-
- Percentage of young people who feel that the Australian Government considers the views of young people.
 - Percentage of Australian Government departments and agencies that worked with the Office for Youth and felt supported to engage with young people.
 - Percentage of the Australian Public Service who feel confident engaging with young people on the development of policy and programs.

PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 1: WE WILL RECOGNISE AND LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Priority one is about creating more opportunities for young people to speak up and be part of government decision-making. Since the launch of *Engage!*, the Office for Youth has provided different ways for young people to share their views, ideas and experiences with the Australian Government.

This helped young people's voices be heard and their input be valued. By offering different ways to get involved, we have made it easier for more young people to speak up about the things that matter most to them.

ACTION 1.1 - COLLABORATING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

- Beginning in 2024, the National Youth Forum is an annual event where young people from across Australia come together to share ideas, build skills, and influence government decisions.
- The 2025 National Youth Forum was held on 5 February at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House in Canberra. The theme for the Forum was Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) young people. This theme was developed by the Youth Steering Committee based on the findings from consultations with young people.
- 94 diverse young people from a range of organisations and groups from across Australia participated in the forum.
- Other attendees included department and agency representatives, Office for Youth staff, state and territory government representatives, and parents and guardians. The then Minister for Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP also attended the event to provide an opening address.

- Young people took part in a policy hackathon event where they worked with government agencies on issues that matter to them, and pitched solutions to policy problems.
- 3 Policy Hackathon streams ran concurrently at the 2025 National Youth Forum:
 - **Building and supporting aspirations for RRR young people to participate in tertiary education** (Department of Education)
 - **Building social resilience in communities to support RRR young people in times of drought** (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)
 - **Including RRR young people in disaster resilience and recovery** (National Emergency Management Agency).
- Outputs from the hackathon will be used by agencies to inform the development of policies and programs. An update on these outcomes will be given to attendees before we deliver the next forum.
- The Office for Youth will provide an update of the outcomes of the 2025 National Youth Forum in the next year's Annual Report.
- The Office for Youth has also recently commenced the 2025 National Youth Consultations. These consultations will support the 2026 National Youth Forum and we look forward to providing an update about these in next year's Annual Report!



Image: Young people speaking on a youth panel at the 2025 National Youth Forum.

CASE STUDY

CLOSING THE LOOP: OUTCOMES OF THE 2024 NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

The 2024 National Youth Forum was held on Wednesday 20 March at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. More than 100 diverse young people aged 13–25 attended the forum and participated in the policy hackathon.

There were 3 topics at the 2024 National Youth Forum. These were developed with the Youth Steering Committee based on the findings from the 2023 National Youth Consultations.

Climate Change

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

- The climate change stream provided insights into young Australians' priorities in the Net Zero transition. This covered topics such as renewable energy, sustainable practices, and climate resilience.
- Young people generated ideas for managing land use conflicts, balancing agricultural needs with environmental conservation.
- These contributions are aiding the development of the Net Zero Plan and the Agriculture and Land sector plan, integrating youth perspectives into strategic planning.

Cost of Living

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

- The cost-of-living stream enabled young people from diverse backgrounds to provide valuable insights on how employment and government initiatives can help to support young people into secure and permanent jobs so they can meet their needs (including financial needs) and aspirations.
- Young people provided recommendations on supports such as work experience, skills attainment, career guidance and progression, and secure employment opportunities.
- The input provided is informing policy consideration on youth employment matters.



Mental Health

Department of Health and Aged Care

- The mental health stream provided recommendations for digital youth mental health services. This had a focus on accessibility, inclusivity, and user-friendly interfaces.
- These recommendations were considered in the development of a digital mental health program grant opportunity. This grant is aimed at developing innovative solutions for mental health support through digital platforms.
- Insights from the forum will inform the development of youth digital mental health services. This will help to ensure they meet the needs and preferences of young people, including features like peer support networks and anonymous counselling options.

