

## Your Voice Matters

A Guide to Public Speaking  
on Political Policies

**Central Coast Conservative Alliance**

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Concerned Young Australians



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A Guide to Public Speaking on Political Policies

Prepared by the Central Coast Conservative Alliance

*"One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city, and then it can change a state, and then it can change a nation." — Barack Obama*

## What's Inside

1. Why Speak Up About Policies?
2. Understanding Political Policies
3. Doing Your Research
4. Building Your Speech
5. Delivering With Confidence
6. Keeping It Respectful
7. Handling Questions and Disagreements
8. Managing Nerves
9. Common Mistakes to Avoid
10. Your Speech-Day Checklist
11. Speech Planning Template
12. Where to Learn More

## 12. Where to Learn More

### Understanding Australian politics and policies

- **Parliamentary Education Office** — [peo.gov.au](http://peo.gov.au) — explains how Australian government works
- **The Conversation** — [theconversation.com/au](http://theconversation.com/au) — expert analysis in plain language

### Improving your public speaking

- **Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program** — structured speaking practice
- **TED Talks** — watch how great speakers structure and deliver talks
- **School debating teams** — an excellent way to practise arguing both sides

### Getting involved

- **Your local council** — many have youth advisory committees
- **Youth parliaments** — YMCA Youth Parliament runs in most states
- **Community organisations** — volunteer with groups working on issues you care about

**Final thought:** Every great speaker started as a beginner. The more you practise, the more confident you'll become. Your generation has important things to say about the future — so stand up, speak out, and make your voice heard.

## 11. Speech Planning Template

Use this template to plan your speech.

**MY POLICY TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY POSITION (for / against / proposing change):** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY AUDIENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OPENING – How will I grab attention?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**MY MAIN STATEMENT:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**ARGUMENT 1:**

Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

Why it matters: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARGUMENT 2:**

Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

Why it matters: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARGUMENT 3:**

Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

Why it matters: \_\_\_\_\_

**OPPOSING VIEW I WILL ADDRESS:**

They say: \_\_\_\_\_

I respond: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONCLUSION – My call to action:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**MY SOURCES:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Why Speak Up About Policies?

Political policies are the rules and plans that governments create to manage things like education, healthcare, the environment, and community safety. These decisions affect **your life right now** — and they will shape the world you grow up in.

Speaking publicly about policies is one of the most powerful things you can do as a young person because:

- **You bring a fresh perspective.** Adults don't always see issues the way young people do.
- **You are directly affected.** Policies on education, climate, mental health, and employment impact your generation the most.
- **You can influence change.** Decision-makers listen when young people speak up clearly and confidently.
- **You develop lifelong skills.** Public speaking, critical thinking, and civic engagement are valuable no matter what career you choose.

**Remember:** You don't need to be an expert or have all the answers. You just need to be informed, honest, and willing to share your perspective.

## 2. Understanding Political Policies

Before you can speak about a policy, you need to understand what it is and how it works.

### What is a policy?

A policy is a plan of action adopted by a government, party, or organisation. For example:

- A plan to make public transport free for students under 18
- A rule requiring schools to teach First Nations history
- A proposal to increase funding for youth mental health services
- A plan to reduce carbon emissions by 2035

### Key questions to ask about any policy

1. **What problem is this policy trying to solve?**
2. **Who benefits?** Who might be disadvantaged?
3. **How will it be paid for?** What are the costs?
4. **Is there evidence that it will work?** Tried elsewhere?
5. **What are the alternatives?** Is there a better way?

**Try This:** Pick a policy in the news right now. Write down answers to each of the five questions above. If you can't answer one, that's a research opportunity!

## 10. Your Speech-Day Checklist

- I have researched my topic using at least 3 credible sources
- My speech has a clear opening, body (2–3 arguments), and conclusion
- I have evidence to support each of my main points
- I have acknowledged at least one opposing viewpoint
- My conclusion has a clear call to action
- I have prepared cue cards (numbered, large text, dot points)
- I have practised out loud at least 3 times
- I have timed my speech and it fits the time limit
- I have prepared for possible questions
- I have done my breathing exercises

## 9. Common Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake	What to Do Instead
Reading your entire speech word-for-word	Use dot-point cue cards and speak naturally
Making claims without evidence	Back up every key point with a fact, statistic, or example
Only presenting your side	Acknowledge opposing views, then explain why you disagree
Using jargon or complicated language	Speak plainly — if a 12-year-old can't follow, simplify
Speaking too fast	Slow down, pause between points, and breathe
Getting personal or insulting	Criticise the policy, not the person behind it
Ending weakly with "So, yeah..."	Finish with a strong statement or call to action

## 3. Doing Your Research

Good research is the backbone of a strong speech. An audience will respect you far more if your claims are backed by evidence.

