



01 March 2018

## **Doing more to inspire and educate young people to be active citizens.**

The SA Commissioner for Children and Young People today announces the launch of **“Democracy in Action”** to highlight the demands being made by young people for the right to vote in future elections from the age of 16.

**“Democracy in Action”** is due to be launched at the Institute Building on North Terrace on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 1:00pm. The project is being run in conjunction with the Centre of Democracy and the Electoral Commission SA.

Candidates from the Greens, Labor, Liberal and Dignity parties will speak, along with young South Australian **Amos Washington, the Australia Youth Representative to the UN.**

There will be workshops for school students the following week. And students at schools located within the Adelaide electoral district have been invited to run their own polls in the run-up to the election.

On Election Day, 17<sup>th</sup> March young people aged 16 and 17 will be given the opportunity to experience voting in a realistic setting at the Institute Building. There will be a sausage sizzle and a video soap box to capture their ideas and thoughts about democracy.

Helen Connolly, SA Commissioner for Children and Young People spent much of 2017 on a *Listening Tour* throughout the State, inviting children and young people to tell her what changes they wanted in South Australia.

### **QUOTES TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO HELEN CONNOLLY, SA COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

“During my Listening Tour many young people wanted to have their say on topical issues. They wanted to be engaged in the political system, to have optional voting rights and to have their voices heard. They wanted to be involved in decision-making that affects their lives.

One young person notably said to me: **“We can’t vote which means our opinion is not recognised. But being under 18, we are the ones who know the improvements which need to be made to assist in our progression in our future ... and the choices which should be made.”**

### **For more information**

Contact the Office for The Commissioner for Children and Young People

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From my interactions with young people they are certainly capable of being engaged in politics. When policies are relevant to them they will engage. Look at the inspiring example of the students in America who are leading the fight for stronger gun controls.

What a positive message it would send to young people all over the country if young South Australians were the first in Australia to be given the opportunity to vote at 16.”

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although voting is compulsory in Australia, it is limited to people aged 18 years and over.

In 1973 the voting age went from 21 to 18. Now, 45 years later, a number of young people and advocates are seeking to re-open this debate.

Internationally a number of European countries, including Scotland, have lowered the voting age to 16, and Canada currently has an active “vote 16” campaign.

South Australian law defines a child as being a person under 18 years of age.

- But young people can drive a car from 16, fly a plane from 16. They can consent to or refuse medical treatment from 16.
- Young people can apply to join the Australian Defence Force from 16.5 years and they can get married from 17 years of age.
- If children and young people are employed, they are required like adults to pay income tax.

**For further information on the Democracy in Action project, contact [damian.creaser2@sa.gov.au](mailto:damian.creaser2@sa.gov.au)**

For further information on the Listening Tour and the work of the Commissioner go to [www.ccyp.com.au](http://www.ccyp.com.au)

## NOTES TO EDITORS

- Media are invited to the launch of ‘*Democracy in Action*’ on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 1:00 pm at the Institute Building, North Terrace, Adelaide.**
- SA Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly will be available for interview.

## For more information

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