

Y AUSTRALIA

Action Plan for Children and Young People Federal Election 2025

The future has never been so uncertain for our young people. Disinformation and misinformation swirls in our orbit. Conflict is a constant on our screens. And climate change threatens our way of life through flood and fire.

Young Australians deserve better.

Making children and young people a priority at this Federal election will go some way to investing in the kind of future our children and young people deserve.

Investments that will grow their minds and their bodies, connect them with their communities and give them a better life with more opportunity.

That starts with delivering quality early childhood education and care.

But affordability, location and disadvantage continue to prevent children from getting the early years education and play they need to flourish.

Looking to the health and wellbeing of young people, the importance of physical recreation cannot be understated. It connects us, gives us a foundation to be healthy and happy and develops important skills for life.

But too many children aren't getting enough of it – it costs too much, and it needs to be more inclusive for more children and young people to take it up.

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people should be of the highest standard and yet almost 40% of children are still exposed to family and domestic violence.

There are unacceptably high levels of children being exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. It must stop.

With these kinds of issues being faced by young Australians, our schools are an important place for them to receive education, care and community. Our schools do an incredible job at juggling the needs of young people in this challenging and complex world.

But too many children are missing school through suspensions, expulsions or because they don't feel safe there, many of them are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander with disability or experiencing mental health challenges.

Lastly, young people need to be heard. Young people do not feel represented in Australia's system of government. We need to give more young people the pathways and confidence to influence our nation and have their voices listened to and acted on.

The Y Federal Election Action Plan is a tangible, straight forward plan to get us on the right path to empowering, inspiring and protecting children and young people. For giving them a better world.

About the Y and the Action Plan

The Y in Australia is part of the world's biggest and oldest youth movement and developed this Action Plan with our local Y associations in every State and Territory. Together we are committed to delivering a better world, with and for young people with our Vision 2030 strategy.

With children and young people, we are committed to driving systemic change across four pillars of impact - meaningful work, sustainable planet, a just world and community wellbeing.

We make a positive impact for young Australians in over 650 communities across the country.

We believe Australia can do more and do better – to support all children and young people.

This Federal election we are highlighting five areas of action to deliver systemic change, support children and young Australians and make our part of this world a better place.

By 2030, we want to see real change. We can't do that without the leaders of our government delivering initiatives that benefit children, young people and the communities they live in.

So the Y calls on the leaders of each party at this election to:

- Deliver universal access to early childhood education and care
- Deliver more funding to increase physical activity among children and young people
- Support children and young people to re-engage with school
- Keep children and young people safe, by fully delivering on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's recommendations and strengthening the work of the eSafety Commissioner
- Establish a National Youth Parliament and a grants program to strengthen civic engagement and social cohesion in young people from diverse communities



Universal access to early childhood education and care



More funding for physical activity programs for children and young people



Support children and young people to re-engage with school



Keep children and young people safe



Establish a National Youth Parliament and grants program

Our Vision and Action Plan

Our Action Plan is for our political leaders to consider committing to, the Australian public as they consider where to place their vote, and candidates for office as they put their case forward to their electorate.



Policy Focus	The Problem	The Vision	Commitments sought from next Government
<p>Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)</p>	<p>“Children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability stand to benefit most from attending high-quality ECEC services. But in the current system they are also most likely to be missing out, as services can be unaffordable, difficult to access or exclude some children with additional needs” (Productivity Commission 2024).</p> <p>Lack of access to early learning and to out of school hours care (OSHC) especially in regional and low socio economic areas and among First Nations children.</p> <p>50% of public schools have an out of school hours care program. OSHC is less likely to be provided at schools located outside major cities or higher socio-economic areas.</p>	<p>Universal access to Early Childhood Education and Care services.</p> <p>By 2030, all Australian children 5 years and younger should be able to access at least 3 days or 30 hours of ECEC services.</p> <p>OSHC should be available to more children and families. By 2030, we want at least 60% of public schools to host OSHC services (up from 50% today).</p> <p>By 2030, we want the workforce shortfall to be halved to meet both current demand and the demands of a future system of universal access.</p>	<p>A plan to achieve universal access to Early Childhood Education and Care.</p> <p>The plan should address workforce shortages including through better staff wages, traineeships and skilled migration.</p> <p>The plan should support not for profit providers in the ECEC sector, especially in under-served communities.</p> <p>Support to build early literacy skills through the expansion of the Y WA School ReadY program.</p>

