




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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ADJOURNMENT

Evans, Ms E

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (7.15 pm): I rise to speak about Ella Evans, a year 11 student at St Patrick's College in Townsville. She is a Darumbal woman from the Rockhampton region and recently Ella was selected to attend the United Nations Youth National Conference in Adelaide. The conference was themed 'Power, diplomacy and influence'. She has written a speech for me to read out this evening and these are her words—

Young people are often given a bad reputation for being disengaged from politics or important issues. The current generation of young people, part of the 'me, me, me' generation are often perceived as being lazy, complacent and self-obsessed. However, recent studies such as the ABC 'What's Up in Your World Survey' suggest this is not the case. We, the youth of Australia, are actually a group of hardworking, compassionate people who are worried about the future of the planet. We are a generation that is immensely politically aware, yet only 7% of us are confident that politicians are working to advance our interests. Our lack of confidence is arguably because we are rarely provided with opportunities and platforms in which we are able to actively engage with the political system.

The United Nations Youth National Conference is an example of an initiative that helps to foster a positive representation of young people, their opinions and their political consciousness. I was lucky enough to participate in this event in June this year. While at the conference, I engaged with over 100 young people from across Australia and New Zealand who were passionate about national and international issues. Many of these young people were already developing strong political views, were actively engaging in politics and community service initiatives, and were making a positive impact within their home communities. We participated in activities such as panel discussions about the news, current affairs and media. We were given opportunities to challenge current political policies and initiatives, and posed thought provoking and mature questions to representatives from the national media. I feel that opportunities which allow young people to engage with the political process are rare. I am a young indigenous woman who is passionate about the issues our youth face, and as an active and engaged member advocating for the future of my community, I often feel I am unheard.

Providing young people with greater opportunities to be involved in discussions about the future of the nation challenges the notion that young people are apathetic. We must provide a platform for the young to voice their concerns, hopes and aspirations. We must ensure that we include young people in political and social conversations to encourage diversity in political decision making.

Remember, it is my generation who will inherit the legacy of your decisions.

Wise words from a 16-year-old.