




RIGHTS IN ACTION


A newsletter for kids in the ACT about your rights and wellbeing





What's new?

Feels funny answering the question of what's new this month...ummm, the Government for one thing! A lot has gone on in May, check out a few news items below:

 Australians voted and Labor won the election so now we have a new Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and lots of new people in parliament.

 On May 17, America's parliament (called Congress) held a public meeting about aliens and UFOs for the first time in 50 years! Senior people in their defence department talked about things flying through the sky that they could not identify. They didn't say they were aliens, but they don't know what they are. What do you think?

 A 19 year old, Gabby Kanizay, has become the youngest Australian to climb Mt Everest, the highest mountain in the world. It took years of training and the trek, which she did with her mother, took 6 weeks.

 This month McDonald's announced it would close all its restaurants in Russia and sell them to protest the war with Ukraine. They had stopped operating when the war began, but have now decided they will close them permanently.

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- HAVE YOUR SAY ON RACISM



Hi everyone, welcome to the May edition of our **Rights in ACTION** newsletter!

In this edition, we are focused on your democratic rights. Did you know some people want to lower the voting age in Australia? And in some other countries, 16 year olds can already vote. We explore some voting rights, as well as find out more about the all important democracy sausage!

Also, one of my young friends has just done her rostrum talk on squirrels and has designed a page of facts for this newsletter. Check it out on page 4 and feel free to send us your own animal facts.

There is also a reminder that we are talking to children and young people about racism. You can join the conversation through our Young Thinker Forum and find out more on page 5.

We are currently planning for the next 6 months of newsletters. What would you like us to look at? Do you have questions, or topics you want to hear more about? Would you like to contribute to the newsletter? We'd love you to hear from you!

Jodie



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VOTING



Voting rights around the world

Did you know the voting booth is an Australian invention? It allowed for voting to be done in private and since being introduced in Australia has spread through other democratic nations. Check out the map below to see what other traditions we share.



Burkina Faso

- Had their first democratic election in 2015 after years of dictatorship
- There is a lack of women in parliament but young women are more becoming politically active
- You must be 18 to vote



Austria

- You can vote from 16 years old
- First country in the European union to lower the voting age



Saudi Arabia

- In 2015 women got the vote for the first time
- After that women gained other rights, like being able to drive and get a passport without a male relative
- Must be 18



United Arab Emirates

- The only country that requires all voters to be 25 years old



Brazil

- You can vote from the age of 16
- Voting is compulsory
- People who can't read can still vote, they use a finger print to sign that they have voted



India

- The world's largest democracy, with 800 million voters
- Must be 18 to vote
- Voters get an ink mark on their finger after voting so they can't vote twice



Indonesia

- You can vote from age 17
- To vote, you punch a nail through the paper, instead of marking a box
- 193 million people voted in the 2019 election
- It's not compulsory but there is a holiday on election day to encourage people to vote.



Bolivia

- Voting is compulsory
- If you don't vote, you can be fined
- They have 2 voting ages - if you are married you can vote at 18 but if single you wait until 21

Should we lower the voting age?

Almost 50 years ago, the voting age in Australia was lowered from 21 to 18. The new voters were different from their parents. The invention of the portable radio meant they were able to listen to music their parents didn't listen to and the strong economy meant they were getting jobs and had their own money. Then TVs arrived and young people were able to learn about the world in a way no other generation had before.

The voting age was lowered because people said young Australians were better informed, better able to judge, more confident and more mature than generations before ([Museum of Australian Democracy](#)).

People are calling for the age to be lowered again, from 18 to 16 years old. In many ways, this generation of teenagers are also more connected to the world than other generations were at the same age, so the arguments to lower the age are similar to the ones used in the past. But not everyone agrees.

Here are some of the reasons people are either **for** the age to be lowered, or **against** it. But what do you think? Can you think of other arguments for or against lower the voting age?

✓ For

✓ You can join the defence force at 16 and be charged with crimes at a much earlier age, so you should be allowed to vote

✓ Young people are already politically active and aware of community issues.

✓ Lots of other countries have lower voting ages, for example Austria, Brazil, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, and Israel

✓ Research says if you start voting at 16 or 17, you're more likely to keep doing it than if you start at 18-20 years old.

✗ Against

✗ In Australia you can be fined if you do not vote. Fining 16 and 17 year olds for this is not fair.

✗ 16 and 17 year olds lack the experience and knowledge to vote.

✗ The area of the brain that helps us make difficult decisions is still developing and changing at those ages.

✗ There are low rates of young people over 18 who turn up to vote even though they can.

VOTE

The history of the democracy sausage

In early Australian elections, people trying to get elected would give out food and drinks to get people to vote for them! Rival parties would chant and sometimes even fight. So bribing people with food and drink was banned and elections made more orderly.

Food was reintroduced sometime in the 1920s when refreshments were sold as a way of fundraising for charities, rather than bribing voters. Cakes, jams and slices were sold at stalls until the invention of the portable BBQ in the 1980s added sausages to the mix!

The term 'democracy sausage' started being used in 2010. The election day sausage sizzle is now seen as a celebration of Aussie democracy, a fun way to encourage voter participation, and a great way to fundraise. Many election day sizzles now include vegan and halal options, reflecting the diversity of voters.

[Democracysausage.org](#) estimated 2305 polling stations had sausage sizzles this year.

Made by  age 9

Squirrels!

I'm Cute!



Squirrels do 4 key things to make sure they always land on their feet.

1. They point their head towards the place they will land
2. Next, they flatten their body like a parachute
3. They also pull their arms and legs in to rotate faster and out to rotate slower
4. Lastly, they pull their legs straight right before they land

Squirrels are
AWESOME!

Squirrels live in almost every type of landscape from the hot sunny deserts to the cold snowy mountains.



Squirrels have cheek pouches in their mouths to store nuts in.



Squirrels bury nuts to eat later



THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE COMMISSIONER IS

LISTENING!

Share your thoughts on racism

This year we are partnering with Curijo and the Multicultural Hub to talk to children and young people in the ACT about their views on and experiences of racism.

It can be difficult to talk about racism, but silence allows it to keep happening so it's really important for us to create safe spaces to discuss the impact racism has, and ways to address it.

How can you take part?

You can send us an email, PM us on Insta, or use our Young Thinker Forum to tell us what you want us to know.



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Young Thinker Forum
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LET US KNOW:

- What do adults need to know about racism in the ACT?
- What is working and what is not working to reduce racism in the ACT?
- What is needed for our community to be free from racism?



CHILDREN & YOUNG
PEOPLE COMMISSIONER
ACT Human Rights Commission

