

# Youth Participation in Policymaking in the Digital Age: Discursive change and the maintenance of political barriers

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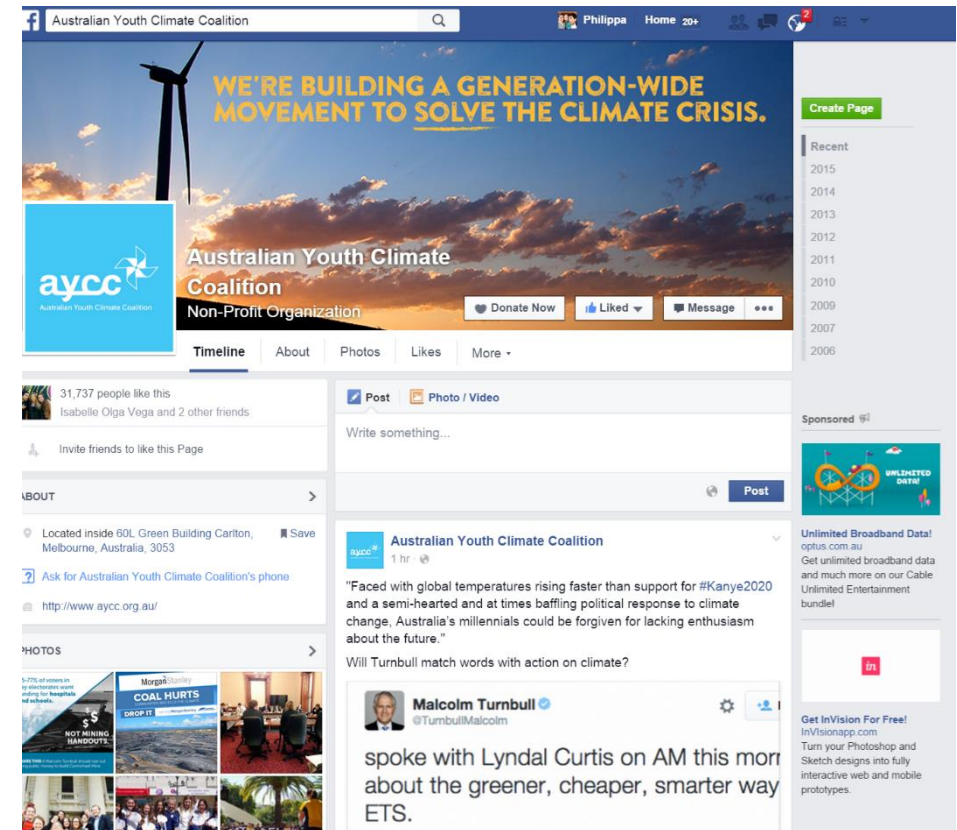
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# Participation and Policy



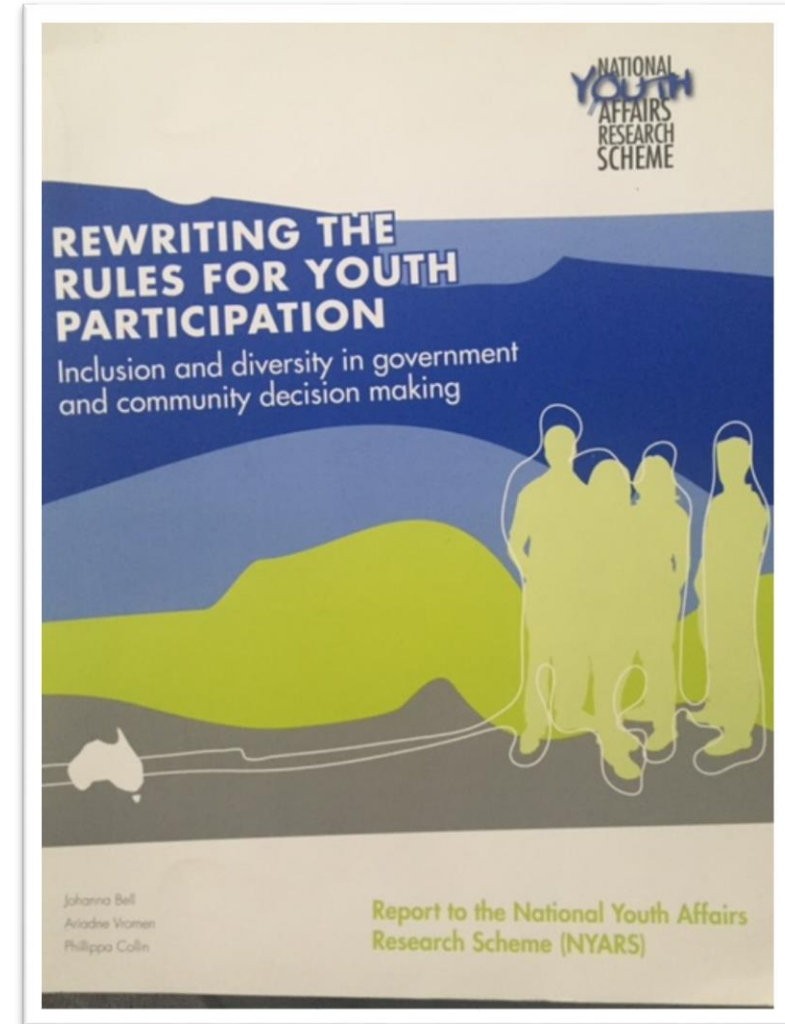
The image shows the homepage of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC). At the top left is the AYCC logo. A navigation bar contains links for ABOUT, PROJECTS, CAMPAIGNS, VOLUNTEER, NEWS, SEED, JOIN, and DONATE. The main banner features a photograph of wind turbines on a grassy hill overlooking the ocean, with the text: "We're building a generation-wide movement to solve the climate crisis. Join a movement of more than 110,000 young people." Below the banner are three call-to-action buttons: "Become an AYCC Regular Donor!" (with a photo of two young women), "Volunteer For your local group" (with a hand icon), "Sign-up For the latest updates" (with a document icon), and "Donate And help us grow" (with a leaf icon). At the bottom, there are social media links for Facebook and Twitter, and a section for "AYCC ON FACEBOOK" with a "Like" button showing 1770 likes. There are also three "VIEW" links to external content.



