

Thursday 25 June, 2026

Federal Government Ends Funding for National Youth Peak Body, Undermining Youth Representation

In June, the Federal Government's Office for Youth ceased funding the **Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC)** – Australia's national peak body representing young people aged 12 to 26.

This decision comes despite the Albanese Government's early commitments to rebuilding youth engagement.

In its first term, the Labor Government appointed **Anne Aly** as Minister for Youth and re-established a youth steering committee, restoring formal youth consultation mechanisms dismantled in 2013 with the abolition of the Youth Advisory Council and the former Office for Youth. AYAC was also reinstated as the national youth peak body during this period.

Research shows young voters consistently identify **cost of living, housing, healthcare, education, job security, and economic inequality** as their most pressing concerns. The same report highlights low confidence among young people in the ability of major political parties to meaningfully address issues such as housing affordability and rising living costs.

Further analysis by **Monash University** finds that young Australians have historically had **limited or no opportunity** to engage with government in substantive ways. Current consultation practices are often **tokenistic**, functioning as "one-and-done" events that serve political optics rather than genuine youth influence over policy.

Some youth issues – such as cost-of-living pressures – shift with economic conditions, others, including **insecure employment and housing affordability**, are deeply entrenched. These require long-term, consistent engagement with young people, not piecemeal project-based initiatives.

Despite new investments in youth engagement elsewhere, AYAC remains the only national body providing **independent, ongoing, youth-led representation** beyond election cycles and short-term programs. Ending its funding risks leaving young Australians without a stable mechanism to ensure their voices shape the policies that affect them.

For perspective, there are 5 million young people in Australia and AYAC is the only organisation that ensures national representation and advocacy to this group. AYAC has more than 3,400 members and subscribers, and engages with thousands of young people annually through its consultation, engagement, research and advocacy work.

A **continuity of representation** is essential if Australia is to move beyond symbolic consultation and deliver genuine, sustained influence for young people in national decision-making.

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