

## EXTRA

# Well connected

Young Australians are searching for ways to get their voices heard in the decision making process.



▶ OPENING DOORS: Olly Tripodi (right) with federal MP Tim Watts

For a generation more connected than ever before – through hits, handles and hashtags – the one connection that’s not happening for them is a link to politics and parliament.

Born between 1982 and 2003, the Millennials number 6.92 million in Australia, 30 per cent of the population.

While research indicates they are typically tolerant, open minded and happy, that same research also suggests only 3 per cent trust and only 6 per cent are inspired by governments.

Many are not even bothering to vote, with the Australian Electoral Commission estimating that of the 1.2 million Australians who have not registered for the electoral roll, 46 per cent are aged 18 to 29.

So when Victorian Olly Tripodi came to Canberra earlier this year he was on a mission.

Elected as the first ever Millennial Leader after a nationwide hunt, Olly became the face of MTV Movement.

Run by television channel MTV, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka and Deloitte Digital, with support from the House of

Representatives, MTV Movement was a nationally focused campaign aimed at connecting youth with politics.

In meetings with MPs, lobbyists and journalists at Parliament House, Olly had a clear message to deliver.

“There are a whole lot of beliefs and ideals that young people hold dear. And they’re drastically underrepresented in the decision making process,” he said.

## “Young people are an engaged demographic and want their voices heard”

“So if I can come here and help let politicians and change makers know that young people are an engaged demographic and want their voices heard, that’s a good thing.”

Among the MPs who met with Olly were Speaker Bronwyn Bishop (Mackellar, NSW), longest serving member of the House of Representatives Philip Ruddock (Berowra, NSW), youngest ever federal MP Wyatt Roy (Longman, Qld), first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives Ken Wyatt (Hasluck, WA), and Deputy Leader

of the Australian Greens, Adam Bandt (Melbourne, Vic). Olly also met with his local federal MP Tim Watts (Gellibrand, Vic).

He said a lot of the discussions focused on how to get young people into the decision making process.

“So we’ve been talking about what youth engagement and opinion actually looks like. Is it jumping online, and signing petitions, and sharing things on Facebook? Or is it a sit-down meeting with young people, and interest groups, and young people and politicians?”

For Olly, one of the outcomes of the discussions was a broader understanding that young people’s engagement with politics should be the same as any other engagement that exists.

“It’s about expressing opinion, expressing belief, and trying to enact the wheels of change,” he said.

The week was also about opening doors for other young people and youth advocates, so that those who would follow could build on the discussions and not have to start from scratch.

At the end of the week, Olly was heartened that parliament is more than what you see on TV.

“One of the takeaway messages that I’ll have for this week is that politics, particularly parliamentary politics, is only a small snippet of what takes place,” he said.

“So the brutality you see on TV, and the sort of screaming matches you see across the chamber, isn’t a fair reflection of how conciliatory most politicians are.

“It looks like it’s a chest thumping sort of fight, but what it really is, is a whole collection of people that do really care about their community and are trying to do good things. So it’s a contest of ideas.”

To connect with MTV Movement visit: [www.mtv.com.au/shows/featured/movement](http://www.mtv.com.au/shows/featured/movement) ■