The image shows the Facebook page for the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. The page header includes the name "Australian Youth Climate Coalition" and a search bar. The cover photo features a wind turbine and the text: "WE'RE BUILDING A GENERATION-WIDE MOVEMENT TO SOLVE THE CLIMATE CRISIS." The profile picture is the AYCC logo. The page is identified as a "Non-Profit Organization" with "Donate Now", "Liked", and "Message" buttons. The "Timeline" tab is selected, showing a post from 31,737 likes by Isabelle Olga Vega and 2 other friends. Below the post is a "Write something..." text area and a "Post" button. The "ABOUT" section lists the location as "60L Green Building Carlton, Melbourne, Australia, 3053" and provides a website link "http://www.aycc.org.au/". The "PHOTOS" section shows a collage of images related to climate activism, including a sign that says "COAL HURTS" and another that says "HOT MINING HANDOUTS". A tweet from Malcolm Turnbull is visible, stating: "spoke with Lyndal Curtis on AM this morn about the greener, cheaper, smarter way ETS." The right sidebar shows a "Recent" list of years from 2015 to 2006, a "Sponsored" section for "Unlimited Broadband Data", and a "Get InVision For Free!" advertisement.

# 10 years ago

- Government commissioned Bell, Vromen, Collin (2008)
- Political (cycle) response:
  - (re)Creation of youth advocacy peak
  - Online Australian Youth Forum
  - Attempt to diversify youth reps
- 2013 - defunding and delegitimising of youth representation



"This government does not believe that a single peak body is necessary for it to hear the views of Australian youth, nor that a single peak body is capable of representing the diverse interests, experiences and background of young Australians,"

"The government is currently developing plans to consult with young Australians using a more focused and targeted approach."

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education Scott Ryan

*Canberra Times* May 20, 2014

# Concepts and Questions

Right to 'Participation' as relational (Moosa-Mitha, 2008)

Underpinning discourses of structures and processes (Edwards, 2009)

Active/Failed Citizen (Harris, 2012)

Participation 1.0 / Participation 2.0: new norms (Micheletti)

Political agents / political opportunity structures (Vromen & Collin, 2010)

**Why isn't youth participation institutionalised / mainstreamed into government frameworks in a digital age?**

# Youth Engaged Policy (YEP) Project

February – May 2016

Literature Review

International case studies

Forums with policy makers (n = 60)

Key Informant Interviews (n = 5)

Critical Issues workshop (n = 18)

Youth Engagement Index

Online survey

Youth Engagement Profile (n = 54)

Co-Design workshop (n = 35)



# Engagement for young people

Discursive construction of young people's engagement has changed

- Beyond apathy, issues matter
- The right of young people to participate
- Diversity and marginalised
- Monolithic category of 'young people'

*“the bright things”*

*“there is a marginalisation of Aboriginal young people and CALD young people”*

# Engagement for policymakers

Discursive construction of value of young people's engagement for policy has not changed

- Engagement is for voice, not co-creation

*“policy making utilises a clinical, brief argument, there are restrictions, boundaries ..it's not effective to have young people there, ‘in the room’” (Canberra forum)*

- Individualised/youth-led focus, expects youth voices to be representative
- Questioning of advocacy organisations



# Engagement *for* policymakers

Value of successful processes of engagement are distinguished *from* policy outcome:

- Mobilization **over** policy change
- Informing **over** co-creating policy
- Models of participation **over** policy.
- Individualised view **over** relational view

# Engagement for policymakers

Digital media seen as risky for engagement

- Insufficient resources or training or knowledge to engage 'properly'

*“Young people are skilled in social media. They are active in existing networks and share information and there has been a failure by policymakers to see this” (Melbourne forum)*

- Risks/fears of digital outweighs benefits
- Representations of how/what young people do and say online over engaging with young people online

# Rights over engagement?

“It’s recognised that [Article 12 is ] the gateway to realising all the other rights. If you don't have a voice, if you're not engaged and if you're not respected then your views are not respected...

...One of my biggest mantras is **it should be the norm to consult and engage children and young people in decisions that impact on them, either as individuals or as a group.** Virtually, every second bit of legislation and every second bit of program that gets developed has an impact on children, from everything from social security to family law to health policy to education policy, and yet consultations with children are not the norm”.

(Interview with Megan Mitchell, Australian Children’s Commissioner)

# Child Rights (to Participation) & Policy Modes

	Participation 1.0	Participation 2.0
<b>Internet</b>	Voice	Action
<b>Repertoires</b>	Speaking to	Speaking / doing with
<b>Actors</b>	Expert Citizens / Reports	Everyday Makers / Failed Citizens
<b>Communication</b>	Vertical	Horizontal
<b>Targets</b>	Government/policy makers	Peers, community, industry
<b>Data</b>	Representations of young people	Representations by young people
<b>Citizenship</b>	Managed	Autonomous

# Tensions for future policy processes

- Engagement vs rights
  - Outcome vs process
  - Advocacy vs inclusion
- Organisation vs individual
  - Youth-focussed vs youth-led
  - Action vs expressive
- Individualised vs Relational

Power and authority not delegated or shared, but now harder to question.

# Thank You

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