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## Make democracy fairer: lower the voting age to 16 for local government elections say SA young people

A poll of more than 769 secondary school students reveals half believe the voting age for local government elections should be lowered from 18 to 16 years, with two thirds saying they would 'definitely' or 'probably' vote if it was.

The poll also revealed young people's reasons for wanting to vote from a younger age including having an opportunity to 'have a voice on what goes on in local government' and having 'a say on the future of the country by participating in electing the people that represent us best'.

Members of the SA SRC's Our Future Our Vote campaign undertook the poll to ensure their view 'that young people want to exercise their right to have a say on the decisions being made about the world they live in' is representative of their peers.

As the generation who will be shaped by decisions being made now, the poll responses show that secondary school age students are keen to have their perspectives and experiences, which are different to those of older generations, considered.

Students said they want 'greater access to civics education for all' rather than this only being an option in senior years 'for those who do certain subjects'. They want to know more about 'what goes on in politics' so they can 'have a say on the issues that are important to them'. They also want to see more presentations and expos that explain the enrolment and voting processes.

Opportunities to talk about voting and issues affecting the community would be advantageous, as would a clear and accessible online platform designed specifically for young people that presents information from an unbiased perspective, and where they can 'practice voting' to see what impact voting is likely to have.

SA SRC campaign members canvassed their peers' opinions throughout March, April and May at 36 secondary schools across South Australia representing Government, Catholic and Independent sectors. The schools polled were in 17 local government areas, with responses coming from students in various year levels and with different genders.

The SA SRC Our Future Our Vote campaign operates on the premise that lowering the voting age to 16 years for local government elections will encourage more young people to engage with democracy from a younger age and the value of quality civics education more broadly.

The Our Future Our Vote campaign is one of five key issues identified by SA SRC representatives for student-led action this year with the other four being: Free Fares for Our Future; Seeing Ourselves; Fitness for Free; and Greening Our Canteens.

Details of the 2024 SA SRC Campaigns can be found at:  
<https://civicsandcitizenshipsa.com.au/young-people/sa-src/>

Quotes attributable to Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly  
Young people repeatedly tell me they want to have a say on the matters affecting them, and that their opinions, views, experiences and ideas need to be listened to, taken seriously and acted upon by adults. While maintaining young people's confidence in democracy and the democratic process is under challenge around the world, South Australia can send the strong message that we want the views of young people to be heard and are prepared to change our voting processes, rules and laws to make that possible.

Quotes attributable to members of the SA SRC Our Future Our Vote Campaign

Tareeka Wickramasiri (Year 10)

Young people should have the opportunity to contribute to discussions about issues that will affect their future because we are the ones who are currently experiencing new changes. If a 16-year-old can be trusted to drive on the roads, they should be able to contribute to decision making about those roads and more.

Sophia Borruso (Year 10)

Young voices are constantly overlooked and our opinions are ignored because of our age and assumption of "lack of knowledge".

Raghu Vijayan (Year 10)

At 16 we can drive, work, fly a plane and pay taxes. It's time we have a voice in shaping our future. Lower the voting age and let us be heard!

Stevie Turner (Year 11)

To be written off before you can say anything isn't what will make a strong future. Strength we give, is strength we share.

To download the [Our Future Our Vote Campaign Position Brief click here.](#)

Visit <https://civicsandcitizenshipsa.com.au/>

South Australia's resource portal for all things Civics and Citizenship offering students and educators access to over 300 civics education resources from one centralised online location.

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