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No reason to celebrate International Youth Day as government cuts vital support for young people

Young Australians have little to celebrate as the world marks International Youth Day, with youth advocates highlighting Federal Government cuts to funding for vital services and the removal of avenues allowing young people to have their voices heard in Canberra.

NSW's peak youth advocacy body Youth Action is urging members of the Abbott Government to make a fresh start on youth issues by committing to sit down and speak directly with a group of young people from around Australia.

Youth Action managing director Katie Acheson said that ahead of the election the Coalition had promised to prioritise youth issues, but since taking office it had removed avenues for hearing from young people, with no Minister for Youth Affairs and the axing of funding for the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition and the Australian Youth Forum.

"There are 4.3 million Australians between the ages of 12 and 25 that have little reason to celebrate today," Ms Acheson said.

"Since coming to office the Abbott Government has removed official channels that allowed politicians to hear directly from young people, and work with them to address the substantial challenges they face.

"Unemployment, homelessness, mental health, domestic and family violence are just some of the significant problems young Australians deal with every day, but with the removal of forums for young people to be heard, they have been excluded from efforts to deal with them."

Ms Acheson said young people from NSW would be travelling to Canberra, joining others from across Australia in an effort to take their message directly to the Federal Government.

Minister for Education and Training Christopher Pyne, Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training Scott Ryan have all been invited to meet with the youth representatives.

"The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, on behalf of peak youth organisations from around Australia, has invited key members of the government to make a fresh start on youth affairs by sitting down to hear from representatives from diverse communities across the country," Ms Acheson said.

"These young people have the ideas, passion and energy to deliver genuine solutions to challenges such as housing affordability and homelessness, unemployment, domestic and family violence, lack of access to apprenticeships and skills training, and alcohol and drug issues.

“But that can’t happen if the Abbott Government refuses to engage with them.

“With inequality worsening in Australia, the current generation of young people is likely to be the first to experience a lower standard of living than their parents.

“There simply aren’t enough quality jobs available for everyone who wants one, and the proposed response to youth unemployment has been punitive penalties rather than greater support.

“Involving young people in tackling the social problems they face not only shows them that they are valued by society, it actually gets better results while increasing social cohesion and economic prosperity.

“Young people want to help tackle these big challenges, but they can’t do that unless our political leaders are willing to listen to them and work together.”

Members of the Federal Government have been invited to meet with young people representing peak youth organisations on Wednesday 14 October 2015 at the Youth Coalition of the ACT office in Canberra.

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