

RIGHTS IN ACTION

A newsletter for ACT children and young people about their rights and wellbeing



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Your right to privacy

Meet Bo and check out his website!

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CYPC Annual Report

What's new?

- Have your say! The Listening Tour is happening now. You can draw or write your ideas then send them to me at actkids@act.gov.au. Check out page 4.

Did you know...

- Humans have unique tongue prints? Imagine unlocking your device with your tongue instead of your finger!
- Tristan Da Cunha in the South Atlantic Ocean is the most remote place on earth that people live in (just in case you are looking for somewhere private!)

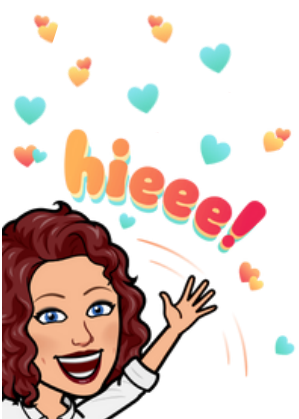
Yuma! Welcome to November Rights in ACTion! This month is about your right to privacy. People must respect your privacy. The government has laws in place to make sure your privacy is protected. Learn more on page 2.

I have been travelling around Canberra speaking to kids, teens, and young people about what I should focus on next year. I would love to hear from you too. If you would like to tell me your ideas, you can learn how on pages 3 and 4.

You can also find out more about what I have been working on this year in our Annual Report summary on page 5.

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Jodie



Privacy



You have the right to privacy. The government must protect your privacy, family, home, communications, and your reputation (the opinion others have of you).

Article (16) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Having privacy means you are not being inappropriately observed or monitored by other people. You have the right to privacy in your daily life, but it is important that your right to privacy is balanced by your right to be safe.








Having privacy helps you:

- explore different ideas and interests,
- process information or feelings in your own way,
- develop your personal identity, and
- choose what information you share about yourself.

Your right to privacy applies to both physical and online spaces. Privacy laws in Australia and the ACT Human Rights Act protect your privacy whatever your age.

This means that government, organisations, and businesses are not allowed to share your personal information without asking you first, unless there is a legal reason to do so, like if you are not safe.

You can also protect your own privacy online. Here are some tips from [esafety.com.au](https://www.esafety.com.au) on how to do this:

-  Pick strong passwords or use a passphrase: Strong passwords are long and hard to guess. A passphrase is a short sentence that uses numbers or punctuation marks to replace letters like: A(Tk1d5Rthe8e5T!
-  Never give your password to anyone except your parent or guardian.
-  Don't write your passwords down or keep them on your device.
-  Ask your parent or guardian if you need help.
-  Do not use your device alone in your bedroom, or bathroom.
-  Do not use unknown or free WIFI connections.
-  Do not open emails, or click on links, unless you know the sender.

Check out Environment for Kids!

Our friends at the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment know you have the right to local environmental information.

They have two special websites, one for primary school students, and one for high school students. The new websites are designed for Years 4-6 and Years 7-10. They have experiments, games, stories, teacher resources, and much more!

Topics include:

- Climate change in the ACT
- Canberra's urban trees
- Rivers, lakes, and wetlands
- Ngunnawal Country
- Community leadership
- Bushfires in the ACT
- Canberra's growing urban area
- Circular economy and waste
- Human settlements
- Air pollution
- Biodiversity



This is Bo...Bogong, who can show you around the new websites!

Check out
Environment for Kids
here:
www.environmentforkids.com.au

Check out
Environment for
Youth here:
www.environmentforyouth.com.au

Universal Children's Day

Universal Children's Day is celebrated every year on 20 November. This is the same day that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted 35 years ago in 1989.

Universal Children's Day promotes awareness of children's rights and encourages adults throughout the community to respect and protect them.

This Universal Children's Day we want to hear from you!

Tell me what I should be doing to protect your rights in the ACT and what would make the ACT better for you! You can email me or upload your ideas to the Young Thinker Forum. We will use your ideas to guide our work throughout 2025.

Oooo, great idea!



actkids@act.gov.au



hrc.act.gov.au/utf

I want to listen to you!

I have had so much fun on my Listening Tour, hearing from children and young people across Canberra about what I should be working on next year. I have heard so many amazing ideas.

I do not want to stop listening, so you can still book a **listening session** in 2025!

Have your say

If you would like me to come to your school or club, you can email me at actkids@act.gov.au or ask your teacher or another adult to email.

