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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia



SURVEY SHOWS YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL MISUNDERSTOOD BY POLITICIANS

A new survey of young people shows that Australian politicians have a battle on their hands if they want to convince young people that they're aware of the issues that affect them.

The survey of almost 350 young people in WA found that only 2.8% of respondents 'strongly agreed' that politicians understood the issues facing young people. (Another 5% of respondents 'agreed').

The survey also found that only 5% of young people 'strongly agreed' that politicians talked about issues that mattered to them. (Another 40% of respondents 'agreed').

However, 68% of respondents said they took an active interest in politics, while more than 70% said voting should remain compulsory in Australia.

"What this survey tells us is that even though young people are actively interested in politics, they feel that politicians are completely out of touch with the issues that affect them," said YACWA CEO Ross Wortham.

The survey also found that although the majority of respondents were enrolled to vote, about 15% were either not enrolled or were unsure if they were enrolled.

"When asked whether they were likely to enrol to vote in the future, 11% said no, while almost 20% said they were unsure," said Mr Wortham.

"We know that there are almost 50,000 young people in WA who are eligible to vote, but are not enrolled.

"When we looked at the reasons given in this survey, several young people said they didn't know how to enrol, which is something that really needs to be addressed."

Mr Wortham said the young people surveyed had many good ideas about how to engage them in the democratic process.

"Many young people suggested there should be more education in schools about the major political parties and the importance of voting," he said, "While others suggested allowing people to vote online or via an app.

"Others said there should be more youth focused current affairs programs and political parties with only young members.

"But the most common suggestion was that politicians need to demonstrate to young people that they care about them and will listen to their concerns and take them seriously," he said.

The survey also found that almost 90% of young people said they regularly used social media to access news, 60% checked news websites and 55% watched news programs on TV.

And 36% of respondents believed the voting age in Australia should be lowered from 18 to 16.

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