

On Human Rights Day, the AASW calls on all governments to commit to immediate action on climate change and celebrates the advocacy of young people in striving for a more just and sustainable world. Having access to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a fundamental human right and something that governments worldwide are failing to achieve. The theme this year is ‘Youth standing up for human rights’ and it also marks 30 years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is incredibly pertinent given it is young people and children who are showing real leadership in the fight for climate justice. Article 24 of the Convention states that appropriate measures must be taken against the dangers and risks of environmental pollution for the wellbeing of a child. Australian social workers strongly support young people’s collective action to claim their right to a sustainable future, as they have shown in the Fridays for Future which sees young people across Australia and internationally rally for action on climate change. AASW National President Christine Craik said, “Young people are actually fighting for their own and for everyone else’s human rights, because global leadership is failing to act on climate change. “We reject suggestions from our country’s leaders that it is climate activists who are making young people anxious, or that young people should not protest and rally on the issue of climate change. “Article 15 of the Convention upholds their right to do so, stating that we must ‘recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly’. “If young people are anxious, it is because they can see the consequences of climate inaction from our political decision-makers. We know as social workers, that having a voice and working towards some control of your own future actually combats anxiety and mental health issues. Like everyone else, they are seeing the lungs of the world disappearing in catastrophic weather events both here in Australia and overseas. “We commend young people for exercising their right under the Convention to advance what we are seeing and experiencing is a national and global emergency.” Today reminds us that young people are the ones who will live with the long-term consequences decisions taken today. Like all of us, young people want to see our decision makers focus on our long-term needs and the right of all young people to a clean and healthy planet. Decision-makers must resist the temptation to put convenience and short term interests ahead of long-term protection of rights. The climate activism of young people shows that they understand this also. Ms Craik said, “The right to a clean, life-sustaining natural environment is key for the vision of the future for many children and young people. They believe that the generation who are currently making decisions do not appreciate the long-term consequences of their climate inaction for future generations. “In this context it is important to recognise today’s young people in their collective action and to recognise how important this action is in setting up a sustainable, healthy and just world.”

## Contacts

Angela Yin  
03 9320 1005  
mailto: [media@asw.asn.au](mailto:media@asw.asn.au)