



---

## Media Release

**EMBARGOED** until 12:01am, 5 December 2018

**Enquiries and interviews:** [youthrep@unyouth.org.au](mailto:youthrep@unyouth.org.au) or 0435 560 799.

### **2018 Youth Representative Consultation Report finds mental health to be at a crisis point amongst young Australians.**

The report comes after a six-month nationwide listening tour of young people conducted by the 2018 Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations, Amos Washington. Amos conducted 152 consultations across urban and rural areas in a diverse range of locations including schools, non-profits, and juvenile detention centres.

The top three issues raised in consultations were (1) mental health and wellbeing, (2) discrimination and inequality, and (3) education. The prevalence of mental health and wellbeing as an issue has significantly increased since last year's Youth Representative Report, with mental health raised as a concern in the vast majority of consultations.

The report also finds that only 43.7% of young people feel as though their opinions are respected by the community. Only 19.2% of young people feel their opinions are represented by politicians in government.

Amos said that this year's report clearly shows that young people need a seat at the policy decision-making table.

"Young Australians are passionate, engaged members of Australian society and the time has come for us to treat young people as valuable members of the community with important contributions to make," said Amos.

"Young people have unique experiences and perspectives, and our leaders can enact more meaningful policy if they actively engage with young people."

The report provides eight recommendations for Australia's leaders. Among these, the report calls for a lowering of the voting age to 16, the appointment of a federal Minister for Youth, the establishment of a federal youth advisory body, and a renewed focus on mental health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, and comprehensive sex education in school curriculums.

The full report, including the complete list of recommendations and findings for each state and territory, can be found at [unyouth.org.au/youthrep](http://unyouth.org.au/youthrep).

## **About the role**

The Youth Representative is the only role of its kind in Australia. The role is appointed annually by UN Youth Australia in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Running since 1999, the Youth Representative holds an extensive, nationwide consultative listening tour to engage with and discover the issues that are most important to young Australians.

After the listening tour, the Youth Representative travels to New York as a member of the Australian Mission to the United Nations, and delivers a speech on their findings to the General Assembly's Third Committee. This year's Youth Representative, Amos Washington, delivered his speech to the General Assembly in October, which can be viewed at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLh20pGkk\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLh20pGkk_c).

Amos Washington is 23 years old and has worked with UN Youth Australia since he was 18.

## **About the Consultation**

The Youth Representative conducts the largest entirely youth-led consultation of young people in Australia.

The listening tour took place between March and August 2018. Amos was hosted by schools, community groups, non-profit organisations, clubs and associations, Universities and Tafes, and juvenile detention centres. In 2018, the Youth Representative conducted 152 consultations across the country with young people from a diverse range of backgrounds. Over 38% of consultations were held outside capital cities.

Consultations were delivered in an interactive workshop style, and participants responded directly to this year's guiding question: *'What would Australia look like if young people had a greater say?'*

Broad data was collected from consultations based on conversations between the Youth Representative and the participants. Notes and drawings from participants were collected and recorded after every consultation.

In addition, a survey provided young people with an opportunity to have their voices heard without attending a physical consultation. Young people were also able to send in art or letters to the Youth Representative.

The Youth Representative facebook page documented the listening tour journey: [facebook.com/unyouthrep](https://www.facebook.com/unyouthrep).