

What you did what?

**How young Territorians
can make things happen
in the community**



Northern Territory Government

This publication was written by the Office of Youth Affairs in the Department of the Chief Minister in partnership with young people.

The Round Table of Young Territorians has brought advice and expertise to the development of the project. Particular thanks go to Jarrad Newman, Felix Allsop and Catherine Murray from the Participation Team of the 2005 Youth Round Table. Their research and recommendations have been invaluable in shaping the direction of the project.

The Office of Youth Affairs would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the South Australian and Victorian governments in allowing the use of some concepts from their youth participation handbooks.

© Copyright Northern Territory Government 2007

This publication is available at www.youth.nt.gov.au

Please contact the Office of Youth Affairs for more information and advice on putting forward your point of view.

GPO Box 4396
DARWIN NT 0801

Freecall: 1800 652 736
Email: oya@nt.gov.au

ISBN 978-0-9803874-2-1

you did what?

Minister's Message

The Northern Territory Government wants you to be actively involved in the decisions and outcomes that affect you and your community. It appreciates and respects what you have to say.

As a young Territorian, you have a right to put forward your concerns, your ideas, your beliefs and your hopes. Your experiences bring valuable and diverse perspectives to what it's like to be a young person living in the Territory.

By getting active and participating you are not only making our community a better place, you are taking some control of your future.

Simply put, you are helping to shape a future that meets your needs as a young person. And there is a great deal of satisfaction that comes from making a difference.

I hope this handbook is something you find useful in turning your ideas into reality.

Marion Scrymgour MLA
Minister for Young Territorians

“Wanting to create change and make a difference in our community can be challenging regardless of our age.

For young Territorians, the challenges may be in not knowing how to get your views on the agenda or your voice heard.”

Marion Scrymgour MLA



you did what?

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Our vision for young Territorians	5
The role of the Office of Youth Affairs	5
Having a say is important	6
About this handbook	6

GETTING STARTED

Think about how you would like to be involved	7
Getting down to business	7
Formal and informal ways to take action	8
Our political system	8
Australian Government	8
State and territory governments	8
Local government	8
Community sector	9
Examples of who does what	9

TAKING ACTION

How do I take action?	11
Discovery action	12
Find out what others are doing	12

Attend a public meeting or forum	12
Read a range of material	12
Subscribe to publications	12
Creative action	13
Hold creative and peaceful demonstrations	13
Chalking	13
Theatre	13
Visual arts	13
Vocal action	14
Write a letter to a politician	14
Write a media release	15
Write a letter to the editor	15
Make a phone call or organise a meeting	15
Write an email	15
Get involved in community radio	15
Group action	16
Organise a petition	16
Hold an information stall	17
Do a letterbox drop	17
Form an action group	17
Work together on a funded youth project that contributes to decision making	18

Interactive action	19
At the national level	19
At the Territory level	19
At the local government level	20
At the community level	20
Volunteer your time	21
Become a board or committee member	22

THIS IS THE BEGINNING

23

you did what?

INTRODUCTION

Our vision for young Territorians

The Northern Territory Government's vision is for an open-minded and freethinking Territory.

The Government recognises the importance of taking into account and respecting young people's views. Without the input of young Territorians into issues that affect them now or in the future, we are unable to create effective policies, programs and services that meet their needs.

We recognise that young people have a valuable and significant contribution to make. Young people's opinions and ideas count.

Government's vision is for a Territory that:

- actively supports and cares for young people
- celebrates and embraces young people's diversity
- encourages young people to speak out
- really listens to what young people have to say, and
- takes action on what they have to say.

Young people want to make their views known and heard, and we want a community that values and respects what they have to offer.

To deliver on this vision, it is essential that young people have the opportunity to participate in decisions that determine their future. This handbook is one way in which we are working towards realising our vision.

We are aware that structured youth participation avenues such as youth groups and public forums are not always the way young people would get involved. We also recognise that some young people need extra support to become involved.

This handbook offers young people useful tools and tips to encourage their participation.

The role of the Office of Youth Affairs

The Office of Youth Affairs is part of the Northern Territory Government's Department of the Chief Minister. It is the key agency for leading and driving government's agenda for Territorians aged 12 to 25 years.

The office is responsible for policy advice, research and strategic planning in relation to government's policy priorities for young Territorians.

