



**MYAN Youth
Engagement Strategy**



Introduction

This paper outlines MYAN's Youth Engagement Strategy, which provides a framework for working alongside young people and support them to actively participate in civic life, influence policy, and strengthen their leadership. It sets out MYAN's approach to meaningful participation, guided by the voices of young people, and highlights the structures, goals, and commitments that underpin this work.

The multicultural young people we work with are diverse and nuanced, each carrying complex identities and lived experiences that shape the way they contribute and are positioned in relation to their communities.

Young people with refugee and migrant backgrounds, many of whom were born or raised in Australia and balance family cultural traditions with the broader Australian culture. They may span 1st, 2nd or 3rd plus generation of young Australians. They often create a third culture and act as cultural bridges, demonstrating resilience and strong leadership in advocating for inclusion, social justice, and opportunities for their peers.

International students who bring global perspectives, skills, and cultural knowledge. While they face challenges such as social isolation, navigating systems, and barriers to employment, they are motivated, resourceful, and deeply motivated. Their experiences add richness and diversity to conversations around belonging and identity.

Newly arrived refugees and migrants who are in the early stages of settlement. They may face significant challenges around language, education, housing, and employment, adapting to a new culture and environment, yet they bring remarkable resilience, determination, and hope. Their contributions highlight both the struggles and the possibilities of starting anew.

Across all three groups, these young people are not defined by a single narrative. Their diversity and nuance remind us that they are more than their migration stories, they are leaders, learners, and active contributors to Australia's multicultural communities.



About MYAN's Youth Engagement Strategy

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) understands the importance of working in partnership with young people, upholding their voices and facilitating their engagement with policy and advocacy that affects them. Through the implementation of MYAN's Youth Engagement Strategy (the Strategy), young people will continue to play a critical role in shaping the first focus area of MYAN's 2024-2026 strategic plan, "Uplift Young People: Enable Young People's Participation in Civic Society and Provide Capability Development for Young People".

MYAN's strategy reinforces meaningful youth participation as an end in itself. It also supports our efforts to advance evidence-based policy and programming, drive transformative advocacy, and build strong partnerships locally and globally.

MYAN's 2024 -25 Youth Advisory Group (YAG) played a key role in developing this strategy. They provided invaluable insights, advice and expertise on all aspects covered in this strategy:

1. The Terms of Engagement

Activator

Advisor

Ambassador

2. Pillars of Youth Empowerment

Education

Participation

Inclusion

3. The MYAN alumni network.



1. Terms of Engagement

This Strategy outlines the different ways young people engage with MYAN – as Activators, Advisors, and Ambassador – and offers direct guidance from young people on how best to engage with them in meaningful and relevant ways. MYAN aims to create an environment where young people can draw on their strengths, pursue their aspirations, and expand their impact within their communities and beyond.

Across all engagement, MYAN's commitments to the young person are:

Informed consent:

We will provide clear and relevant information about each opportunity or activity, ensuring that the scope, purpose, and intent are fully understood. Young people will be supported to set their own boundaries and are always free to withdraw if they choose.

Briefing & Guidance:

We will offer the necessary preparation and support tailored to the nature of the activity, allowing for clarifying questions. MYAN will also make accommodations to the best of our abilities to ensure the engagement opportunity is inclusive and accessible.

Closing the loop:

We will follow up with debriefs and feedback opportunities, keep young people informed of any outcomes or impacts of their involvement, and show genuine appreciation for their contribution.

1.1 Activator

Young people who engage with MYAN in an ad-hoc manner for opportunities that are often consultative and require lived experience. These young people are supported by MYAN to platform their voice and contribute to discourse around key issues for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Potential Activities

- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Consultations
- Case studies
- Media opportunities

YP R&R/Expectations

- Lived experience of a particular topic.
- A willingness & interest to provide insights on topic of experience.

Remuneration

They act in a voluntary capacity but may receive honorariums depending on the nature and level of engagement with a particular activity.

Recruitment

Activators may be identified through MYAN's state and territory partners, other existing networks or through open expression of interest and recruitment.

1.2 Advisor

Young people who are formally onboarded at MYAN in a volunteer or delegate capacity through an agreement or in an advisory capacity through mutually agreed Terms of Reference (ToR) with MYAN. Their engagement is structured with regular scheduled meetings, clearly defined roles and responsibilities within a term. They are emerging leaders who participate in advocacy and programming initiatives and exhibit strong leadership and topic-specific knowledge of national and community issues. MYAN is committed to the ongoing professional development and empowerment of these young people.