### Where to find reliable information

- **Government websites** (e.g., [aph.gov.au](http://aph.gov.au)) — official policy documents and parliamentary debates
- **Reputable news outlets** — The Guardian, The Conversation
- **Research organisations** — Grattan Institute, Australia Institute, Lowy Institute
- **Community organisations** — groups directly affected by the policy
- **Statistics** — Australian Bureau of Statistics ([abs.gov.au](http://abs.gov.au))

### How to spot unreliable sources

- No author or organisation is named
- Extreme or emotional language with no evidence
- The source only presents one side
- It asks you to share before reading
- It contradicts multiple credible sources

**Watch Out:** Social media posts, memes, and YouTube videos are not research sources on their own. Always verify claims through credible sources.

## Taking good notes

When you research, always write down:

- The **key fact or quote**
- The **source** (who said it, where, when)
- Whether it **supports or challenges** your position

## 4. Building Your Speech

A great speech has a clear structure. Think of it like a house — it needs a strong foundation, solid walls, and a roof that brings it all together.

### A. Opening (10% of your speech)

Grab attention and state your main point. You could:

- Start with a surprising fact or statistic
- Tell a short, relevant personal story
- Ask a thought-provoking question
- Use a brief quote from someone respected

Then clearly state your position: "*Today I want to talk about why [policy] matters to young Australians, and why I believe we should [support/oppose/change] it.*"

## 8. Managing Nerves

Even experienced speakers get nervous. Nerves are a sign that you care about doing well.

### Before the speech

- **Prepare thoroughly.** Confidence comes from knowing your material.
- **Practise out loud** at least 3–5 times. Practise in front of a friend or family member.
- **Visit the venue** beforehand if possible, so it feels familiar.
- **Breathe.** Try box breathing: in for 4 counts, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4. Repeat 3 times.
- **Arrive early** so you can settle in without rushing.

### During the speech

- Focus on your **message**, not on yourself.
- Find **friendly faces** in the audience and speak to them.
- If you lose your place, **pause, breathe, and check your notes.**
- Remember: the audience **wants you to succeed.**

**Reframe your nerves:** Instead of thinking "I'm scared," tell yourself "I'm excited." The physical feeling is almost identical, but the mindset shift makes a real difference.

## 7. Handling Questions and Disagreements

After your speech, you may face questions or pushback. This is a good thing — it means people are engaged!

### Tips for Q&A sessions

- **Listen fully** before responding. Don't interrupt.
- **Repeat or rephrase the question** so everyone can hear: "So the question is about..."
- **Stay calm.** If someone is aggressive, take a breath. Respond to the content, not the tone.
- **It's okay to say "I don't know."** Follow with: "I'd be happy to look into that."
- **Bridge back to your main point:** "That connects to what I was saying about..."

### When someone disagrees

1. Thank them for sharing their view
2. Find common ground: "I agree that [shared concern] is important..."
3. Respectfully explain where you differ and why
4. Avoid a back-and-forth argument — make your point and move on

### B. Body (80% of your speech)

Present 2–3 strong arguments. For each one:

1. **State** your point clearly
2. **Support** it with evidence (facts, statistics, examples)
3. **Explain** why it matters — connect it back to real life

**The Rule of Three:** Three arguments are easier for an audience to remember than five. Pick your three strongest points and develop them well.

### C. Acknowledging the Other Side

A strong speaker shows they have considered different viewpoints:

*"Some people argue that [opposing view]. I understand this concern, however [your response with evidence]."*

This makes you appear fair, thoughtful, and well-prepared.

### D. Conclusion (10% of your speech)

- Summarise your key points briefly
- Restate your position with conviction
- End with a call to action: What do you want your audience to do, think, or feel?

## 5. Delivering With Confidence

What you say matters — but *how* you say it matters just as much.

### Voice

- **Speak slowly.** Nerves make us speed up. Pause between points.
- **Vary your tone.** A flat voice loses attention.
- **Project.** Speak to the person at the back of the room.
- **Pause for effect.** After an important point, pause for 2–3 seconds.

### Body language

- **Stand tall.** Good posture shows confidence.
- **Make eye contact.** Look at different parts of the audience.
- **Use hand gestures naturally.** Don't grip the podium.
- **Move with purpose.** Avoid pacing or swaying.

### Using notes

- Use **dot-point cue cards**, not a full script.
- Write key words in **large, clear text**.
- Number your cards in case you drop them.

## 6. Keeping It Respectful

Talking about politics can get heated. As a young speaker, you can stand out by being **passionate but respectful**.

### Golden rules

- **Attack the policy, not the person.** Say "This policy fails to address youth unemployment" rather than "The minister is an idiot."
- **Use facts, not insults.** Evidence is always more persuasive than name-calling.
- **Respect your audience.** Some may disagree — that's healthy democracy.
- **Be honest.** If you don't know something, say so.
- **Acknowledge complexity.** Most policy issues are not simple.
- **Be inclusive.** Consider how policies affect people from different backgrounds.

**Important:** Being respectful does not mean being silent. You can strongly disagree with a policy while still treating everyone with dignity. Passion and respect go hand in hand.