The office aims to respond to challenges facing young Territorians by working in partnership with all levels of government, the community and private sectors and young people themselves.

The office is also responsible for providing a range of options by which young people's opinions can reach and be considered by government.

Through its grants program, the office supports initiatives that provide positive recreational and developmental opportunities for young Territorians.

Young people are encouraged to contact the office for information and advice on taking action on issues that matter to them. The Territory's youth website www.youth.nt.gov.au also provides a range of information on youth participation pathways.

you did what?

INTRODUCTION

Having a say is important

Creating change and making a difference, no matter how small, has so many positive spin-offs for you and your community.

You need to take control of your future.

Everyone has a basic right to have a say in decisions that affect our lives. It's really important that you as a young person have equal access to decision-making processes.

Young Territorians are a diverse bunch and everyone's lives are enriched because of this. We have a large number of Indigenous young people that live in remote parts of the Territory and young people from many different cultures.

So everyone has a different perspective to offer.

It's this diversity that makes the Territory unique and contributes to better quality decisions.

By getting active on issues that concern you, you are joining other young people around the Territory who are prepared to make a real difference too!

About this handbook

This handbook is all about giving you the knowledge on ways to take action on issues that matter to you and your community.

If you feel strongly about an issue but don't know where to start, this handbook gives you practical information on different ways to have a say or to get your point of view across.

For example, if you're interested in lobbying for more concerts or in having a shade structure erected over a skate park, then this handbook will guide you on the many ways to take action.

And remember – more information on ways you can be involved and have a say is available from the Office of Youth Affairs.



“When a person or group works to create change and speaks out it helps the broader community to understand the issues.”

Alice, 18, Palmerston

you did what?

GETTING STARTED

Think about how you would like to be involved

There are many ways you can be involved in creating change. You just need to find one that suits you and your lifestyle.

Things for you to think about when deciding what the best approach is include:

- With all my other commitments, how much time do I realistically have to spend on this involvement?
- How do I communicate best? Is it in writing, participating in a forum, having a face-to-face meeting or joining a web chat room.
- What are my special skills and areas of interest?

Many young people have skills that they are not aware of. It's important that you know these skills and never think of them as being trivial. For example, you may feel at home using the web so you could think about setting up an email network, join a chat room or even start up an email petition.

You will have preferences on how you would like to be involved.

The type and level of involvement you choose may also depend on where you live in the Territory, your culture and beliefs and where you're at in your life.

Getting down to business

Now that you have thought about your skills and preferences for involvement, it's time to think about different ways that change can be created.

- Change can be created by **doing it yourself**, for example: writing a letter to a politician, raising an issue with your school principal or simply expressing your own opinion among your friends.
- Change can be created by **asking someone else to take action**, for example: students asking their student representative council for more dance parties, more sports equipment or more outdoor breaks.

- Change can be created by **working together with groups or organisations**, for example: a youth advisory group working with the local council to design a skate park or working with government to develop a specific youth program.

We talk a lot about creating change by taking action. It is worth remembering that any action you take – no matter how small – can make a positive difference to your life and others.

After all, change has to start somewhere!

you did what?

GETTING STARTED

Formal and informal ways to take action

There are many ways that you can contribute to change. It will always involve some **type of action** on your part.

Some ways are formal and also focus on enhancing your skills, for example: youth advisory bodies, youth parliament, student councils, professional bodies and advocacy groups.

Some ways are very informal and unstructured, for example: contributing to an on-line discussion group on the web, putting up posters, writing a media release or simply encouraging your school to recycle to contribute to environmental change.

Before you can take action on an issue you think is important, you need to work out whether it's a national issue, a Territory issue, a local government issue, or for that matter, an issue your community or neighbourhood can take up by itself.

Let's take a look at who does what.

Our political system

Politically, Australia is organised into three levels of government: Commonwealth Government (the Australian Government), state and territory government (the Northern Territory Government) and local government (the Darwin City Council, the Alice Springs Town Council, the Palmerston City Council and so on).

The non-government sector (better known in the Territory as the community sector) also plays an important part in decision-making and providing services and programs to Territorians.

There is some overlap between the three levels of government and the community sector but on the whole they look like this:

Australian Government

On the first level, the **Australian Government** makes laws and decisions that impact on the entire country about things like national security, defence, immigration and customs, foreign affairs and trade, currency, airports, quarantine and welfare payments through Centrelink.

