



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**



Youth Participation Kit

16-25 year olds





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This kit is designed to support young people to be actively involved in their communities and the decisions that affect them.

Here, you can read about what youth participation is, what you can expect when you get involved, as well as tips for how to make a difference in your community.

We've also created a kit for young people aged 10 to 15 years old and handy resources, all available on the Department of Communities website here:

www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/youth-participation-kit



What is Youth Participation?

Youth participation is having a genuine say in decisions that impact your life, your peers, and your community. It's more than being asked what you think – it's about being respected, listened to, and involved meaningfully in shaping the world around you.

Whether it is in school, university, your workplace, community, or government – your perspective as a young person matters. Participation can be about improving your school, helping in your community, or making things fairer for others.

As a young person, your insights and contributions are invaluable. You know what matters to you and have expertise in being a young person. This is invaluable to making sure services and supports are relevant to young people and meet their needs.

When young people are involved:

- Programs, services, and policies can better reflect what young people need
- Communities are more inclusive and future-focused
- You gain skills, confidence, networks, and experience.

Participation empowers you to lead, collaborate, and create change – both now and into the future.



Why should you get involved?

Getting involved lets you:

- Share your ideas and be creative
- Help fix things you care about
- Build confidence and make new friends
- Learn new skills, including job ready skills
- Strengthen skills you already have
- Make your school, university or community better for everyone
- Meet new people
- Get experience for your resume
- Find a new hobby or activity.

Everyone has something valuable to contribute, and small actions often lead to big changes that make a positive difference.



Your rights and responsibilities

Australia has signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention). The Convention contains 54 articles that set out the rights that children and young people have. Every young person under the age of 18 has these rights.

One of these rights (Article 12) is the right to express your views and be involved in the matters that affect you. This includes the **right** to:

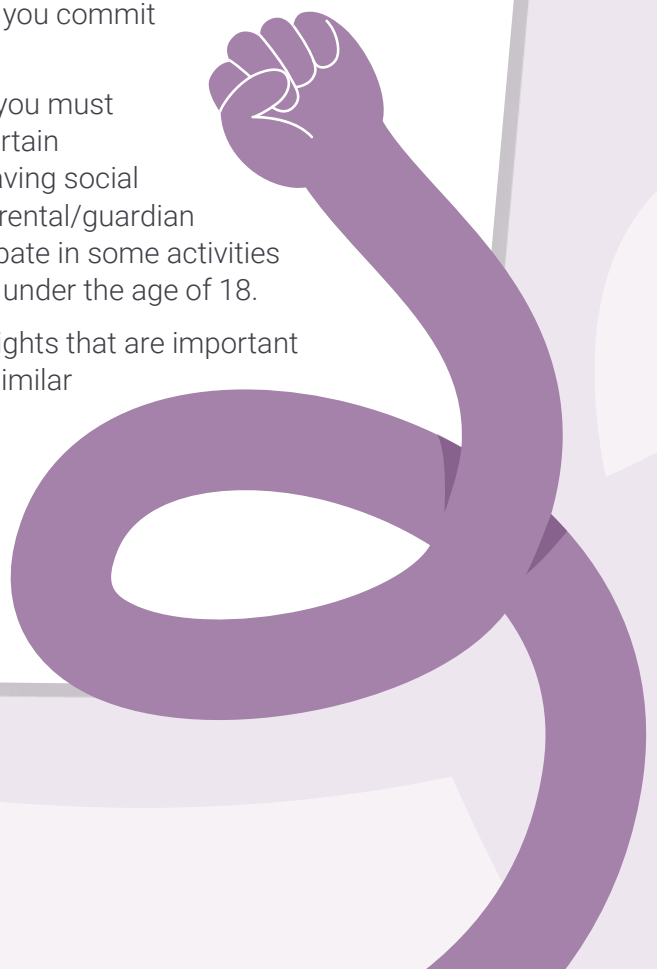
- Be heard and taken seriously
- Be included in decisions that affect your life
- Be safe, respected, and supported.

Being involved means you also have **right** to uphold, including to:

- Listen to other people's ideas
- Be respectful when you share your opinion
- Try your best and follow through if you commit to something.

In Australia, the law dictates how old you must be to do certain things and take on certain responsibilities, like driving a car or having social media profiles. You may also need parental/guardian written consent/permission to participate in some activities such as volunteering or work if you're under the age of 18.

If you're over 18 years, you still have rights that are important and protected. These rights are very similar to those outlined above, ensuring that you can have a say, be respected and safe, and help shape the systems that affect your life.