Have your say!

Listening sessions start with an interactive human rights workshop, then some activities to help you consider the issues I should work on to make Canberra a better place to live. We can tailor the session to suit your year level and school timetable!

Book your session today!

 actkids@act.gov.au  02 6205 2222  actkids.act.gov.au

Would you rather share your idea privately?

You can write or draw your idea here, take a screenshot and email it to me at actkids@act.gov.au.





Yuma!

I am Jodie Griffiths-Cook, **your** Children and Young People Commissioner. My job is to help make the ACT a better place for children and young people to live. To do this, I:

1. Listen to you so your views are heard by people who make decisions that affect you.
2. Make sure your rights are considered in new laws and policies.
3. Work with services for children and young people to help them improve how they work.

My job is about upholding the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people in the ACT, so it is important for me to let you know about some of the things I have been doing.

1. Listening

You can contact me to raise issues and ideas you have. I try to create opportunities to listen to you, because your rights are the focus of my work.

Consultations

Every year we listen to you about issues that matter to children and young people in the ACT. This year we asked:

- If the ACT has enough accessible places to play and hang out,
- What you think about the National Autism Strategy, and
- How you like to learn about human rights - this helped us design easy to understand resources and an animation that explain the ACT Human Rights Act.

Young Thinkers

Young Thinkers at Work is a work experience program for students in years 9 to 12. In 2024, we hosted 6 Young Thinkers at Work this past year.

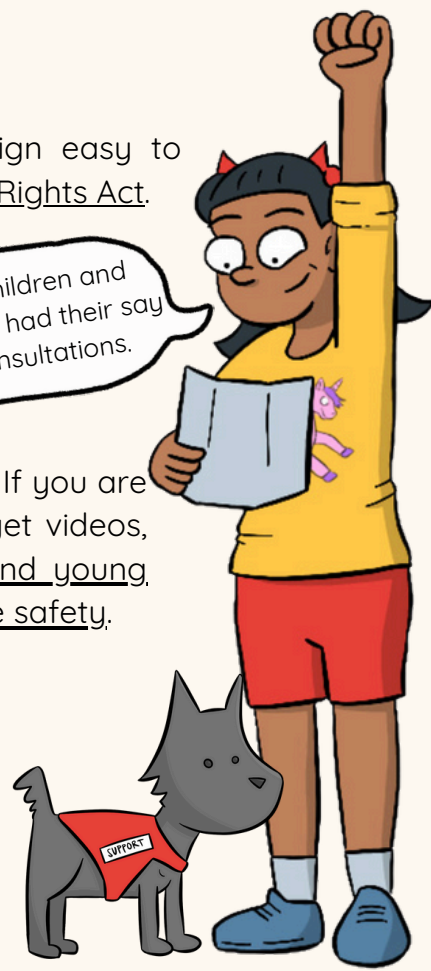
The Young Thinker Forum is for children and young people of any age. If you are passionate about an issue, you can tell us in any way you want. We get videos, essays, posters, and artwork! This year, topics covered by children and young people included mental health, discrimination, gender equality, and online safety.



Over 800 children and young people had their say in these consultations.

Youth Advisor

Throughout the past year, I had 3 Youth Advisors! This paid position gives a young person who has left school and might be at Uni or TAFE, some experience in the workplace. They inform me about issues young people face in Canberra and help influence our work.




2. Laws and policies

Part of my job is to review laws and policies to make sure they support your rights. I get to look at new laws, changes being made to laws, and government policies before they are made final. Some of the laws and policies we advised the Government about this year include:

Corporal Punishment

I have been working with other organisations to get a law that makes physical punishment of children illegal. At the moment it is illegal to physically punish children and young people in schools, but the law does not say that it is illegal in peoples' homes. Physical punishment is against children's rights so should be banned everywhere.



The ACT is the first place in Australia to raise the age at you can be charged with a crime to 14!

Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility

In 2023, the age a child could be charged with a crime was lifted from 10 to 12 years old. In 2025 it will be raised again to 14. I helped make these changes happen and continue to advise the government about how to improve the support children and young people get when they behave in ways that are a risk to themselves or others.

Read the [child friendly report on racism in the ACT](#).

Stopping Racism in the ACT

In early 2023, I released a [report about children and young people's experiences of racism in the ACT](#). The report had recommendations to stop racism and to support people experiencing it. Since then, we have worked with other organisations and government directorates to put the recommendations into action to make the ACT safer and more inclusive.