State and territory governments

On the second level are the state and territory governments. The **Northern Territory Government** is responsible for matters which include public health, schools, roads, power, water and police, fire and ambulance services. The Northern Territory Government also makes laws which only have an impact on the Territory.

Local government

On the third level is local government. The **Darwin City Council** and other municipal councils in the Territory take care of issues in your local area. Local government responsibilities typically include community recreational facilities like parks, playgrounds and skate parks, rubbish disposal, some town planning and libraries. Local government is more focused on the concerns of their local members and committees, so it's often a good place to start your involvement.

you did what?

GETTING STARTED

Community sector

- The community sector is generally independent from government although they do receive funding and grants from government to provide services and programs.

Community sector organisations are driven by people with a common interest to help individuals and families that may be disadvantaged and need support. They perform a variety of compassionate and charitable functions, for example: they advocate on behalf of their clients, they monitor government policies to assess the impact on various groups and many offer a range of support programs and services.

Many of you will be familiar with the Territory's community sector through organisations like the Alice Springs Youth Accommodation and Support Services, Australian Red Cross, Danila Dilba Health Service, Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Anglicare and Mission Australia.

Examples of who does what

The following are scenarios of who does what in government and what type of action young people can take. The scenarios are fictitious but are based on real issues that have been raised through the Office of Youth Affairs.

Scenario 1 Lowering the voting age to 16

Students from Casuarina Senior College were discussing the voting age. The group believed strongly that the legal voting age for Australian citizens should be 16. They were interested in finding out whether other young Territorians felt the same way. They conducted a focus group in their school community and there was general consensus for reducing the voting age to 16, although some young people were of the view that it shouldn't be compulsory at that age.

The issue is the responsibility of the **Australian Government**. The voting age for Australian citizens is currently 18 years and is compulsory. Because this is an Australia-wide issue, all Australian states and territories must agree to lowering the voting age before legislative changes can be made.

Students could write to the Prime Minister of Australia with their concerns. They could also organise a petition and seek signatures from other supporters.

Scenario 2 Middle years schooling

Some students in Year 9 did not fully understand the Northern Territory Government's introduction and implementation of middle years schooling. They were unsure how it would affect them and why the change to a new system of schooling was needed.

The **Northern Territory Government** is responsible for education and schools in the Territory.

A good place for students to start would be a teacher or principal. Or they could contact the Northern Territory Government minister responsible for education. Information on middle schooling would also be available from the Department of Employment, Education and Training's website.

you did what?

GETTING STARTED

Scenario 3 Shade at the skate park

Lachlan and Fletcher from Nightcliff were keen skateboarders and regularly used the skate park at the Water Gardens Regional Playground in Jingili. The skate park was a great facility but there was no shade. The boys and their friends couldn't use the skate park during the heat of the day.

The **Darwin City Council** is responsible for the facilities at the recreational park. Lachlan and Fletcher could write to the council with their suggestion to provide shade.

They could also contact their elected Legislative Assembly Member for Nightcliff (known as an MLA) who can lobby for improvements to the facilities on their behalf.

Scenario 4 Youth environmental action group

Junior rangers participating in the Territory's Junior Ranger Program wanted to do more. They wanted to raise awareness in the community on the benefits of reducing household energy and greenhouse gas emissions. They were very passionate about preserving their Territory and bigger global issues and wanted to form their own youth environmental action group.

The environment is **everyone's responsibility** and the responsibility of all levels of government and the corporate and community sectors.

The Junior Ranger Program is a good place to learn about the Territory's natural and cultural environment. They could also find out what other environmental action groups exist. A good starting place is to make contact with community groups like the Territory's Environment Centre or COOLmob.



“ Youth participation is about believing that your ideas are good, that people need to hear them and that things might get better if people listened to you! ”

Anika, 17, Alice Springs

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

How do I take action?

If you've got something to say about your part of the Territory, this section will suggest ways to get your voice heard.

It will give you the tools and know how to turn your ideas into action and maximise your influence to create positive change in your community.

Taking action has been categorised under five key themes:

- Discovery action
- Creative action
- Vocal action
- Group action
- Interactive action

“

I believe the ability for young people to be able to speak their mind is of immeasurable importance. For the youth of today to be able to shape the world of tomorrow we must be able to extend our views to those people in power. Democracy gives us the power to be not only right but also wrong. It is this privilege that teaches us the difference between when to speak and when to listen.