Ways you can get involved



Participation can happen in all sorts of ways. There's lots of ways you can get involved. We have listed a few ideas below, but you might think of some more!

You can:

Education

- * Join a committee, student representative council, or leadership position at school, university or TAFE.
- * Advocate for mental health or inclusion initiatives at school, university or TAFE.
- * Contribute to youth-led research or peer education programs.
- * Provide tutoring or mentoring to younger students or others who need some help.

Online

- * Join safe, positive groups.
- * Share ideas or creative work that helps others.
- * Take part in surveys or digital consultations.
- * Start or sign petitions about issues you care about.
- * Support social media accounts that speak on issues that are important to you.

Workplaces

- * Join or form a youth advisory committee within your organisation.
- * Speak up about wellbeing, equality, or workplace culture.
- * Advocate for fair employment conditions and accessibility.

Community

- * Be part of your local youth advisory council or advocate to create your own.
- * Volunteer with youth organisations or community groups.
- * Help co-design projects, events, or strategies that benefit young people.
- * Become a mentor to someone younger than you or someone in need.

Civic and Political Life

- * Enrol to vote if you haven't already.
- * Participate in youth parliaments or leadership programs.
- * Join national consultations or policy discussions.
- * Advocate for causes you care about through campaigns, political parties, or online platforms.

Finding where to get involved



If you have an idea of what you'd like to do, the next step is to find out where and how you can do it.

It is likely that there will be organisations you can get involved with who are already working in the space. Doing an online search can help you find opportunities once you've got an idea of what you're looking for. Some great places to start your search are:

- Visiting your local government office, local youth centre or Volunteer Resource Centre to talk to someone about where you might be able to get involved.
- Volunteering WA, which has an online database of opportunities.
- Searching volunteer job listings on places like YVolunteer, Seek, Indeed, or EthicalJobs.

If you're interested in youth issues and opportunities, there are also a couple of organisations who often share articles, ideas and opportunities through their channels. You might like to follow some of these groups on your social media platform of choice:

- Young People Connect WA to hear about opportunities to join the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council or become a Youth Week WA Ambassador
- Australian Government Office for Youth to learn about the National Youth Steering Committee and Advisory Groups
- Volunteering WA
- Volunteer Resource Centre
- Youth Affairs Council of WA
- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
- Commissioner for Children and Young People (for young people under the age of 18 years)

Choosing a group to get involved with

There are a lot of organisations and groups out there, so it's important to take the time to find the right one for you. Look for organisations that are working to achieve the goals that are important to you, and who you believe to be ethical and making a real difference.

You can find information on most organisations through their websites and social media channels (reading the comments section is a good idea), and through asking people who are familiar with the work they do.

When looking at different opportunities, it might be useful to ask yourself these questions:

- * Are their goals and values the same as mine?
- * Do their opportunities look useful and fun?
- * Can I participate close to where I live, work or study?
- * Do they seem ethical?
- * Does their work seem to be making a real difference?
- * Am I available for the times they need? Are they flexible with this?
- * Does it seem like there are opportunities to participate in decision-making?

What to expect when you get involved with an organisation



Organisations usually have policies, procedures and structures in place that organise how they do things.

It's important to remember that those things exist to make sure that the organisation works safely and effectively, so even though things may take a little longer to get done, the rules are there for a reason.

Some groups require induction, training or orientation, so it is important to be prepared and spend time learning about what they do before getting to work. It can sometimes seem a bit daunting, but this will give you a chance to see if the organisation suits you and whether you suit the organisation. Don't be afraid to pull out early if you are not happy – but once you have made a commitment, do your best to stick to it.

When you start out with an organisation, they should give you all the information you will need, including:

- guide to what you will be doing
- explanation of why and how your efforts will help
- background information about the organisation and what they do
- details of any policies, procedures or requirements you need to abide by
- who you can ask for help if you need it.

When you contribute your time, lived experience, and ideas to a project, advisory group, or consultation, you are providing valuable insights that improve decisions and outcomes.

It is fair and respectful for you to be acknowledged for your time and expertise when you participate in meetings or projects. Receiving acknowledgement recognises your contribution, helps reduce barriers to participation, and supports equity, ensuring that young people from all backgrounds can be involved.

Ways you could get acknowledged for your time

Acknowledgement for participation may not always be in the form of money.