STOP
RACISM

3. Improving services

The ACT has new laws about what services that work with you have to do to be 'child safe'. You have the right to be protected from harm, and adults must:

- Listen when you tell them about things that worry you or make you feel unsafe,
- Think about what needs to happen to keep you safe,
- Tell you what they will do, and
- Do what they say they will do.

We are designing resources and training to make sure services know how to be safer for you!

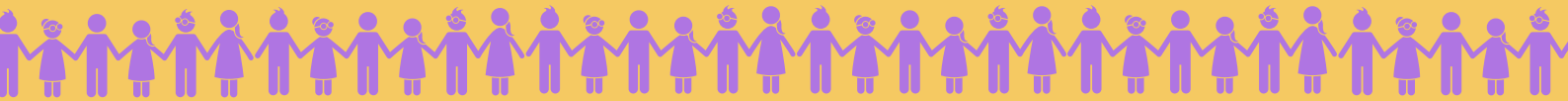


Click on the poster above to learn more about the Child Safe Standards.



Hi again!

As well as being ACT Children and Young People Commissioner, I am also the Public Advocate (PA). This means I am responsible for protecting the rights of people who are vulnerable to abuse or neglect because of their situation. This includes children and young people in mental health facilities, out-of-home care, or in custody.



In 2023-24, I was told about children and young people whose rights might be at risk. 290 of those children and young people required individual support for things like:



Supporting children and young people to participate and understand legal processes they are involved in.



Supporting young people to make complaints about their treatment in youth detention.



Pushing for police and care services to work together to stop children and young people from being exploited.



Making sure young people in out-of-home care get enough support and planning for when they leave care.



Responding to concerns about the standard of care children and young people had in out-of-home care.



Pushing for support, care, and planning for young people being released from mental health hospital care.



Case study: Participation in court

16-year-old Jayden had to go to court because another person had asked for a Personal Protection Order against Jayden.

Jayden and their parent accepted the order but were very worried about going to court. My team asked the court if they could attend another way. The Magistrate agreed to let Jayden and their parent attend court by telephone.

Jayden's fear of going to court could have made the process a lot longer, because Magistrates do not like making protection orders without being sure young people fully understand their effect and consequences.

Attending by phone meant there was no delay and Jayden felt supported.



Monitoring services

If you are concerned that a service you are involved with is not looking after your rights, and keeping you safe and well, you can call us and ask to speak to an Advocate.

As PA, I monitor services for children and young people and speak up when I think more needs to be done to make their lives better. This role is written into law, so services (including the government) must give me information so I can check that they are supporting the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people.

We review the information we receive and if we are concerned that the rights, safety, or wellbeing are not being well supported, we ask why not.

Bimberi Youth Justice

We visited Bimberi **28** times and responded to **119** issues that young people raised with us. We also looked at CCTV recordings to check how staff interacted with young people.

On **29** times, a young person was isolated from other young people. 69% of these were for health reasons.

There were **12** lockdowns, when young people could not leave their rooms for long periods.

Force was used on young people **99** times. That is 48% less than last year.

15 strip searches occurred but no banned items were found. This was 5 more searches than last year, and I have asked for other ways of searching to be considered.

243 timeouts were used. This was 34% less than last year.

Child Protection

We advocated for **217** children and young people and took over 3,000 actions to try to make things better for them.

93 children and young people were removed from their families. This is 26% more than last year.

We reviewed **32** allegations of abuse that were made about children and young people in out-of-home care.

I made **22** formal requests for information from welfare agencies asking about what was being done to improve the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people in out-of-home care.

Protection matters

We reviewed **52** referrals for **48** young people who were involved in protection matters.

Mental Health

As PA, my team and I reviewed **241** mental health documents for children and young people.

This includes documentation about things like involuntary detention, restraint, seclusion, forcible giving of medication, applications for psychiatric assessments and mental health orders, and documents related to mental health treatment plans.

I was told that **67** young people required involuntary mental health care.

13% of them were young people in out-of-home care.

Restrictive practices

We reviewed **22** positive behaviour support plans for children and young people.

Why do we record this information?

Knowing how many times these different things happen, helps my team and I work out what needs to change in these services. I can then ask for changes so that children and young people in these services are better protected and their rights are upheld.

Because **every** child and young person matters.

You matter!