”

Nathan, 21, Nhulunbuy



you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Discovery action

Becoming informed about an issue of concern is a great tool for creating change. It is essential to undertake some research.

Knowledge is the basis from which we can act. Read and listen to a range of arguments and opinions of others. You don't have to agree with all opinions, but understanding an opinion you don't agree with helps you to argue against it.

Being informed about why the issue is important, whom it affects and how, helps you take responsible action. Sometimes by trying to take action without knowing the facts, we can do more harm than good.

Taking the time to reflect on the impact of your action is also a great way to make sure that you're on track and fully understand the action's effects.

Find out what others are doing

Find out what other people, organisations or governments are doing about the issue. You can learn about an issue simply by talking with the right people. This way, you are tapping into knowledge that is factual and current. Who knows where this could lead – you could be asked to work with the experts on an issue!

Attend a public meeting or forum

Attending public meetings or forums can be useful ways to broaden your understanding of an issue and take into consideration the different views of the people the issue affects. Interested people have the opportunity to ask questions and voice their opinion about issues. This could extend to joining a chat room or following web blogs.

When attending public meetings you may sense that your views are not being listened to, especially if you are the only young person there. Don't be disheartened or discouraged – be focused, be calm, be persistent and you will shine.

Read a range of material

You can guarantee there is information – even statistical data – on any issue or topic somewhere. Look into what other people have written about a topic you're interested in. It's a great way to learn more and understand what sort of research has already been done. Head to the web and use key words to conduct a search.

Subscribe to publications

Another great way to keep informed on an issue is to subscribe to publications. There are many peak bodies that represent areas of special interest in the community. Most of these bodies would produce email or hard copy publications like newsletters or journals that debate issues of concern. Many electronic newsletters are free.

Discovery tip

While on your journey to find out everything you can about an issue or topic, you may find that you have misunderstood the issue or that it does not require any action. If this happens to you, it should not be seen as a failure. Instead, take it as a sign that you have acted responsibly.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Creative action

Use your creative talents, think outside the square and get noticed!

The creative arts are a powerful advocacy tool that you could use, especially if expressing your opinion in a creative way appeals to you. There are many creative ways to express your feelings and your opinions. The options are really endless.

Some ideas include:

Hold creative and peaceful demonstrations

The idea is to organise an event that has a high visual impact. You want to be noticed after all! One reason creative demonstrations can be effective is because they provide good pictures for media coverage, and you know how the media love exciting things. You may even want to prepare a media release for the occasion. Before you hold a peaceful demonstration, it's a good idea to seek permission from your local council or police station.

Chalking

Chalk is a wonderful medium because it's not permanent and washes off when it rains! You and your friends could get together to draw a mural on the school basketball court, at your youth hang-out or even the mall. Don't forget to seek permission first.

Theatre

Let's face it, everyone loves to be entertained. To raise awareness on an issue, perform a simple skit at your school, your local shopping centre or other visible locations. Or get a youth drama group together and perform on stage.

Visual arts

Create banners and t-shirts with your message on it. Keep it simple and short so it's easily read. Design posters or artwork that clearly represent your opinions on issues that matter to you. Seek permission to display your design work in your local library, council or overpass.



Creative tip

When using your creative talents to express your opinion, think carefully about your message. Be clear and strong but remember if someone finds it offensive, your message may get lost because of a negative reaction.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Vocal action

If you really feel passionate about an issue, being vocal either by expressing your views in writing or out loud is a great way to take action.

Being vocal can be about raising awareness in your community about an issue. It can be in expressing your opinion and sharing your knowledge or lobbying for change on an issue.

Lobbying is considered to be the art of persuading or influencing the people in the community who may have the power or support to bring about social, political or legal change. You could lobby for change by contacting:

- Members of a board or committee
- Newspaper editors
- Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)
- Parliamentary members that represent the Territory at the federal level
- Local government officials
- Political parties

- Community groups in your area of interest
- Corporate sector
- Peak bodies representing areas of special interest in the community

Some ideas include:

Write a letter to a politician

Members of parliament represent the whole community. They are elected to represent you! They make heaps of decisions about things that affect your life, your community and your Territory. Politicians need to hear your perspective as a young Territorian – your point of view. This in turn helps them make informed decisions on issues affecting young people.

