



Youth Environment Council of SA: Where are they now?



Name: Erin Henson

Years involved: 1998-2004

Current role: State Government.

I started as a graduate working with Zero Waste SA (now Green Industries SA) as a Project Manager, which was fantastic. I first managed an Australian Government project for waste oil and then managed the Wipe Out Waste program.

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

The first thought that comes to mind is probably confidence, and an understanding of how State Government works. My involvement in the YEC led me down a path to getting a job with State Government as a graduate first thing out of university. To this day, I think it really helped that I knew the Chief Executive of the Department for Environment and Heritage through my involvement in the YEC, especially given he was on the selection panel for the graduate intake. When I first joined the YEC in 1998, I never knew it really would have helped me to get my first full time “proper job” in 2005!

A main role of the YEC was to advise the Minister on what young people thought about environmental issues and what they felt was important. We spoke at various events about the environmental issues that concerned us. It was so worth it, not only for the students, but also the Minister to get a sense of ‘this is what's important to young people.’ That was the point of the YEC at the time, to speak to the Environment Minister about current issues, and that’s what kept us going.

Why was this important?

Because of the long time I spent with the YEC, I experienced the benefits of a good community of people that had formed. When you're high school age you don't necessarily have those opportunities, ones that put you with adults as well as other young people doing this sort of stuff. I always saw it as a huge privilege to be involved with the YEC.

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

Hang in there and get involved. Get involved a bit beyond your comfort zone. What kept me going was the relationships and ultimately the friendships that were formed.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

One thing that I remember well was the passion and determination of people like Jo Bishop to get youth involved with the decision makers in Government. Others like Nick Goode, Verity Bone and David Butler also put so much work and effort into the YEC.