Potential Activities

Thematic or project specific, as outlined in the agreement or ToR, examples include:

- Roundtables
- Meetings
- Media

YP R&R/Expectations

- Lived experience and expertise of a particular topic..
- A willingness & interest to provide insights and potential solutions on topic of experience.
- Adherence to signed agreement or ToR and Code of Conduct.

Remuneration

They act in a voluntary capacity but may receive honorariums as outlined in their agreement or ToR.

Recruitment

Advisors may be identified through MYAN's state and territory partners, other existing networks or through open expression of interest and recruitment.

1.3 Ambassador

A young person or young adult that has previously been formally engaged with MYAN through various programs and advisory bodies. They are onboarded at MYAN for a specified term in an Ambassador capacity through a mutually agreed Terms of Reference (ToR) with MYAN. Due to their expertise and experience in advocacy, this young person has a wide network and community, power and skills to influence positive change. They are involved in high-level policy discussions and can act as a peer mentor for other emerging young leaders. MYAN may engage with them based on their specific expertise and skill set for strategic advocacy activities.

Potential Activities

Thematic based on the Ambassadors skillset or area of expertise, as outlined in the agreement ToR and may include:

- National Policy Alliance related activities
- Panel speaking
- Roundtables
- High level meetings
- Media

YP R&R/Expectations

- Lived experience and advocacy expertise in a particular topic.
- An understanding of the current discourse or advocacy landscape in relation to their topic of expertise.
- A willingness & interest to be involved in MYAN's advocacy and policy activities in an ad-hoc capacity.
- Adherence to signed ToR and alignment with MYAN values and strategic goals.

Remuneration

They act in a voluntary capacity but receive honorariums depending on the nature and level of engagement and as outlined in their ToR.

Recruitment

Ambassadors are identified for engagement on particular topics through our networks, and alumni based on their interest, expertise and skillset known to MYAN.

2. Pillars of Youth Empowerment

At MYAN, engaging with young people means meeting them where they are, valuing and promoting their contributions, and providing skilling and personal and professional development opportunities. Empowerment involves creating inclusive environments that respond to their feedback and contributions, motivating young people to exercise their agency, and building their capability to challenge themselves, grow as leaders, and become strong advocates. The engagement and empowerment of young people also means they can influence MYAN's agenda, share feedback, and advise on how we can continually improve our efforts to engage with youth. Through this support, they are equipped to drive systemic advocacy and act as effective agents of change.

2.1 Education

Education is about the national access of individuals to knowledge, resources, and opportunities. As stated in the UNHCR article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education involves *"the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin."*

At MYAN, education means providing young people with opportunities to gain the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. Education is also about supporting young people to develop the practical skills and confidence to advocate for themselves and their communities and to build and exercise a strong sense of agency over their own lives. All educational and training initiatives with and for young people are underpinned by the principles of the [National Youth Settlement Framework](#) and delivered across both formal and informal settings.

Guiding principles outlined by young people for Youth Education at MYAN:

Building the capacity of young people to be powerful and strategic communicators which includes -

1. Media training to ensure young people are confident, and knowledgeable when speaking to media representing MYAN.
2. Public speaking to build the skills and impact of the advocacy young people can do on panels, keynotes, roundtables and presentations.
3. Storytelling to incorporate lived experience powerfully and safely.
4. Thematic or topic-based training to empower young people with the latest knowledge, best practice and discourse to ensure their advocacy is evidence based.

Learning through collaborations with experts, mentors and peers, including -

1. Trailblazers (other established young leaders) of similar backgrounds and experiences.
2. Community leaders with deep ties and understanding of their community needs.
3. Academic experts who are youth friendly and who use their expertise in advocacy and activism.

Providing a safe, conducive environment and enough time for learning big and small practical skills, make mistakes and ask "silly questions", which looks like -

1. Learning how to draft an agenda, plan and facilitate a meeting.
2. Learning aspects of organising online and in-person events.
3. Learning how to use the software and tools that are critical to advocacy work.

2.2 Participation

Within MYAN, meaningful participation of young people fosters their critical awareness, thought leadership, and well-informed advocacy that shapes their own lives and wider society. MYAN seeks to create spaces and opportunities for young people to exercise their rights through education, engagement, and effective participation. In our context, youth participation is transformative; driving social justice, shifting power structures, and advancing the realisation of young people's rights. We support young people to strengthen their leadership, exercise their voice, and confidently influence policy and decision-making.