Our Vision and Action Plan

Policy Focus	The Problem	The Vision	Commitments sought from next Government
<p>Education</p>	<p>High rates of school refusal and school exclusion.</p> <p>The extent of school refusal is difficult to say due to the lack of data, though estimates range from 1-5% of school aged children (40,000-200,000).</p> <p>School refusal is most prevalent among students with disability (particularly neurodivergent students) and those with mental health challenges (Senate 2023).</p> <p>Nationally, it's estimated that 80,000-100,000 students are suspended each year. Boys, Aboriginal students, students from low SES backgrounds, and students with a disability are disproportionately excluded from schools.</p>	<p>Support for young people to re-engage with education should be a national priority.</p> <p>By 2030, we want the rates of school exclusion and refusal to be reduced by 20%.</p>	<p>A national strategy to reduce the rates of school exclusion and school refusal including:</p> <p>Address the knowledge gap by investing in research on the prevalence of school exclusion and refusal (see Senate Inquiry School Refusal 2023).</p> <p>Recognise the value of Special Assistance Schools in supporting the children the mainstream education system is failing.</p> <p>Support the development of new Special Assistance Schools by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introducing Commonwealth supported loans for not for profits to support school building reducing the regulatory barriers for new schools to be opened <p>Establish a fund to support community partnerships with schools to improve student engagement in education, especially for vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Funding could support programs like the Y NSW Alternative Suspensions program, the Y WA Case Management program and other similar interventions.</p> <p>Continue to invest in and strengthen the Education Engagement & Attainment Initiative through the National Indigenous Australians Agency.</p>

Our Vision and Action Plan

Policy Focus	The Problem	The Vision	Commitments sought from next Government
Physical Activity and Recreation	<p>Australia's children are some of the least active in the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than one quarter of children (5-14 years) are meeting recommended physical activity levels 83% of adolescents (15-17 years) are insufficiently active Australian children's physical literacy and motor skill competency is declining <p>Traditional approaches do not cater for the diversity of sports participants.</p> <p>Inflation has increased cost barriers to participation especially among low SES families.</p> <p>Low levels of physical activity are related to poor connectedness and loneliness.</p>	<p>By 2030, we want an increase in physical activity among children from low participating cohorts.</p>	<p>Support community based organisations with funding to increase participation in physical activity.</p> <p>Ensure investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports greater diversity of activity to improve access from diverse communities. broadens pathways for people of all abilities to new urban and adventure activities like new sports/ recreation activities (e.g., surfing, skateboarding, rock climbing) through community based recreational centres and out of school hours care
Child Safety	<p>Child safety issues include online safety and social media, child abuse and neglect, the effectiveness of the child protection system in Australia, mental health, exposure to domestic violence, Aboriginal child welfare, bullying, both in schools and online and the high rate of youth suicide.</p> <p>Recent research has found an unacceptably high prevalence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> physical abuse (32.0%) sexual abuse (28.5%) emotional abuse (30.9%) exposure to domestic violence (39.6%) neglect (8.9%) 	<p>By 2030, we want more children and young people to be supported to develop the skills and understanding to safely engage in the digital world.</p> <p>By 2030, we want national child safe legislation, a national working with children checks system and a strong consistent reportable conduct system.</p>	<p>Maintain and strengthen investment in the work of the eSafety Commissioner to educate young people and their families on online safety and protect them from online abuse.</p> <p>Establish national legislation to put in place the ten national child safe standards of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.</p> <p>Establish a national Working with Children Checks system.</p> <p>Harmonise and strengthen Australia's mandated reporting processes and reportable conduct schemes.</p>

Our Vision and Action Plan

Policy Focus	The Problem	The Vision	Commitments sought from next Government
Youth Voice in our Community	<p>Among young people aged 18–24, the proportion of having a great sense of national belonging has been in decline, falling from 60% in 2009 to 34% in 2022.</p> <p>Young people are under represented in our governance institutions and lack trust in government.</p> <p>The average age of Federal MPs is 51 and none are under 30.</p> <p>Young people generally feel they are not heard or represented in civic and political discussions, and that political consultation with young people is tokenistic or politically motivated for some people.</p>	<p>By 2030, more young people understand and trust democratic institutions.</p>	<p>Establish a grants program to strengthen civic engagement and social cohesion in young people from diverse communities and cohorts, and to foster the next generation of community leaders.</p> <p>Develop a National Youth Parliament, building on the strengths of existing state and territory Youth Parliament programs.</p> <p>Invest in the construction of a National Youth Parliament Building to expand accommodation for students visiting the National Parliament in Canberra.</p>

Contact Details

For further information, please contact:

Jarrod Dobson
National Director - Advocacy and Public Policy

m: 0407 832 855 e: jarrod.dobson@the-y.org.au