YOUTH ADVISORY GROUPS

- The Youth Advisory Group program partners young people with Australian Government departments and agencies. The members work on the development of policies and programs that affect young people.
- Each group has up to 10 diverse young people aged 16–25. The groups run for a period of up to 2 years.
- The Youth Advisory Groups were established in 2023 and remain a cornerstone of the Office for Youth’s programs through *Engage!*.
- Since the launch of the *Engage!*, there have been 8 Youth Advisory Groups working on diverse focus areas. Some finished up in March 2025, some are continuing, and others are new. There are currently 5 Youth Advisory Groups.
- The work of the Youth Advisory Groups has allowed the voices, experiences and needs of diverse young people to be represented in government policy and programs. They have also helped to build trust and transparency between young people and government.
- You can learn more about the work of the Youth Advisory Groups (past and present) on the Digital Youth Hub.

SNAPSHOT OF PAST YOUTH ADVISORY GROUPS ACHIEVEMENTS:

Safe and Supported Youth Advisory Group

Working partner: Department of Social Services

- Provided feedback into the monitoring and evaluation strategy for *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*.
 - Provided advice on the development of a consultation plan to engage with young people with a diverse range of abilities and experiences aged 8-14. This resulted in making appropriate changes to carry out safe consultations for children and young people with lived experience.
 - Influenced the guidelines for the Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial.
-

First Nations Education Youth Advisory Group

Working partners: Department of Education and National Indigenous Australians Agency

- Provided informal case studies and advice on the role of teachers in school engagement to inform ongoing policy development and advice around the First Nations Teacher Strategy.
 - Explored models of support for First Nations Students in influencing, advocating and advancing educational change. This provided insight and support for the continued development of the First Nations Education Policy.
 - Developed a summary of advice around the importance of addressing racism in schools, community and family engagement, and embedding First Nations perspectives in education. This Communique will continue to influence policy processes.
-

Employment Youth Advisory Group

Working partner: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

- Provided feedback and innovative ideas on issues that impact young people in Australia, including employment services, careers (careers advice and guidance, and school transition support), apprenticeships, self-employment assistance.
- Provided advice to inform policy consideration on youth employment matters, including eligibility of employment services, place-based supports, soft employment skills, compliance and in-work supports for young people.

YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE

- The Youth Steering Committee (the committee) works with the Office for Youth and the Minister for Youth to deliver *Engage!*. They also provide advice on government policies and programs that impact young people.
- The committee is made up of young people aged 12–25 from across Australia. Committee members are appointed for a 2-year term, with half of the committee being replaced every year. The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) continues to support the operation of the committee.
- Since the launch of *Engage!*, the committee has supported the Office for Youth to deliver and implement key actions of the strategy. This includes the National Youth Forum, Digital Youth Hub, the National Youth Survey and the Youth Engagement Toolkit. Their support has involved giving feedback on drafts, participating in consultations, and sharing ideas on the implementation and delivery of projects.
- Additionally, the committee has met with the Age Assurance Taskforce to discuss the social media ban and continues to have contact with the National Children’s Commissioner on her priorities.
- Committee members have also represented young people at national and international events, like the Commonwealth Youth Forum in Samoa in October 2024.
- The Office for Youth will continue to work with the committee to identify areas where young people can meaningfully have a voice and seek their views on how to improve youth engagement across government.
- You can learn more about the work of the committee (past and present) on the Digital Youth Hub.

“Being part of the Youth Steering Committee was a powerful reminder of the value of diversity in collaboration. While we were united by our shared identity as young Australians, it was our varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that truly enriched our work. Engaging in open, thoughtful discussions with such a dynamic group not only deepened our understanding of the issues facing youth today, but also ensured the strategy we developed was inclusive and representative. This experience has strengthened my belief in the importance of diverse representation in shaping meaningful, effective policy.”

- YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER

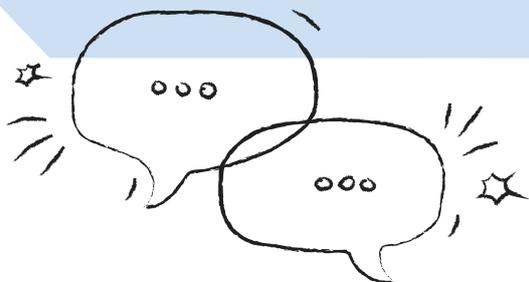
ACTION 1.2 - RECOGNISING YOUNG PEOPLE

NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK

- The 2025 National Youth Week ran from 3 to 7 February. The series of events brought together around 100 young people as well as youth advocates, government officials and ministers to participate in meaningful conversations about programs and policies that affect young people.
- The then Minister for Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, officially opened Youth Week at a welcome event in Canberra on 3 February 2025 attended by the outgoing and incoming Youth Advisory Group members.
- The National Youth Forum was held on 5 February, marking the key event of National Youth Week.
- Throughout the rest of the week, the Youth Advisory Groups and Youth Steering Committee members took part in a range of engagement and advocacy activities, including 9 meetings with the then Minister for Youth and portfolio ministers and meetings with partner agencies.

“I really appreciated the opportunity to engage with like-minded individuals from across the country. The discussions were incredibly insightful, and it was inspiring to hear different perspectives on important issues. I also enjoyed the chance to network with passionate, driven youth leaders and professionals, which helped me feel more connected to a larger community. Overall, the forum was a great platform for learning, growth, and collaboration.”

- 2025 NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM PARTICIPANT



FUNDING FOR THE YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

- The Office for Youth provides funding and support for the Young Australian of the Year Award category, which recognises the important contributions young people make to Australian society.
- Administered by the National Australia Day Council, the Australian of the Year Awards is the nation's peak award program that celebrates the achievements and contributions of extraordinary Australians.
- The recipients of the 2025 Australian of the Year Awards, including the Young Australian of the Year, were announced by the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister of Australia, in Canberra on 25 January 2025.
- Dr Katrina Wruck was the named 2025 Young Australian of the Year.
- Dr Katrina Wruck's research is giving back to remote communities. Based on her research, Katrina has set up a profit-for-purpose business, Nguki Kula Green Labs, which is poised to transform the consumer goods sector by harnessing the power of green chemistry, while inspiring others to step into STEM.
- A proud Mabuigilaig and Goemulgal woman who has long advocated for First Nations knowledge, Katrina also participates in community engagement programs. She is frequently told by the students she speaks to that she's the first Indigenous scientist they've met. Her work has been recognised with several awards, and she is already well known in her field.

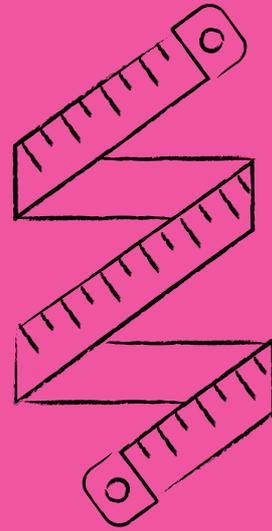


“It’s extremely validating to get this recognition because too many people along my entire journey have doubted my abilities. I was told by teachers I would never be able to read or achieve any kind of success, let alone be able to study hard maths. This year, I discovered I am neuro-divergent which has helped me to realise I learn a different way to the expectations of all those critics. I hope that by sharing my story, it helps another young person pursue their passion whatever it is, and that my journey can become someone else’s survival guide one day.”

- DR KATRINA WRUCK

Image: 2025 Young Australian of the Year, Dr Katrina Wruck.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS



The three measures associated with priority one and our current status against each of them is outlined below.

PERCENTAGE OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WHO FELT THEY INFLUENCED A GOVERNMENT POLICY OR PROGRAM

The data for this measure comes from post-program surveys for the following actions:

- National Youth Forum
- Youth Advisory Groups
- Youth Steering Committee.

Participants (young people part of an Office for Youth program) were asked to respond to the following question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Through [my participation at the National Youth Forum/my Youth Advisory Group/the Youth Steering Committee], I was able to influence a government program or policy.*

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree



59%

59% OF YOUNG PEOPLE FELT THEY INFLUENCED A GOVERNMENT POLICY OR PROGRAM.

RESULTS DISCUSSION

In 2025-26, the Office for Youth will focus its efforts to close the feedback loop between Australian Government departments and agencies and young people through all of its programs. This will include regular communication to participants by both agencies and the Office for Youth within meetings and through e-communication.