Letter writing tips

- Don't waffle – the most effective letter is the one that has no unnecessary words and the point is made clearly.
- Write to express, not to impress!
- Before you start to write ask yourself “Why do I want to write about this?” and “What do I expect from this?”
- Explain why a particular issue is important to you, your community or young Territorians as a whole.
- Be constructive and use facts. Politicians don't know everything so you may be educating them on some issues.
- Always be courteous when putting your message across.
- Think about who you are writing to and how to make them understand and support your point.
- It's a good idea to ask a friend to check your work. It's amazing what a fresh pair of eyes can pick up!

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Write a media release

If you want to bring specific issues or events into the media spotlight, knowing how to write a media release is a valuable skill. A media release is used to alert the media to an event or issue, and helps journalists follow up and report on the issue. There are many helpful websites that show you how to write a media release.

Media tips

- If the media get in touch with you, you don't have to answer their questions. It's quite okay to say 'no thanks' to their questions or even to an interview.
- The saying that any publicity is good publicity is not necessarily true.
- Be prepared to 'buy time' when contacted by the media. If you're asked an unexpected question, tell them you will call them back with a comment shortly. Then you will have time to develop a clear idea of what your key messages will be.

Write a letter to the editor

You can express your opinion publicly on an issue by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. It may be about an issue that is current in the news or something that people are being vocal about. Almost every newspaper or, for that matter, magazine has a letters section where people can share their views.

While there are no guarantees that your letter will be printed, a calm and rational letter is likely to get a better response.

Letter to the editor tips

- Check out the letters to the editor section of your local newspaper for examples.
- Mention the article you are responding to and the date it was published so that readers and the editor know what you're writing about.
- Focus on one main point.
- Keep it brief and write in short paragraphs. A good rule is one point per paragraph.
- Include your name and contact details.

Make a phone call or organise a meeting

Talk to an MLA or a person of influence either by telephone or in person. Make some notes beforehand to help you remember the key things to say. If he or she is not available when you call, ask to make a time to call back. Be calm and polite and don't forget to note down whom you spoke with.

Write an email

Letters tend to get more attention than emails simply because they're more visible, and emails can easily be overlooked. If you're going to write an email, don't be tempted to be too informal just because it's an email.

Get involved in community radio

There are several community radio stations in the Territory that encourage voluntary participation by young people. Or get on talkback radio to express your view on an issue.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Group action

Group action simply means getting a group of like-minded young Territorians together to express a collective opinion on an issue.

Some ideas include:

Organise a petition

A petition is basically a request for action.

It is one way in which a group of individuals can directly place grievances before parliament. Most petitions to parliament are about issues that people feel really strongly about. Petitions aim to demonstrate that there is widespread opposition or support for a particular course of action.

Petitions can also highlight an issue to the broader community.

By signing petitions politicians can gauge the extent of public opposition to or acceptance of a particular issue or problem.

There are a few important things to remember when putting together a petition.

- In the Territory, petitions do require the involvement of an MLA to present the petition to the House. The MLA cannot alter the petition in any way or place his or her own interpretation on it.
- Investigate whom the petition needs to be sent to and contact that MLA to make sure they will present it to parliament for you. It's more likely to be your local MLA.
- The statement or issue that people are signing their name to must be on each page of the petition.
- Personal details – such as a street address – are usually requested on a petition to support the validity of someone's signature.
- Respect privacy – all personal details must be kept private by you and other organisers of the petition. If you coordinate the petition you must not pass on personal details of another person or use the information for any other purpose without consent of the individuals who signed.



Petition tips

- Petitions to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly need to be worded in a certain way in order for them to be tabled.
- It is important to ensure that petitions conform to relevant rules before beginning to gather signatures or the petition may not be accepted. Rules for the presentation of petitions and an example of a petition is available from www.nt.gov.au/lant/pub/ip4.shtml
- Before you begin, please contact your local MLA or the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly on (08) 8946 1512 or visit the website www.nt.gov.au/lant

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Hold an information stall

Take information to people rather than expecting them to find it.

A stall is a great way to get information out there and for a group of you to meet potentially interested people who may feel the same way as you do about an issue.

The first thing you need is permission to use a public space, like a park or a market. Your local council is the best point of contact and will usually have a policy about the use of public places. If you don't have time to run a stall you can often get the same information out by using public notice boards in your workplace, libraries or at your local shopping centre.

