



Youth Environment Council of SA: Where are they now?



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Years involved: 2003-05, President 2005

Current role: Primary school teacher

I teach a Year 5/6 class at a state school in Melbourne, and the environmental awareness I picked up early through YEC is something I try to impart to my students now as part of everyday teaching. My students are actively involved in writing letters and finding solutions to sustainability issues in their community, and I'm really proud of them.

What was the most significant change that came from your involvement with the YEC?

I think it was realising that there were others who- although I assumed everyone else was like me- had very a strong passion and were honestly experts in some really specific issues. I think some amazing changes came out of the YEC in different communities- such as one student I remember managing to get a local marine species listed as protected in their area-and although that wasn't something I was personally involved in it stuck with me and I realised how real the possibilities are to make change if you care about something enough.

Why was this important?

What I learned during my involvement with YEC has influenced me in the way I teach today. I think sometimes it's easy to get bogged down and quite depressed by the enormity of some of the environmental problems we face today; and even more so if you're a child and not as well equipped to deal with that. But when you make very young people aware of some of these issues, they do get over the initial shock and they actually start to think about action, and that's something everybody needs to encourage.

What advice would you give to current and future members of the YEC?

As a young person, if you're willing and have the nouse to work within an adult framework (such as the YEC), then people will listen to you. And that's really powerful.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I had so many opportunities opened up for me as a YEC member, such as being nominated as President and being invited as a keynote speaker for an AAEE (Australian Association of Environmental Education) conference at the age of 16. But I think at the time I didn't realise the gravity of that, and the position I was in to actually make some real change if I considered it carefully enough. So really, just know that you have so much to give and when those opportunities come up, make the most of them.