We are already seeing improved results through our mid-program check-ins with our Youth Advisory Group members.

Youth Advisory Group mid-program data update

The 2025 mid-program Youth Advisory Group participant survey shows that program participants are having a positive experience collaborating with the Office for Youth and their partner agencies:

- 100% of members reported having a positive experience of the Youth Advisory Program so far.
- 82% of members feel that the Australian Government considers the views of young people.



Image: Youth Advisory Group members at the 2025 National Youth Forum.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO REPORT A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE AT A GOVERNMENT EVENT OR PROGRAM

The data for this measure comes from post program surveys for the following actions:

- National Youth Forum
- Youth Advisory Groups
- Youth Steering Committee.

Participants (young people part of an Office for Youth program) were asked to respond to the following question:

How would you rate your experience at/on the [*National Youth Forum/Youth Advisory Group/Youth Steering Committee*].

1. Very Negative
2. Negative
3. Neutral
4. Positive
5. Very Positive



88%

88% OF YOUNG PEOPLE REPORTED A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE AT A GOVERNMENT EVENT OR PROGRAM.

PERCENTAGE OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WHO FEEL THEY ARE RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

There is currently no data available for this measure. This data will come from the Young Australian of the Year Award participant survey conducted by the National Australia Day Council in their next evaluation cycle.

PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 2: WE WILL EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE TO ADVOCATE AND ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT

Priority two is about making it easier for young people to find information about government programs and services. It also focuses on providing First Nations and underrepresented young people with more opportunities to grow their leadership and advocacy skills. Since the launch of *Engage!*, the Office for Youth has developed our new website, improved our social media and provided two new grants to support youth engagement projects. This work is helping young people to be more confident, informed and connected to the Government.

ACTION 2.1 - CONNECTING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

DIGITAL YOUTH HUB

- The **Digital Youth Hub** was launched on 6 December 2024 and is a dedicated online space for young people to get support and find information on government services.
- The Youth Steering Committee were involved in the design and development of the website.
- The content of the website has been written in a way that is easy for young people to understand and engage with.
- The content of the website has been developed in collaboration with government departments and agencies to ensure young people can access relevant information in a central location.
- The Office for Youth will continue to collaborate across the Australian Government to enhance the Digital Youth Hub with new, relevant content that reflects the interests and needs of young people.

THERE ARE 6 SUBJECT AREAS ON THE DIGITAL YOUTH HUB:

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Mental health
- Finding health services
- Online safety
- Healthy relationships and consent
- Medicare and health insurance
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Vaping and smoking

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- High school
- University and TAFE
- International students
- STEM education

EMPLOYMENT

- Choosing a career
- Getting the job
- Apprenticeships and traineeships
- Workplace rights

LIFE STUFF

- Income support
- Housing
- Tax and superannuation
- myGov
- How our government works
- Voting
- Finances and money

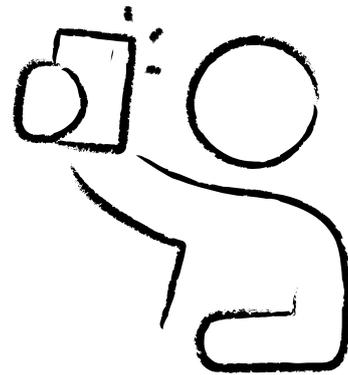
ENVIRONMENT

- Climate change
- Climate action
- Good news stories
- How you can make a difference

OFFICE FOR YOUTH

- The *Engage!* strategy
- All Office for Youth programs and projects
- How you can get involved!

ENHANCED SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT



- The Office for Youth has a presence on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.
- We heard through consultations with young people that 68.8% want to hear about what the government is doing through social media.
- After a brand refresh following the launch of *Engage!*, the social media platforms have seen increased engagement with our core audience – young people.
- Instagram is the main social media platform where we engage with young people.
- We are working hard to ensure that our social media channels are visually appealing, written in a youth-friendly voice and post about topics that matter to young people. We will continue to work with the Youth Steering Committee to further develop our approach to social media.

INSTAGRAM



776

Instagram followers
at launch of *Engage!*

1,663

Instagram followers
[May 2025]



Image: Youth Steering Committee members in Canberra.