You might receive:

- * An hourly or session-based payment for your participation.
- * Gift cards or vouchers if cash payments aren't possible.
- * Reimbursement for expenses, such as travel, internet data, or meals.
- * Honorariums (a set payment given to thank you for your time).
- * Professional development opportunities such as training or networking.
- * Certificates of participation or reference letters to support future study or employment.

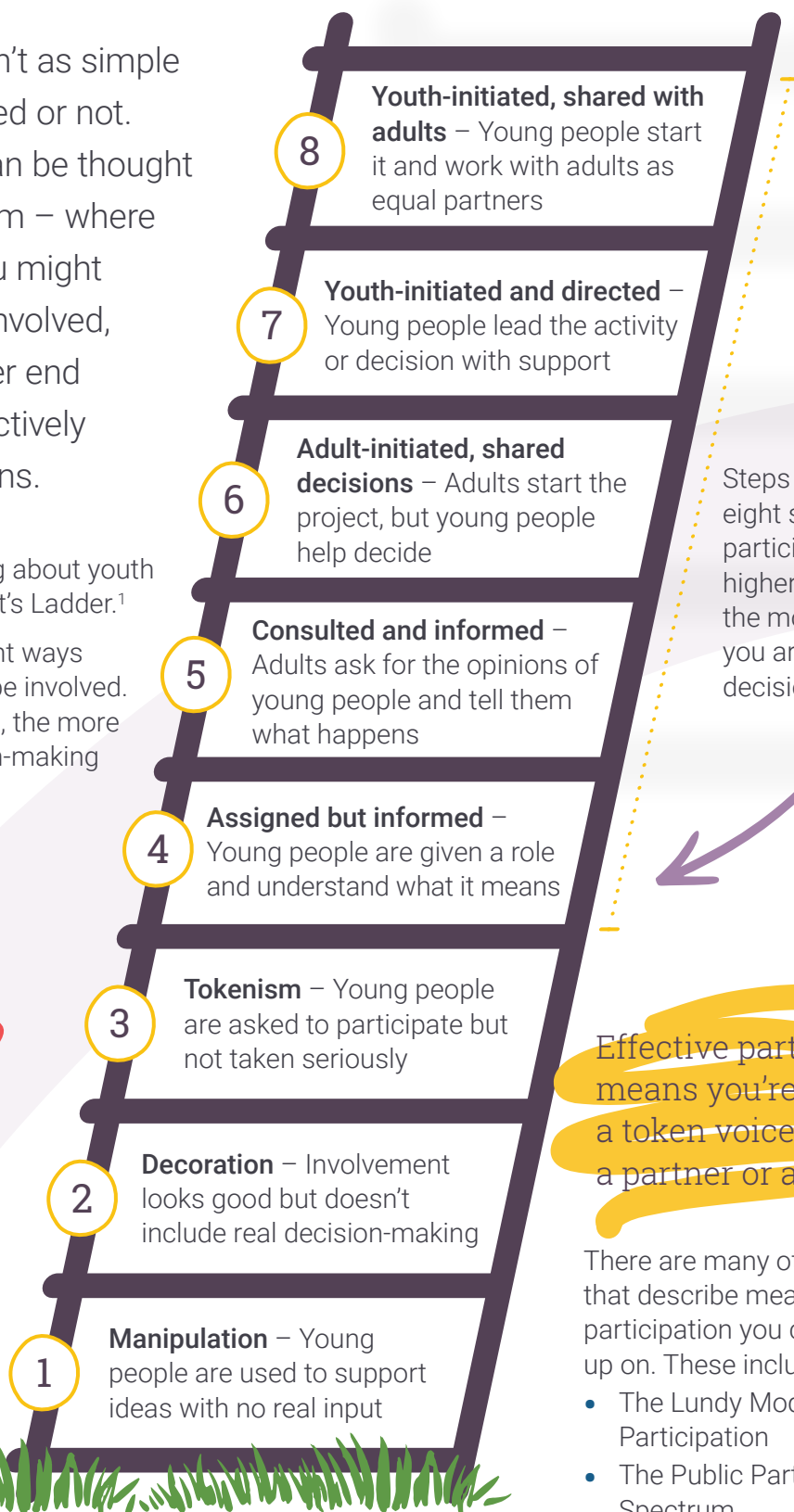
Being paid for your time is not about agreeing with the leaders or organisations; it is about valuing your voice and ensuring your participation is ethical and equitable.

What does meaningful participation look like?

Participation isn't as simple as being involved or not. Participation can be thought of as a spectrum – where on one end, you might only be lightly involved, and on the other end you might be actively making decisions.

