



**THE HON KATE ELLIS MP
MINISTER FOR YOUTH
MINISTER FOR SPORT**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Celebrating International Youth Day

Young Australians are better educated than any previous generation about the environment and the need to protect it, the Minister for Youth and Sport, Kate Ellis, said ahead of the United Nations International Youth Day tomorrow – 12 August 2008.

The theme for this year's event is *Youth and Climate Change: Time for Action*, reflecting the growing call by young people for action to protect the planet from environmental degradation.

"Young people are more aware than ever of the importance of the environment to their future and the potential impact of climate change on Australia's future prosperity," Ms Ellis said from Beijing.

"International Youth Day is a perfect opportunity to recognise the growing role young people are playing in local efforts to care for the environment, and I encourage more Australians to follow their lead."

"While the Beijing Games is showcasing the sporting talent and achievements of our young athletes, International Youth Day recognises the commitment and drive of young Australians in other areas, such as the environment."

"Young people are making a important contributions in various field, including volunteering or campaigning to raise awareness about particular issues affecting their community.

"About a third of young Australians do volunteer work, and one in 10 is actively involved in civic or political groups, trying to make the world a better place."

Ms Ellis said Elizabeth Shaw and Melanie Poole, two young Australians who have been chosen to represent young Australians at the UN General Assembly in New York later this year, were examples of the talent and drive of young Australians.

Ms Shaw, from Western Australia and Ms Pool, from Canberra, have talked to young people nationwide about the issues they find most pressing, and will present their findings at the UN General Assembly.

"These young women are among many young Australians who are making outstanding contributions to their communities at the local or international level," Ms Ellis said.

“The Australian Government recognises the importance of the youth voice on various issues facing the world today and supports the international leadership and participation of young Australians.

“The current generation of Young Australians does not have to wait its turn to participate in public debate and discussion”.

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