



Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration

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Voices of Influence Australia

Office of the High Commissioner

United Nations

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Voices of Influence Australia ('VOI') makes the following submission in response to the call for input: views of youth-led and youth-focused organisations and institutions on the future of human rights for the development of the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration.

Voices of Influence Australia

1. Voices of Influence Australia ('VOI') is a youth-led organisation that functions to move and encourage the masses who are passive, individual consciences into active, collective voices for human rights globally.
2. As an organisation, VOI recognises and asserts the need for the voices of young people to be heard across a complexity of human rights.

Question 1 – What are the challenges the world is facing now, how will they affect the future of human rights, and what future do you want for human rights?

3. The world is currently experiencing a multitude of challenges that can, do and will affect human rights. One such example is unprecedented technological growth with current and emerging technologies representing opportunities to both promote and hinder human rights.
4. Technology has the potential, and has already been utilised, as a tool to perpetrate human rights abuses, such as misinformation, surveillance and radicalisation. For example, surveillance can be used to track and monitor people's movements, communications, and activities¹. The potential for surveillance to infringe on human rights

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2021). Human Rights and Technology: Final Report. Retrieved from <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/technology-and-human-rights/publications/final-report-human-rights-and-technology>.



can be seen through China's recent push to develop a nationwide Social Credit System, which generates a score for each citizen by compiling data collected from a person's social media, buying histories, location data, facial recognition video footage and more, with the corresponding credit then used to determine individual's access to housing, jobs, and transportation.² Further, technology has increasingly been used a tool for disinformation by undermining trust in institutions and inciting violence and hatred. This issue is compounded by unequal access to technology³.

5. However, technology also presents an opportunity to protect and promote human rights, for example, by increasing access to education. It is vital that human rights institutions, organisations and governments are proactive in the regulation of technology and ensure that human rights are placed at the centre of regulatory and legislative frameworks that concern digital technologies. This requires institutions to be on the front foot of emerging technologies and technological risks whilst remaining flexible and adaptive to new risks that emerge. VOI believes that this approach - a future-focused, evidence-based and proactive approach to the protection and promotion of human rights is what our future world needs.

Question 2 – What are your recommendations to decision and policymakers, including governments, civil society, international organisations, the United Nations, and others, to advance human rights in the future?

6. To advance human rights and empower marginalised groups, decision-makers and policymakers at all levels (including governments, civil society, international organisations, the United Nations ('UN'), and other stakeholders) must take deliberate

² Piper, Arthur. (2023). Digital surveillance's threat to human rights. Retrieved from <https://www.ibanet.org/article/CEE365AB-CC04-4E2C-91F6-D5F4D353A0A0>

³ Kertysova, K. (2018). Artificial Intelligence and Disinformation: How AI Changes the Way Disinformation is Produced, Disseminated, and Can Be Countered. *Security and Human Rights*, 29(1-4), 55-81. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02901005>



and comprehensive actions. The objective should be to create a future where communities and individuals actively play a role in leading the solutions to human rights issues which affect them the most and are active participants in shaping the future of human rights.

Inclusive Participation

7. First and foremost, it is imperative to establish inclusive platforms that amplify the voices of marginalised groups, particularly young women and gender-diverse individuals. These platforms should provide a safe and respectful space for people to share their experiences, insights, and recommendations. Establishing diverse taskforces, advisory panels, and consultative bodies composed of individuals from marginalised backgrounds incorporating their perspectives in policy discussions and decision-making processes is essential for crafting effective solutions that cater to their unique needs.

Capacity Building

8. Investment in educational programs and workshops to build the capacity of marginalised individuals to understand their rights, articulate their concerns, and engage effectively in advocacy is vital. Empowerment starts with knowledge and being provided/equipped with the relevant tools that enable people to drive positive change. By providing training and skills development opportunities, decision and policymakers can enhance the ability of these groups to engage in policy discussions, advocacy, and leadership roles.

Collaboration

9. Governments, civil society organisations, international bodies, and the UN must work together to create multi-dimensional strategies that address the systemic issues leading to human rights violations.



Legal Reforms

10. Existing legal frameworks should be reviewed to identify the areas that disproportionately impact marginalised groups. Where appropriate, laws should be amended (and created) to better safeguard rights and ensure equal protection. Furthermore, it is imperative that mechanisms are established to hold decision and policymakers accountable for the implementation of policies that in operation, harm human rights.
11. The path to advancing human rights requires a steadfast commitment from decision and policymakers. By creating inclusive spaces, raising awareness, building capacity, promoting representation, and fostering collaboration, a future can be realised where those who are most affected by human rights violations play a pivotal role in shaping policies.

Question 3 –What commitments and actions can young people take towards advancing human rights in the future?

12. Young people are actively designing and creating their new opportunities. These opportunities allow them to commit to, engage with and build tangible ways to work towards advancing human rights in the future.
13. Across Australia, in the past five to ten years, there has been a noticeable increase in youth-led organisations. Many organisations provide young people a platform to develop their understanding of human rights, engage with human rights related topics, and participate in professional development opportunities with a focus on human rights.
14. VOI itself is founded on the principle of improving youth participation in the governance and implementation of human rights. Our organisation is led by young people for young people and works to reconceptualise young people as a solution to existing problems by



creating spaces and opportunities to facilitate youth leadership, representation and advocacy relating to the protection and advancement of human rights.

15. VOI has been created to address a gap in the human rights space generally; the engagement of young people. VOI is leveraging its platform to engage passive masses to become active voices. Similarly, other youth-led organisations are providing more spaces for young people to critically engage with human rights. Young people's involvement in these organisations is one avenue to commit to and action involvement with human rights now and into the future. However, they depend on adequate resourcing and funding.
16. To enable youth-led organisations platforms that provide young people avenues and opportunities to commit to and act for human rights (and grow capacity sustainably), increased and ongoing support and funding is required. The increased resources will provide organisations with new ways to better engage young people and are a means to demonstrate the value of young people committing and acting for human rights now and into the future.

Concluding Comments

17. Voices of Influence Australia thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. Should you have any queries or require further submissions, please contact the undersigned at your convenience.

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