

MEDIA RELEASE

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It's International Youth Day: time for the government to make a fresh start with young Australians

Australia's national, state and territory youth peak bodies have today written to the Federal Minister for Education and Training, Christopher Pyne, to voice grave concerns about the Australian Government's attitude towards young people.

Today, International Youth Day celebrates young people's involvement in decision-making. But the youth peaks have pointed out there's currently little for young Australians to cheer. Since coming to office, the Abbott government has:

- removed a Minister for Youth or dedicated youth portfolio;
- stopped funding the national youth peak body, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition;
- ended the Australian Youth Forum;
- cancelled the National Youth Awards;
- ended Commonwealth National Youth Week activities and will stop all National Youth Week funding in two years' time.

Moreover, the Abbott Government continues to pursue punitive plans to deny young people under 25 income support for four weeks. These unfairly harsh measures are likely to push more young people into hardship or homelessness.

Over a year ago, Senator Scott Ryan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training, said the Abbott government was planning a "focused and targeted approach" to consult with young people [1]. Such consultation hasn't yet happened. Recent cuts to the Department of Education and Training youth engagement budget show no money allocated for it to happen [2].

The youth peaks have asked Minister Pyne to make a fresh start with young Australians by beginning a process of meaningful youth consultation. The peaks have invited the Minister to meet with a group of young representatives in Canberra on Wednesday 14 October, to hear their ideas about how the government can better include and involve young people.

"Times are tough for young Australians. They're likely to be the first generation with lower standards of living than their parents," said youth peaks' spokesperson, Leo Fieldgrass. "There aren't enough jobs for everyone who wants one, but this government thinks it's OK for young people who are unemployed to go without food or rent for a month. Current policies are taking us on a dangerous path – they're excluding and alienating the generation we expect to support our ageing population. Politicians need to step up now and show young people that society values them."

"If young people feel heard by government it will be good for everyone," said Mr Fieldgrass. "Research shows that involving young people in policy-making increases social cohesion and economic prosperity. We know that young Australians have fresh ideas and energy to offer. Young people want to help tackle the social problems we face together."

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Background

- Australia's national, state and territory youth peak bodies represent over 4.3 million young people aged 12 to 25 and the hundreds of thousands of people and organisations that support them.
- Between them, the youth peaks have over 200 years' experience in consulting and meaningfully engaging with young people.
- [UNESCO International Youth Day 2015](#) asks "Member States and the general public to understand the needs of young people, to implement policies to help them overcome the challenges they face, and to encourage young people into the decision-making process".

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References

¹ Judith Ireland, '[Budget cuts force Australian Youth Affairs group to close](#)', Canberra Times, 20 May 2014.

² Federal Budget 2015-16: Portfolio Budget Statements 2015–16; [Budget Related Paper No. 1.5 Education and Training Portfolio](#), p. 35.