ACTION 2.2 - EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

FIRST NATIONS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GRANT

- The First Nations youth engagement grant aims to support First Nations young people to have a strong cultural identity and empower them to advocate on the issues that matter most to them.
- The First Nations youth engagement grant was awarded to the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) in partnership with the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC).
- Over 4 years (2024–2028), FYA and NIYEC will develop and deliver a pilot student congress model that connects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to:
 - share their learning experiences
 - engage in collective voice initiatives, and
 - develop capacities in creativity, collaboration, building relationships and leadership.
- The pilot model is centred around First Nations leadership and self-determination. This model will trial ways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and young people to share their experiences and advocate their education priorities to government.
- Phase 1 of the pilot (2024–25) saw the establishment of a Youth Design Group to co-create the model and delivery of co-design workshops and consultations with students, young people and sector partners to inform design principles of the model.
- The Office for Youth will continue to work with FYA and NIYEC to promote events and engagement opportunities for the Youth Design Group members, including attending the National Youth Forum.



“Young mob deserve a seat at the table, and that’s exactly what the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Congress will provide. It represents self-determination, true representation, and the power of young people leading change in education and beyond.”

- FIRST NATIONS YOUTH DESIGN GROUP PARTICIPANT

Image: Members of the First Nations Youth Design Group brainstorming ideas for the pilot student congress model.

REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GRANT

- The Regional, Rural and Remote youth engagement grant aims to support young people from these areas to build their advocacy and leadership skills. This grant was awarded to ABC Heywire, which includes the Heywire Competition and the Heywire Regional Youth Summit.
- The Heywire competition gives young people living in Regional, Rural, and Remote Australia the opportunity to share their lived experiences with a national audience through storytelling. Heywire winners have their stories broadcasted through the ABC network. This exposure amplifies their voices and highlights the unique challenges and triumphs of life in regional Australia to both government and everyday Australians.
- The competition winners also attend the Heywire Regional Youth Summit at Parliament House every February, where they collaborate on ideas for positive community change.
- The 2025 summit brought 55 young winners together in Canberra for a week of leadership and development opportunities. They presented their ideas for community improvement to an audience of government representatives and community leaders.
- The 2025 ABC Heywire winners had stories showcasing the diverse experiences of regional Australia come from Far North Queensland, King Island in Tasmania to remote Western Australia, from the likes of LGBTIQ+ advocates, First Nations youth leaders, pilots, artists, classical musicians, coaches and farmers.
- The 2025 ABC Heywire cohort ensured that a range of young people's voices and experiences were represented:

HEYWIRE PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic breakdown of the Heywire participants

23.7%

First Nations

18.4%

Culturally and/
or Linguistically
Diverse

15.8%

LGBTIQ+

18.4%

with disability

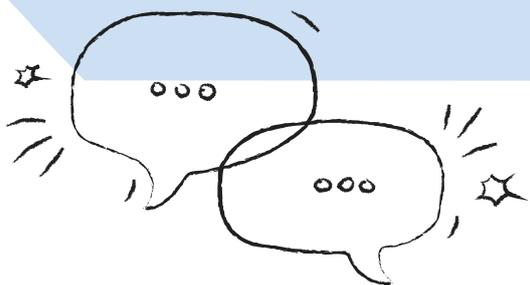
- The media reach of the Heywire program allowed young people’s voices to be heard across Australia in a number of ways, including:
 - 30+ lived experience stories in text on the Heywire website and ABC Facebook
 - 30+ radio packages (2-3 mins) played across local radio, ABC Radio National and on Story Stream
 - 10-12 videos (2-3 mins) featured on News Breakfast, BTN and Landline
 - 25+ 30-second videos on YouTube shorts and Facebook
 - A 30-minute TV special featuring 12 stories of young people in regional Australia - featured on the ABC News Channel and Main Channel over Summer
 - Interviews on triple j Hack and ABC social media



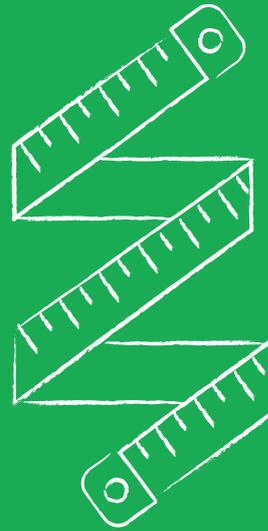
Image: Young people speaking with Prime Minister the Hon Anthony Albanese MP at an ABC Heywire event.

