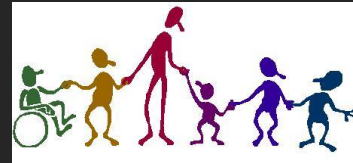


Young Thinker Opinion Piece



Youth should have their own voice, not be spoken for...

I believe that young people's voices should be seen by adults as an opportunity to grasp information out of their viewing range. Although you may have children it still does not put you in the same perspective as them, as they are not an open book and you cannot gather all the information amongst youth from rides home in the car on the way home from school. Therefore if there is voluntary communication about issues coming from youth, listen to them as it will help shape a better society or world with the input of all ages, not just adults.

Firstly I will define youth for you. Youth is the age between childhood and adult age, it is the age where you are no longer a child and are able to start gaining independence and can start making decisions. Typically the age bracket under the category "youth" is 12-25. What I see is better identified by young people because we are amongst it and it is information we gather from our peer's activities and issues as well as our own.

Youth issues are just as important as issues to you, adults. If they are not dealt with from the beginning, at youth, these problems will perpetuate and will more than likely advance. Age unfortunately is a major barrier in terms of youth having a voice. Age is just a number, it shouldn't be the difference from receiving credibility and not. The stereotypical view of a young person is lack of knowledge due to less life experience. What is not taken into account is that a young person sees the world in a different way and issues amongst youth clearer than adults are able to. Rather than being shut down by adults I believe youth sharing problems and issues should be an opportunity for minds to remain open and to learn what is really going on.

Young people already are trying to contribute important societal issues, for example, I went to a Youth Assembly at the Legislative assembly few months ago, and there were so many issues I did not know were amongst youth. We were given the opportunity to speak in groups then present recommendations to commissioners and ministers who could either have input or do something with the issues raised. More forums like this should be implemented as it builds a bridge between the gaps that are prominent today between generations.

A positive example of how youth can assist with providing feedback and contribute ideas is my work with the Human Rights Commission. I expressed what I see amongst youth today with them and they are now supporting me with taking that to the next level.

We, youth are a primary source. You cannot get more accurate information than what you are informed by us. Adults need to stop speaking for youth and allow them to speak for themselves. You are a secondary source, you may think something is an issue when it is not or vice versa. This is why the gap of communication between adults and youth needs to be closed. Communication is a stepping stone for positive change. You will not know what needs changing amongst youth without it.

The 'Young Thinker' initiative provides an opportunity for children and young people to express their views about societal issues that are of importance to them. While the children's and young people's views do not necessarily reflect those of the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner (PACYPC), they are used to inform the work of the PACYPC and provide the opportunity to gain important insights into the way that children and young people experience the world. I encourage you to consider how the views in this opinion piece may have relevance to your work, and to engage with children and young people as an important stakeholder group in the operation of your service.



Public Advocate and Children
and Young People Commissioner



ACT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION