

yChange Civics in action.

Commissioner launches yChange to re-engage SA young people with their Australian citizenship

Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, has today launched **yChange** – South Australia’s first curriculum aligned, project based, action civics resource for primary and secondary educators.

Designed to empower SA young people with the attitudes, skills and knowledge they need to become active, responsible citizens, **yChange** delivers a different way to teach civics and citizenship by taking an action civics approach to lessons and learning.

The launch of **yChange** coincides with **SA Youth Week** resonating with this year’s theme of ‘*Our Voice – Our Future*’ which encapsulates one of the key reasons for developing **yChange** in the first place; ‘providing children and young people with opportunities to have voice, choice, influence and agency’.

Developed over an eighteen-month timeframe, **yChange** is the Commissioner’s response to the most recent test scores from the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP–CC). The scores reveal that when it comes to understanding the importance of our democracy and appreciating our national values, the performance of Australian students has plateaued.ⁱ

Conversely South Australian children and young people have told the Commissioner they would like to understand the systems they are in, know how to engage in the world around them, and acquire the skills they need to transition into adulthood. **yChange** is designed to close this civics education gap.

Through **yChange** students go on a five-part learning journey that equips them with the knowledge of systems and practical skills they need to access, analyse and communicate information. They learn to link civics and citizenship education with ways in which they can take action on issues in their local communities they would like to see addressed, and on which they work as a class to identify.

Flexible enough to be scaled to suit primary or secondary school students, **yChange** has been mapped to the Civics and Citizenship skills and knowledge strands of the Australian Curriculum and aligns with the aims of *South Australia’s Youth Action Plan*. A pilot program undertaken in 2020 involved students and teachers from Mark Oliphant College, Marryatville High School and Elizabeth Vale Primary School. Their input was significant in shaping the final content of **yChange**.

Schools can apply for a **yChange Action Grant** of up to **\$500** to implement student action plans. Once a class has completed their **yChange** project they are encouraged to enter the Governor's Civic Awards for Schools and upload their project presentation into the **yChange Project Showcase** to be promoted to decision makers and influencers across the State.

Schools from the Department for Education, Catholic Education and Independent Schools systems have access to the **FREE yChange Resource Pack** via a simple registration process. Supportive partners include the Commonwealth **Parliamentary Education Officer, Parliament of South Australia, History Trust of South Australia** and the **Centre of Democracy**.

Commissioner Connolly is encouraging educators to complete **yChange** with their students and help close the civic engagement gap that currently exists within South Australia.

Quotes attributable to Commissioner Helen Connolly:

As young citizens, SA children and young people are well placed to identify the impact that 21st Century issues are and will have on themselves and future generations. They are also more than capable of generating ideas around what can be done to improve their own and others' situations. Yet their insights and opinions are rarely sought, and when they are, mostly overlooked. **yChange** has been developed to empower young people to make the change they want to see. What makes **yChange** so different to other civics programs is that young people themselves determine the issue, devise the plan, and put their plan into action, guided by educators who have been equipped with teaching resources that can support them to do so. Students have direct experience of how their participation in action civics can bring about positive change – crucial to an understanding of how our democracy works, and their potential to have voice, choice, influence, and agency within it. I urge educators to take SA students on the **yChange** learning journey and make their school a **yChange** school today!

To view the *Intro to yChange* video: https://youtu.be/H_SUCEZMw5M

To find out more about yChange visit: www.ychange.com.au

For further information on the work of the Commissioner visit: www.ccyp.com.au

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ⁱ *Students are engaged in the community but test scores on democracy stall.* Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. 21 January 2021.