“Participating in the Heywire competition and summit has been a life-changing experience. It gave me the confidence to share my story and the opportunity to meet incredible people who are passionate about making a difference in their communities. I feel more empowered to engage with the government and contribute to positive change.”

- 2025 HEYWIRE PARTICIPANT



MEASURING OUR PROGRESS



The three measures associated with priority two and our current status against each of them is outlined below.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE WITH THE DIGITAL YOUTH HUB AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

The data for this measure comes from analytics of the Digital Youth Hub website and Office for Youth social media channels.

Digital Youth Hub

While we can't access the demographic breakdown of users for the Digital Youth Hub, we can still track website engagement to see how well it's performing. We do this by looking at the number of people accessing the Hub (users) and the number of pages on the Hub they access (views). This helps us understand how it is being used and how we can continue to improve it for young people.

DIGITAL YOUTH HUB ENGAGEMENT

Website Google Analytics from launch of Digital Youth Hub
(6 December 2024 to 20 May 2025)

71,243

VIEWS

22,368

USERS

Social media

The following data represents the total followers for Office for Youth social media channels, and the percentage of these that are young people. It also highlights the engagement statistics for our social media channels.

It is worth noting that Instagram is the main social media channel where we engage directly with young people. This is because our other channels (LinkedIn and Facebook) are not platforms commonly utilised by many young people aged 12-25.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Social media followers breakdown



1,663

Instagram followers

(As of 20 May 2025)

Percentage of followers by age

- 13-17 years – 7%
- 18-24 years – 39%
- 25-34 years – 27%



424

Facebook followers

(As of 20 May 2025)

Percentage of followers by age

- 13-17 years
(Data not available)
- 18-24 years – 22%
- 25-34 years – 28%



1,652

LinkedIn followers

(As of 20 May 2025)

Percentage of followers by age

(Data not available)

Social media engagement statistics (all channels)

(20 March 2024 to 20 May 2025)

6,613

Total engagement

5,516

Post likes and reactions

3.4%

Engagement rate*

* An engagement rate measures how actively people interact with content. It tells us how well our content resonates with our audience. An engagement rate between 1% and 3% is generally considered healthy, while anything above 3% suggests a highly engaged audience. The Office for Youth aims to align its rates with the Department of Education's social media strategy 2024-25 which identifies rates above 2% as good.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WERE ABLE TO ACCESS THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION THEY NEEDED ON THE DIGITAL YOUTH HUB

The data for this measure comes from pre-program surveys for the following actions:

- National Youth Forum
- Youth Advisory Groups.

Participants (young people part of an Office for Youth program) were asked to respond to the following question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am able to access the information I need on the Digital Youth Hub website.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree



66%

66% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO ACCESS THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION THEY NEEDED ON THE DIGITAL YOUTH HUB.

PERCENTAGE OF FIRST NATIONS YOUNG PEOPLE AND UNDERREPRESENTED YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN A PROGRAM WHO FEEL MORE CONFIDENT TO ENGAGE WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Data for this measure is not currently available. This data will come from the grant recipients of the First Nations youth engagement grant and the Regional, Rural and Remote youth engagement grants in future years.

PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 3: WE WILL SUPPORT GOVERNMENT TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Priority 3 is all about improving the way that the government works with young people. The Office for Youth aims to do this by building government skills and confidence in youth engagement. Since the launch of *Engage!*, we have made progress, and this continues to be an important focus of our work. One big step was creating the Youth Engagement Toolkit, which is helping government to engage with young people. We have continued to consult across the Australian Government through the Interdepartmental Committee on Youth, which encourages the harmonisation of youth engagement across government. This work is important to ensure young people are included in government decision-making into the future.