One way of thinking about youth participation is Hart's Ladder.¹

This shows different ways young people can be involved. The higher the step, the more power and decision-making young people have.



Steps four to eight show real participation. The higher you go, the more involved you are in decision-making.

Effective participation means you're not just a token voice – you're a partner or a leader.

There are many other models that describe meaningful participation you can read up on. These include:

- The Lundy Model of Child Participation
- The Public Participation Spectrum

¹ Roger Hart, 1992: "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship"



What makes participation meaningful?

For youth participation to be effective, it must be:

- **Purposeful** – there's a clear reason you're involved.
- **Inclusive** – all backgrounds and identities are represented.
- **Safe and supported** – you're heard, not judged.
- **Transparent** – you know what's being done with your input.
- **Resourced** – you're not expected to volunteer endlessly without support.

How to be an effective participant

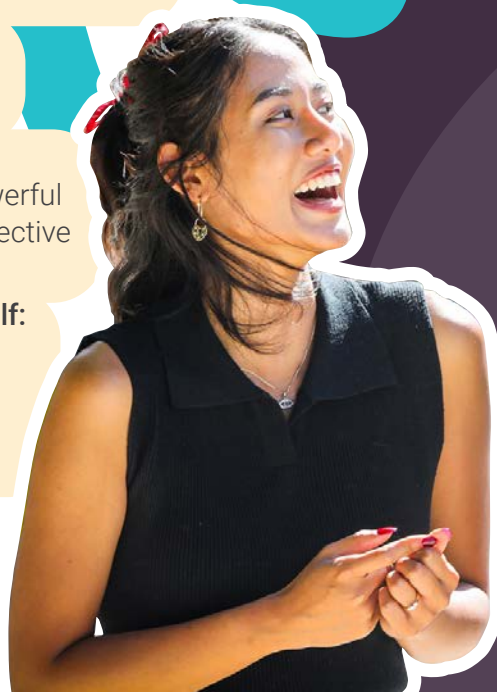
- * **Be informed:**
Learn about the issue, process, or organisation.
- * **Be confident:**
Your experience matters, so back yourself and share your unique views.
- * **Ask questions:**
Don't be afraid to challenge or clarify.
- * **Work with others:**
Collaboration is powerful and will be more effective than working alone.
- * **Take care of yourself:**
Advocacy and engagement can be draining – rest is important.

What should leaders and organisations do?

Organisations and leaders should:

- Provide genuine opportunities for young people to provide input.
- Be open to feedback and willing to share power.
- Make space for diverse voices.
- Recognise the value of lived experience.
- Offer support (financial, emotional, logistical) for young people to participate meaningfully.

If these things aren't happening – it's okay to raise concerns, suggest improvements, or step away.



Tips for getting involved and speaking up

- **Think about what matters to you** – school, university, environment, bullying, fairness?
- **Start small** – join a group, fill out a survey, or talk to a trusted mentor.
- **Don't worry about being perfect** – your perspective is valuable.
- **Work with others** – teamwork can make big things happen so consider joining a club or existing group that's doing something important .
- **Ask questions** – being curious helps you learn and grow.
- **Use your talents** – for example, art, writing, public speaking, teamwork.
- **Stay kind and confident** – your ideas have value.
- **Be patient** – real change takes time, and your efforts matter.
- **Only take on what you can** – it can be tempting to sign on to a lot, but it is okay to prioritise your education and other commitments.
- **Set goals** – Imagine where you want to be and what you want to be doing, having goals to achieve will help you get there.
- **Apply, apply, apply** – there are many opportunities available, apply for what you're interested in and be okay with not getting accepted for everything you apply for, just keep the grind. Apply, apply, apply!



Checklist: am I being included?

Use this checklist to reflect on your experience:

- * Do I feel safe to share my ideas?
- * Do adults listen to me and take me seriously?
- * Do I know what will happen with my feedback?
- * Do I get updates or results afterward?
- * Can I help plan or lead parts of the project?

If you answer 'no' to any of these, you might be part of a lower step on the ladder – and you can speak up or ask how you can be more involved.



Things to remember

Youth participation is about **respect, fairness, and inclusion.**

It's your right to have a say, and your responsibility to use your voice thoughtfully.

You don't need to wait to be older to get involved. Start where you are, use what you have, and take the first step.

Be true to yourself, everyone has something valuable to contribute, and small actions often lead to big changes that make a positive difference. Your voice matters, and so does the way you use it. Start with what's important to you. Talk to others. Join a group. Ask questions. Create something.



Participation
is a journey
– every small
step counts.





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