

Young have say on climate crisis

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YOUTH FORUM 'We've grown up with environmental issues'

Young have say on climate crisis

Alanna Tomazin

AT THE forefront of environmental advocacy, the future leaders of tomorrow are passionate about discussing their right to a healthy environment.

Helping to uplift that discussion, the University of Newcastle's Centre for Law and Social Justice hosted its 2023 Youth Forum on Wednesday.

Fifty-five students from across years 9 to 11 at 12 different schools in the Hunter region gathered at the University of Newcastle's NUspace campus to share in their passion for a future that they can contribute to right now.

Merewether High School's year 10 student Isobel Redford said the day was an opportunity for young people to get their point across and promote a proposal to the government.

"We discussed the need for a youth voice in parliament and how the perspective of young people should be incorporated more in environmentally sustainable approaches," she said.

She said there was a lack of access for young people to influence policy making around a healthy environment and there was a disconnect between the older and future generations.



Students gathered at NUspace to talk about the future of a healthy environment. Picture supplied

"I feel like there's a lot of stereotypes that young people shouldn't have a voice, because we're inexperienced and don't have the knowledge, yet we've grown up with environmental issues," she said.

"It's very much been a part of our childhood and I'm really passionate about it because I don't want it to be detrimental to my kids' futures or future generations."

UON Human Rights

School of Law and Justice associate professor Amy Maguire said several students talked about their perception of barriers between generations.

"They described it as a societal view of young people as politically and socially ignorant compared to older generations and how that's driven by this idea that experience is equated to knowledge," she said.

"Already, in their very

short lifetimes they've seen so much dramatic change in the environment. They feel like they're not heard enough or taken seriously enough by decision-makers, and they want people to stop talking to them about being the leaders of tomorrow and recognise that they can contribute valuably right now."

St Francis Xavier College Hamilton year 11 student Sarah Davies said young adults can help find resources to

contribute to a better future.

"We can help change our resources and our right to a healthy environment for our future. I've lived through this and seen how if we do nothing to help our environment, we will lose out in the future," she said.

Professor Maguire said the students also discussed practical ways to sustain a healthy environment through transitioning away from fossil fuels towards clean energy.