ACTION 3.1 - LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

NATIONAL YOUTH SURVEY

- The National Youth Survey is an annual survey where young people can share the issues that matter most to them and how they would like to be included in government decision-making.
- The findings of the survey will guide the resources and services offered by the Office for Youth including the themes and topics of the National Youth Forum and Youth Advisory Groups. This information will also be shared across government to help them understand how best to engage young people on relevant policies and programs.
- The National Youth Survey has been created in collaboration with the Youth Steering Committee. First Nations young people were also consulted to help shape the First Nations specific question and response options in the survey.
- The 2025 National Youth Survey will be launched in the second half of the year and promoted to as many young people across Australia as possible and will be accessed on the Digital Youth Hub.

ACTION 3.2 - BUILDING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

RESOURCES AND TRAINING MATERIALS TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Youth engagement resources and training materials for the Australian Government will help build the capacity of government to consider young people in policy and program design.

TOOLKIT

- In December 2024, the Office for Youth launched the Youth Engagement Toolkit (the toolkit). The toolkit includes resources designed to support Australian Government officials to more effectively engage young people in policy and program design.
- The Office for Youth partnered with the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University to consult with the Australian Public Service, the Youth Steering Committee, and young people and their supporters in the not-for-profit sector to inform the toolkit content.
- The toolkit was promoted at Secretaries' Board on 11 December 2024 where agency heads noted the release of the toolkit and OFY's role in supporting agencies to build their youth engagement capabilities.
- The Office for Youth will continue to promote the use of the toolkit.

TRAINING

- The Office for Youth will continue to provide training to Youth Advisory Group partner agencies.
- To support the promotion of the Youth Engagement Toolkit, the Office for Youth will continue to offer advice, training and guidance to agencies interested in engaging young people in policy or program design.

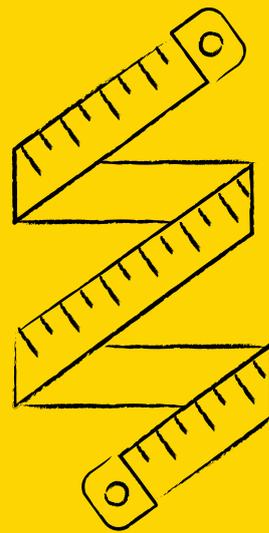
“As a public servant invested in incorporating youth engagement into all possible elements of our work, the *Engage!* strategy was tremendously helpful. The strategy and associated toolkits gave me direction throughout the process. I was able to set a clear purpose for the engagement, consider the requirements of safe and ethical engagement, and most importantly, reinforce an outcome-drive approach along the way. One of the guides in the toolkit helped set precedent for recognising the time and contributions of young people. Another guide helped me draft an elevator pitch that was engaging and fit-for-purpose. Overall, I loved using the strategy and I would like to see it become a mandatory engagement policy throughout the Australian Public Service (APS)”

- APS EMPLOYEE



Image: Young people at the policy hackathon as part of the 2025 the National Youth Forum.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS



The three measures associated with priority three and our current status against each of them is outlined below.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO FEEL THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The data for this measure comes from post program surveys for the following actions:

- National Youth Forum
- Youth Advisory Groups
- Youth Steering Committee.

Participants (young people part of an Office for Youth program) were asked to respond to the following question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Australian Government considers the views of young people when creating a policy or program.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree





45%

45% OF YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

RESULTS DISCUSSION

This report offers the Office for Youth the opportunity to establish benchmark targets for each measure. While participants in Office for Youth programs felt that they had an individual impact on policies or programs, highlighting the promising youth engagement efforts across the Australian Government, there is still room for improvement across the public service. Notably, 37% of the young people surveyed gave a neutral response to this measure, suggesting a strong foundation to build upon. In 2025–26 the Office for Youth will focus its efforts on supporting agencies to:

- **close the feedback loop** with young people through Office for Youth programs
- **enhance youth engagement capabilities** through the Youth Engagement Toolkit and training provided by the Office for Youth, and
- **embed youth perspectives** across the Australian Government through the Interdepartmental Committee for Youth.