Do a letterbox drop

Simply put your views respectfully out there by getting a group of friends together and doing a letterbox drop. Respect any 'no junk mail' signs.

Form an action group

Action groups are formed when a group of people share a view about an issue and want to make changes. For example: young people being concerned about their environment and starting a recycling drive through their local school or community.

You will need to be very organised so that you can work out the best strategy to achieve what you want. It's a good idea to first make sure there isn't an action group already formed that you could join.



Action group tips

- Give your action group a name that reflects the issue or concern. For example: 'Let's protect our native frogs'.
- Define your group's goals and make sure they're achievable. For example: having a goal to 'save the world' is very admirable but not very achievable.
- Agree with other members on how the group will run, for example: how often will you meet, will you use formal or informal meeting procedures.
- Set targets and timeframes.
- Agree with other members on who does what and share responsibilities fairly.
- Respect each other's contributions and differences.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Work together on a funded youth project that contributes to decision-making

Community organisations, the corporate sector and government have different grant programs that fund innovative youth participation projects.

A group of you may like to get together and hold a youth forum or debate during National Youth Week or the school holidays as a way of raising community awareness on an issue.

You could also seek funding to establish a local youth committee and be your community's voice on issues of importance.



“ Young people have a lot to say that is very important. We want to be listened to and taken seriously. ”

Bernard, 14, Katherine

Funding tips

- Different organisations have particular rules about who is eligible for a grant. Check with the organisation about your eligibility.
- Funding organisations will ask you to fill out an application form. Make sure you read the application carefully and pay particular attention to the funding guidelines.
- A lack of time is a common barrier identified by grant seekers. Make sure you develop timelines that clearly set out the key activities that are expected to be achieved. Timelines help a project stay on track and can help you stay focused.
- Be realistic. You may need to apply to several organisations as your first application may not necessarily be successful. It's a good idea to have a backup plan in case you don't get the grant.
- Be innovative and think of ways you can do your own fundraising.
- Head to www.youth.nt.gov.au for information on funding sources.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Interactive action

- Get interactive in your action by tapping in to existing youth participation programs, volunteering your time or becoming a member of a board or committee.

There are many opportunities to interact with other people to pursue an interest, to challenge yourself, to learn new skills, to meet people and to contribute your ideas and knowledge.

There are programs run at every level of government and also at the community level.

There is a wide range of community groups that provide young people with the opportunity to be part of decision-making. These include recreational groups (like sporting and interest clubs), activist groups (like peace movements and environmental groups) and groups within schools, universities and remote communities (like youth development units).

Examples in this section will give you an idea of what options exist at all levels, including community organisations.

At the national level

National Youth Roundtable

The National Youth Roundtable is the Australian Government's youth consultation mechanism. It brings together young Australians aged 15 to 24 years to have a say about issues that have an impact on young Australians.

Members include young people from all states and territories and bring a wide range of experiences and viewpoints.

At the Territory level

Community Cabinet

Community Cabinet is a great way for you to meet and talk to Northern Territory Government ministers about the issues that are important to you. Community Cabinet meetings are held all over the Territory and are very informal.

Round Table of Young Territorians

The Round Table of Young Territorians links young Territorians to the Northern Territory Government. It is government's principal youth advisory body. The Round Table has a membership of 16 young people aged 15 to 25 years who represent the diversity of the Territory. Members are encouraged to actively talk with other young people in the community about their concerns and their ideas for solutions.

Members also research topical issues affecting young people and present their findings to government.

You are encouraged to contact your local Round Table members to express any issues or concerns you may have which, in turn, will be conveyed to government.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Student Forum

The Student Forum is an opportunity for secondary students to express their views on current educational issues and present formal recommendations to the Chief Executive of the Department of Employment, Education and Training. The forums allow students to ask questions, make suggestions and debate issues directly with top-level decision makers.

Youth Parliament

The program aims to give secondary students the opportunity to understand parliamentary processes and procedures. Participants have input into the decision-making process through the formation and debating of mock Bills. Students develop communication skills and gain an insight into parliamentary democracy and how it operates.

At the local government level

Youth Advisory Group

The Darwin City Council's Youth Advisory Group provides advice on issues affecting young people in Darwin. YAG as it's commonly known has about 15 young people aged 12 to 20 years that have different backgrounds and experiences. The group sometimes hosts and develops youth projects and events that are by youth for youth.

