

RIGHTS IN ACTION

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



As adults, it is
our job to listen!

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What's new?

- The Canberra Balloon Spectacular festival will run from 14 March to 22 March 2026. This is Australia's longest running hot air balloon festival. This year, there is a special guest: a turtle-shaped balloon called Finley the Turtle will be flying in Australia for the first time!

Did you know...

- Around 16,000 people use Australian Sign Language at home.
- When we are asleep, our ears can still hear everything, that is why people usually like sleeping in a quiet space.

Yuma! Welcome to our first 2026 edition of Rights in ACTION. This month we focus on the responsibility adults have to listen to you. This is an important part of making sure your right to have a say is protected. When we talk about listening, we mean any action that means your views are taken seriously, in whatever form they are communicated – whether it be through art, AusLan, written, or spoken. Whatever way you have your say, adults should pay attention.

We also have some listening themed activities and information to share, including what we learned from last year's Listening Tour.

We hope this edition reminds you that your words matter, and your views count!



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Jodie



We have a responsibility to listen

You have the right to have a say about decisions that affect you, and to be listened to. Your opinions should be considered when decisions are made.

Article 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child.

You have the right to have a say about decisions that affect you. But you cannot meaningfully have a say unless adults truly listen. Listening includes asking for your opinions, taking them seriously, and involving you in decisions that affect you, so your ideas help shape what happens next.

It does not mean that you will always get your way, but it does mean that your views should be considered and the reasons decisions are made should be explained.

Children and young people often tell us that adults do not listen enough. That can feel frustrating or unfair and needs to change. All adults have a responsibility to listen, so that your rights are respected.

We also have the responsibility to make sure there are a range of ways for you to have a say. If we only listen to speeches, or only consider ideas if they are written down, that means some children and young people will find it harder to have their say. Adults need to make sure there are a range of ways for you to share your ideas and views - ways that work for your age, abilities, and situation. You should also get support to have your say if you need it, and enough information so you understand what you are being asked.

Jodie, our Children and Young People Commissioner, has a job that focuses on listening to you and speaking up for you. Here are some of the ways Jodie listens to you, shares what you have to say, and helps grown-ups improve how they listen.



Listen to us... Don't dismiss us! Five tips for adults

Check out our YouTube video that shares practical advice for grown-ups on how to listen better to children and young people. What advice would you give to adults? Watch now: youtube.com/watch?v=_79RHfE6mQs



Young Thinker Forum (YTF)

YTF is for you to have your say about topics you care about, in ways that suit you. Write to us or create an artwork or cartoon, submit a video/ audio recording, or send us a poem or song. You can do this on your own or with your friends. Just upload your creation: hrc.act.gov.au/ytf



Child rights workshops

We can come to your school or club to run a fun, interactive workshop about your rights. In these sessions, we give you time to tell us about ways to make the ACT a better place for you to grow up. You can find out more or get an adult to book a workshop by emailing actkids@act.gov.au.



What kids want adults to do

At the end of 2025, Jodie toured some schools, early learning services, and organisations to hear from children and young people. She asked what adults can do to make the ACT a better place for you to grow up. Here are some of the things you asked us to do...



1. Listen to us and take us seriously

- Hear what we say and believe us, listen when we say we are sad, worried, or afraid.
- Ask for our ideas when making rules or decisions.
- Show us how our ideas helped make things better.

2. Keep us safe from harm

- Stop bullying quickly and fairly.
- Make it easy for us to tell someone when we feel unsafe.
- Teach us about healthy friendships, consent, and staying safe online.
- Make sure we can ask for help without getting in trouble.

3. Give us more places to play, explore and have fun

- Make fun and accessible places all kids can use, like parks and playgrounds.
- Protect nature - trees, birds, animals, and clean water.

4. Make school a better and fairer place

- Give schools more teachers and helpers.
- Teach us things like AUSLAN, first aid, and real-life skills.
- Have later start times or shorter weeks, so we have more time to rest and play.

5. Help us be safe online without taking away our rights

- Teach us how to use the internet safely. Make rules with us, not for us.
- Protect our privacy and don't make us give away our faces or ID.
- Remember that online spaces help many kids feel less alone.

6. Support our families

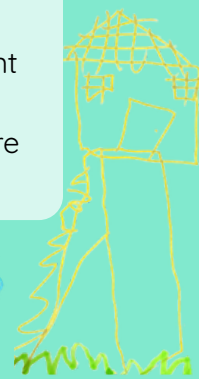
- Help families spend more time together.
- Make sure kids who cannot live at home have safe places to stay.
- Improve buses and school transport.
- Make things more affordable so families do not struggle.

7. Protect our environment

- Take action on climate change.
- Keep oceans, rivers, and parks clean.
- Support kid-led ideas to help the planet.

6. Make sure every child feels included

- Treat all kids fairly.
- Make schools and services welcoming for LGBTQIA+ kids, disabled kids, and kids from all cultures.
- Use lessons that show lots of different kinds of people and families.
- Ensure the ACT and all its services are accessible and safe.



Fun listening ideas

Listening walk

Go for a walk and count all the different sounds you can hear. How many did you notice?



Create a playlist

Music can be used to protest and raise awareness about issues. Create your own playlist about an issue you are passionate about.



Forbidden word

With a friend pick a word you both use a lot. For the next hour talk but try not to say it. The first person to use it, loses.

“like”

Learn Auslan

Learn sign language, and help create a more inclusive world! You can download the app or explore the dictionary online: auslanwiz.com.au



Storytime

In a group, one person starts a story, then you each take a turn to continue it a sentence at a time. This is fun to do out loud or you can write it down.



The power of your words

Quotes are when we repeat or write someone’s exact words. For example, you might quote famous people you admire. We often quote children and young people! For this activity, think of something that matters to you, then write your own quote – one sentence that shares what you think is important. We would love to see your quote. If you want to share it, you can submit it to our Young Thinker Forum at: hrc.act.gov.au/ytf or email it to actkids@act.gov.au



“

IMPORTANT!

REMEMBER! →



”



Your
VOICE
MATTERS

Dates to look out for this March

2026		FEBRUARY					
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	

Clean up Australia Day - 1 March



Clean Up Australia Day is when people work together to look after our environment. It began when a sailor named Ian Kiernan wanted to clean up rubbish in Sydney Harbour. His idea was a big success, and 40,000 people came to help in the first year!

Today, millions of volunteers all over Australia help clean up our land and oceans. Why not find some friends and join in the cleanup?



Neurodiversity Celebration Week - 16 to 20 March

Every March, Neurodiversity Week celebrates the amazing skills and talents of people who think and learn in different ways. It helps us learn how to be kinder and more inclusive, and to celebrate what makes everyone unique.

Why not use this week to learn more about neurodiversity? You can see some educational videos at neurodiversityweek.com/videos.



National Close the Gap Day - 19 March



Everyone has the right to good health care, but sometimes it is harder for some people to get the help they need. Research shows that First Nations peoples often have poorer health than other Australians. National Close the Gap Day is about fixing this and making sure everyone in Australia can be healthy and access good health care.

Why not celebrate by getting creative about why good healthcare for everyone matters? Make a poster, picture or poem and share it on our young thinker forum: tinyurl.com/53kt6wkt.



International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - 21 March

This day is all about stopping racism. We know from listening to you that this is an issue many of you want grown-ups to talk about more. One young person told us in our racism consultation, "We want adults to listen and do something about it".

These conversations should happen all year but this day is a good way to raise awareness.