PERCENTAGE OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES THAT WORKED WITH THE OFFICE FOR YOUTH AND FELT SUPPORTED TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The data for this measure comes from post program surveys for the following actions:

- National Youth Forum
- Youth Advisory Groups
- Youth Steering Committee.

Australian Government departments and agency representatives involved in an Office for Youth program were asked to respond to the following question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Office for Youth supported my business area to meaningfully engage with young people through/ at [National Youth Forum/ the Youth Advisory Group/ Youth Steering Committee].

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree



82%

82% OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES THAT WORKED WITH THE OFFICE FOR YOUTH FELT SUPPORTED TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

PERCENTAGE OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE WHO FEEL CONFIDENT ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AND PROGRAMS

We do not currently have data for this measure. We are working toward an approach that we can survey the Australian Public Service (APS) on youth engagement.

Although we do not currently have the data to report on this measure directly, the findings from the above measure suggests that through the Office for Youth, APS staff are building their capacity to engage with young people.

LESSONS AND NEXT STEPS

As highlighted in this report, the Office for Youth and young people in our programs have achieved a lot since launching *Engage!*. Over the next year, we will continue implementing the strategy, reviewing and improving our programs based on the feedback of young people and the departments and agencies we work with.

Next year, the Office for Youth will have data available for all measures and initiatives which will be reflected in the 2026 report.

Going forward, our focus will be increasing government capacity for youth engagement by promoting the Youth Engagement Toolkit and supporting agencies to close the feedback loop with young people. We aim to improve results by working closely with young people and government agencies to enhance our programs and initiatives. We will also demonstrate how young people's advice and feedback has been used across government.

Through regular program check-ins we will monitor the effectiveness of youth engagement across the next 12 months. We will adjust our programs when needed to ensure youth voices and experiences are embedded in policy and program design.

We will continue to consult across the Australian Government through the Interdepartmental Committee on Youth, which coordinates youth related policies and harmonises youth engagement across government. We will also continue to consider and prioritise First Nations and Regional, Rural and Remote young people in the development and implementation of *Engage!*, ensuring their voices are included in government decision-making.



Image: Attendees of the 2025 National Youth Forum.

DEFINITIONS

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Advocacy | Taking action to support a cause or issue that is affecting a person or community. |
| Australian Public Service | The Australian Public Service (APS) refers to Commonwealth Government departments and agencies. The staff within the APS deliver services, develop policies, and support the Australian Government in serving the public. |
| Decision-making | The process of making choices about government policies and programs. |
| Departments and agencies | Organisations and groups in the Australian Government responsible for different policies and programs. |
| Engaged | Young people were actively involved, contributing their ideas, experiences, and perspectives. |
| Framework | The structured approach that outlines how we track progress, measure outcomes, and understand the impact of our actions. |
| Government | The Australian Government which is the national government of Australia. |
| Inclusive | Ensuring everyone is valued and supported to participate, free from discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and practices. |
| Interdepartmental Committee | A common governance body for cross-agency taskforces, where senior executives from representative agencies may discuss work and provide input on deliverables. |
| LGBTIQ+ | An abbreviation which is used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer or any other sexually or gender diverse people. |
| Lived experience | Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement or experience. |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | The ongoing process of tracking progress and assessing the impact of our work to understand what's working, what's not, and how we can improve. |
| Pilot model | Small-scale version of a program or approach that is tested to see how well it works before being rolled out more widely. |
| Policies and programs | Plans and activities made by the Australian Government to address different issues or provide support to people. |
| Program participants | Unless another program is stated, the use of the term 'program participants' in this report refers to young people who took part of an Office for Youth program. |
| Secretaries Board | A high-level forum of Australian Government agency leads that discusses strategic priorities, reviews initiatives, and guides public service capability and policy implementation across the Australian Public Service. |
| Self-determination | The fundamental right of people to shape their own lives. |
| Strategy; Engage! | <i>Engage!</i> sets out the Australian Government's vision to ensure all young people across Australia are able to have a say on issues and policies that impact them. |
| Underrepresented | Groups or individuals who have less presence, voice, or influence compared to others in a particular space or decision-making process. |
| Young people | Young people who are between the ages of 12–25. |