GRIND Youth Newspaper

GRIND is Darwin's only youth exclusive newspaper that is created by young people for young people. The newspaper provides a supported vehicle for a youth voice and expression. It promotes and celebrates the positive contribution young people make in our community.

At the community level

Foundation for Young Australians

The Foundation for Young Australians is a non-profit organisation committed to helping young Australians to reach their full potential. The foundation has a number of ambassador committees that help to oversee the activities of the organisation. There is a Northern Territory committee that is made up of young Territorians. Their role is to actively engage young Territorians in the work of the foundation.

Katherine Youth Group

The Katherine community has a forum for young people to get together and have a say on issues facing young people living in Katherine and surrounding communities.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Australian Red Cross Advisory Groups

The NT Division of the Australian Red Cross has a number of youth advisory groups that meet regularly to provide advice on youth-related issues and the operations of the SHAK Youth Recreation and Development Centre in Casuarina.

Multicultural Youth Council

The Multicultural Youth Council of the Northern Territory is a multicultural group run by Territorians aged 16 to 25 years from different cultural backgrounds.

Under its parent body of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, the youth council is committed to identifying issues that may relate to young people from different cultures and in raising awareness of all cultures in the Territory.

The youth council also organises social and community activities.

Volunteer your time

Young Territorians make a huge difference in their local community by volunteering their time and energy. Volunteering is a great way to make a contribution to improve your community, gain some skills, discover your hidden talents and open yourself up to new experiences.

Young people will volunteer for many reasons and in many different ways. You can experience working for causes that you are interested in, or helping to create change in areas that are important to you.

Before committing to a volunteer position, take the time to consider your level of involvement. Be practical about the extent of the volunteer commitment that you make. Think carefully about how much time you are able to or willing to commit to the job.

There are many different organisations and programs you can approach to be a volunteer. Contact the Office of Youth Affairs for more information on volunteering in your community.



Volunteering tips

- Make sure the organisation is not-for-profit. This means that the organisation does not make a profit out of its activities. If you are unsure, just ask.
- Make sure the purpose of the organisation matches your own core values and beliefs.
- Make sure the organisation has relevant insurance.
- Make sure your role as a volunteer is clear.
- Make sure you read the information material that is provided.

you did what?

TAKING ACTION

Become a board or committee member

There are many specialist boards and committees in the Territory that play an important role in providing leadership direction and creating change.

Some of these boards and committees are made up of community members – including young people – to bring a fresh and unique perspective to their aim.

Some reasons young people are asked to be on a board or committee include:

- to gain an understanding of issues affecting young people
- to bring a youth perspective to the organisation, and
- to provide young people with development opportunities.



“ Youth participation means young people being included in decision-making processes. ”

Illona, 19, Darwin

“ Young people that have gone to the trouble of being involved and having a say about something important to them feel really good about it. ”

Josh, 24, Tiwi Islands

Board and committee tips

- Find out as much as possible about the organisation and the committee – a good starting place is the most recent annual report or its website.
- Most boards and committees will have terms of reference – ask for them.
- Know what is expected of you as a board or committee member – ask for a job description.
- Familiarise yourself with meeting procedures.
- A mentor or support person is a good idea so you can discuss any concerns you may have.
- Identify gaps in skills and knowledge and take action in this area to strengthen your role as a board or committee member.

you did what?

THIS IS THE BEGINNING

This is the beginning

Now that you know the different ways to take action, it is up to you to choose your preferred approach.

This handbook is not designed to identify every avenue that is available to you to create change. You will come up with other innovative and creative ways to do so.

Having a vision of what you would like to achieve for yourself or your community can involve being imaginative and thinking outside the square.

We encourage you to think of ways to create new opportunities, new spaces or new resources.

Whatever you choose to do to get active in your community, the best time to start is now.

So make that phone call you've been putting off!

“ All young people should always keep in mind that we are the influential adults of the future! It is up to us to plant seeds of change in how we would like things to be. Never be afraid to speak your mind on social, political and environmental issues which can be changed for the better. Always stick up for what you believe in and remember – one person can make a difference! ”

Ros, 25, Tennant Creek



A final word

Remember – help is always available!
Please contact the Office of Youth Affairs for more information and advice on putting forward your point of view.

www.youth.nt.gov.au