



Principle and Practice Statement: Youth Voice

Purpose:

This principle and practice statement is intended to articulate our collective principles regarding youth voice and ways in which this may be implemented and inform our practice.

Introduction:

OUR AMBITIONS



Empowered young people

We enable young people in Australia to have a stronger voice and be heard more clearly

OUR PRIORITIES

Bring belief to business

Apply our belief to engagement, advocacy, decision making, innovation and technology



Our collective ambition to empower young people specifies that we enable young people in Australia to have a stronger voice and be heard more clearly.

In 2019, the Office for Young People and Community Impact held workshops and consultations with all Association CEOs and staff, receiving input from more than 200 individuals.

The consultations focused on building a collective understanding of what we mean when we talk about the voice of young people and what this means for the Y. Specifically, we focused on how we understand the voice of young people in terms of our staff and volunteers, our work with young people in programs and services, the voice of young people in the broader community and also in our governance structures. The following principles emerged through our consultations with the Movement.

Principles:

PRINCIPLES:

IN PRACTICE, THIS MEANS:



Being listened to and being heard

We commit to ensuring that not only are young people listened to, but they feel genuinely heard and outcomes are communicated transparently to young people.

We will check in with young people to ensure we have understood what we have heard, and work together on what the outcomes should be. We will ensure young people are informed about any decisions that are taken and the reasons why. We also make sure our listening is supported by behaviours that promote integrity and credibility to bring about visible change. In our practice, we recognise that young people already have a voice, and we all share a responsibility to create the space and opportunity for that voice to be heard.



Embracing diversity

We commit to valuing and recognising the diversity of young people's perspectives and we commit to ensuring inclusion of all young people and diverse forms of engagement.

We recognise that young people hold diverse views and perspectives and we will actively seek out, hear and value the voice of all young people. In our practice, this means engaging in deep listening with young people, embedding empathy and flexibility in our behaviours. We will also ensure our practice is culturally welcoming and accessible. We will meet young people where they are at and we acknowledge that diverse forms of engagement and communication are critical for inclusion of all young people.



Being valued, respected and understood

We commit to ensuring that young people feel valued and our engagement is non-judgemental, respectful and builds trust.

We will engage with respect and understanding, ensuring young people feel and are valued. This means being non-judgemental and setting pre-conceived notions and perceptions aside. We recognise that creating a sense of belonging and equality where trust is placed in the voice of young people is essential to being valued. This also means that young people must have choice about how, where, when and with whom to have a voice. Most importantly, we recognise that young people are the experts of their world.



Opportunity to influence

We commit to ensuring young people have opportunities for self-expression and the ability to influence their world.

We will actively provide young people with the space, ability and opportunity to express their views, beliefs, and opinions through a variety of mechanisms and platforms. We understand that for some young people this is about engaging in activism and for others it may represent the opportunity to make a contribution to their organisation and community.



Creating safe spaces

We commit to creating an enabling environment in which young people feel safe to have a voice and raise issues of concern to them.

We will intentionally support the voice of young people, through taking the time and creating safe spaces for young people to challenge, be challenged and to have their voices heard. This may include a range of elements from supportive structures and governance, to creating dialogue and multiple platforms for participation. Creating safe spaces also means addressing power imbalances, building confidence in young people and building trusting and honest relationships. This also means the creation of spaces and opportunities to share knowledge, learn from one another and encourage ideas through genuine and authentic co-design.