The National Youth Settlement Framework (NYSF) states that:

"A rights-based approach empowers young people to understand and exercise their rights and increases the ability and accountability of individuals and organisations that are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of young people. A rights-based approach ensures that both the standards and the principles of human rights are integrated into policymaking as well as the day-to-day running of organisations, including service delivery."

Guiding principles outlined by young people for Youth Participation at MYAN:

Strengthening thematic recruitment and continuing to leverage the existing skills and interests that young people have on particular topics relevant to youth settlement.

Having formal and informal recognition of young people's achievements and competencies which supports their positive identity formation, motivation and progress as become more empowered. This could be done through:

- Monthly shoutouts
- Alumni bulletin
- Social media promotion

Bridging the gap between MYAN's key strategic stakeholders or important decision makers (e.g. Governance group and Federal Government Departments) and young people, enabling them to engage directly with them in a supported way. This can strengthen their participation in stakeholder engagement and demystify the processes behind projects, programs and policy making.

Ensuring a transparent closing the loop process allows young people to understand and reflect on the impact and outcomes of their work, advocacy, and efforts. This process not only enhances their learning, education, and sense of empowerment, but also reinforces that their contributions remain valuable even when predetermined outcomes are not fully achieved or the impact differs from what was intended.



2.3 Inclusion

At MYAN, young people will be provided a safe, accessible and welcoming spaces to be themselves and be supported to become agents of positive change. An inclusive environment can be fostered by applying the NYSF Good Practice Capabilities below:

- Cultural Intelligence
- Youth - centred
- Strength - based
- Trauma - informed and,
- Family - aware.

MYAN's established culture, processes, structures, policies, and advocacy is conducive to sustaining an inclusive environment for young people and we are committed to constructive feedback and continuous improvement.

Guiding principles outlined by young people for Inclusive Environments at MYAN:

Wellbeing, Safety, and Psycho-Social Support

- Integrate formal welfare briefings with designated welfare officers, regular welfare checks, and psycho-social support across all programs, consultations, and events involving young people.
- Provide clear policies, training, and resources to help young volunteers protect their physical health and mental wellbeing while engaged in MYAN activities.

Inclusive Culture, Gender Balance, and Innovation

- Foster a safe, inclusive environment where young people feel empowered to propose and test innovative approaches, supported by better gender balance, strong local and state partnerships, and clear policies on travel, social media, grievances, conflict resolution, and a code of conduct.

Build Rapport and Strong Connections

- Strengthen in-person connections and engage young people earlier, while ensuring clear communication about project scope, timelines, and expectations.
- Develop clear Terms of Reference collaboratively and articulate work culture expectations to enhance understanding, improve efficiency in meetings, and support sustained motivation and retention.



3. MYAN Alumni Network

Young people that have been engaged with MYAN have expressed strong interest and motivation to remain connected with each other and with MYAN, even after their official “term” as has concluded. This continuity is important because many MYAN alumni go on to achieve remarkable things in Australia and globally, and their stories are worth celebrating. An alumni network also ensures that even individuals beyond the predefined youth categories continue to have opportunities to stay engaged and contribute. They can have a strong role in representation for emerging leaders and act as mentors or role models.

To support this, young people suggested several avenues of engagement:

3.1. Engagement through MYAN’s Communications Channels

E-newsletter: Alumni could be featured through a dedicated “Alumni Highlight” section. Submissions might be collected on an ad hoc basis, with MYAN maintaining a standing Expression of Interest (EOI) link for alumni to share updates, projects, or initiatives. MYAN could also proactively reach out to alumni to showcase their work or amplify important causes.

LinkedIn: A private alumni LinkedIn group would provide a professional and accessible space for members to share their work, seek advice, and collaborate. It could also serve as a channel for MYAN to share relevant opportunities directly with alumni.

3.2. Alumni Events

Online Events: Informal skills-sharing sessions or webinars, led by alumni and facilitated by MYAN, could provide valuable peer-to-peer learning. These sessions might focus on topical issues, practical tools, or insights that alumni can apply in their ongoing work and advocacy.

In-Person Events: Biennial alumni gatherings, structured more like thematic reunions than formal conferences, would provide spaces for networking, collaboration, and inspiration. These events could be designed around a clear purpose or goal, with alumni actively involved in planning, fundraising, and securing sponsorship to cover costs.





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