

Youth Forum: The Right to Participation



**CENTRE FOR
LAW AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Dear Principal/HSIE Coordinator,

I am a Director of the Centre for Law and Social Justice at the University of Newcastle. You can learn more about our Centre here: <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research/centre/law-and-social-justice>

I am excited to inform you about an event we are planning for **Wednesday 6 November 2024** – a Youth Forum focused on the human right to participate in political and public life. I hope you will be happy to nominate **four of your students to participate** in this exciting event.

This year marks the Centre's third consecutive year hosting human rights-focused youth forums in collaboration with the Human Rights for NSW Alliance, which is convened by Australian Lawyers for Human Rights. In 2023, we successfully hosted a Youth Forum on the right to a healthy environment. This event brought together 55 high school students from 12 schools across the Hunter region. Students collaboratively drafted the 'School Students' Statement on the Right to a Healthy Environment.' In April of 2024, this Statement was officially launched by Trisha Doyle MP, NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, Heritage, Climate Change and Energy. In September of 2024, a small delegation of students will attend NSW Parliament for ministerial meetings to discuss the 2023 Statement.

In 2022, we hosted our first Youth Forum on the right to education. This event brought together 70 high school students from 17 schools across the Hunter region. Students developed the 'School Students' Statement on the Right to Education.' The Statement was read into Hansard and both Statements were reported on in local news. More information can be found here: <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research/centre/law-and-social-justice/public-forums>

Event Goals

As a school leader, I am sure you would agree that the right to participate in political and public life should not be regarded as a privilege – instead, it is the right of all young people. Yet in Australia and internationally, young people face barriers to participating in their communities and informing decision-making that affects them. This forum will build students' understanding of their right to participate in political and public life, including in terms of how young people can inform decision-making that affects their lives and futures.

The Centre for Law and Social Justice is a proud member of the Human Rights for New South Wales Alliance. This Alliance brings together community and legal organisations to campaign for legislation to protect the rights of people in NSW. Such legislation already exists in other Australian jurisdictions, and a national Charter of Rights campaign is also underway.

Event Design

This forum will be a fully catered, participatory event. It is scheduled to run from 9.30am to 2.30pm on Wednesday 6 November at the University of Newcastle's NUspace campus. NUspace is located at 409 Hunter St, Newcastle and the event will be held in room X-101 (on the first floor of the building). This campus is accessible by public transport, including bus and light rail. University staff will be on hand throughout the day to support student needs. There will be no cost to student participants.

Students will be seated at collaborative tables with representatives from multiple schools. Each table will be hosted by a University staff member or student, who will act as scribe for the group's discussions. The majority of the day's schedule will be devoted to facilitated collaboration on the key questions for the forum. School teachers are not required to attend, however teachers are most welcome. At previous forums, some schools have sent teachers with their student groups and others have not.

The forum will be attended by Jodie Harrison, Federal Member for Charlestown and Minister for Women and Prevention of Domestic Violence. In the final session, all participants will work together to develop a 'School Students' Statement on the Right to Participate'. Minister Harrison will witness the final drafting session and respond to the students' views. She will also engage in a Q&A session with student participants. The Centre for Law and Social Justice will publish this statement online and distribute copies to participants, their schools, education authorities and policy makers to convey the perspectives of young people on their right to participate in political and public life.

Practical Considerations

- The Centre for Law and Social Justice will be inviting local media, including the Newcastle Herald and ABC Radio 1233, to report on this event. Students and their parents will be asked to give or withhold consent to feature in media reporting on the event.
- Permission forms will also request students note any dietary requirements so that catering is appropriate for all participants' needs.
- The venue is accessible with lifts and ramps for wheelchair access. Please inform us of any particular accessibility requirements your students may have.

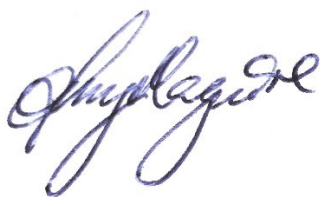
Our invitation to your school

We would greatly appreciate your nomination of four students to participate in this forum. This event would be best suited to students in Years 9-11. We request you consider nominating students from diverse backgrounds as we are aiming to host an event that includes the perspectives of First Nations students, students with disability, students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, and students from low-SES backgrounds. We also request that you consider nominating students who are particularly engaged in advocacy, human rights or social justice.

This forum aims to engage students from Newcastle and the Hunter region in the campaign for comprehensive human rights protection in NSW. As such, it connects to multiple goals of the NSW curriculum. It also provides an opportunity for local students to engage with the University of Newcastle and the School of Law and Justice.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation. Please forward any questions and student nominations to SocialJustice@newcastle.edu.au - **please send nominations by Wednesday 23 October 2024.**

Yours sincerely,



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