



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement



*Adult  
Assistant*

*&*

*Chaplain*

*Pack*



*Never underestimate the students!*



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

November 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a brief information package for people who are interested in taking on the role of being an Adult Assistant to a YCS Group. The YCS Movement is run for, by and among secondary school students, and yet the Adult Assistants and Chaplains play a vital role in the development of a group.

The first part of this pack, Pages 3– 11, is general information about the YCS Movement. The second section contains more details about the role of the Adult Assistant.

Please take this opportunity to find out what the Young Christian Students Movement is all about and the extremely rewarding role that you could play in developing the faith and leadership of secondary schools students through being an Assistant to the YCS.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about this Information Pack please contact the National Formation Coordinator, Vicky Burrows on the following details:

Vicky Burrows

Mobile: 0412529656

Email: [vicky.burrows@aycs.org.au](mailto:vicky.burrows@aycs.org.au)

Thank you for taking this time to find out about YCS. For further information about the role of Adult Assistant contact us to obtain the *Guide to Forming and Recruiting AAs* and *Everything and Nothing- AA Training Program*.

Yours in the Faith

Elizabeth McFarlane,  
AYCS National Chairperson  
Year 11 Student



*Never Underestimate the Students?*



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Introductory formation for new Adult Assistants

The following steps are useful for preparing new Adult Assistants before they begin work with a YCS group.

### **Step One**

Invite the potential Adult Assistant to meet with the worker or YCS contact to learn basic information about the YCS and their role. We recommend the following information should be provided at the meeting which is available in the AA and Chaplains kit downloadable from the internet.

- Intro to YCS- purpose and vision
- YCS Creed
- YCS Principles
- The Three Truths
- The Review of Life
- A student run Movement
- Holistic Formation
- The Role an Adult Assistant
- How to start a YCS Group if relevant

### **Step Two**

Where possible the Adult Assistant should be given the opportunity to visit another YCS group and see how they work. This will give them the chance to also talk to another Adult Assistant and see them in action.

### **Step Three**

The Adult Assistant meets with the worker or another Adult Assistant to complete a personal Review of Life. This ensures that the new Adult Assistant understands the Review of Life and takes their own personal action, making them a good example to the students.

### **Step Four**

The AA is now ready with basic formation to support and attend YCS meetings – with the ongoing support outlined below.

### **Step Five**

The ongoing formation and support of an Adult Assistant is very important and we encourage where possible an Adult Assistant meets with other adults to be reviewing their experiences as well as learning new skills and furthering their formation. How this occurs will differ from diocese to diocese but it is a very important aspect of the ongoing development of YCS groups and student leaders.



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Introduction to YCS

### **Purpose and Vision**

The Young Christian Students Movement (YCS) is an international movement that is run for secondary school students, by the students themselves. The Movement aims to empower students to take action in their own lives, in order to change the world around them in the light of their faith and beliefs. The YCS is called to live the mission of Christ amongst the student body and we are therefore committed to providing the secondary school students of Australia with the wonderful formation in both reflection and action based in our Catholic faith, that is the trademark of the our Movement and the Review of Life method.

The YCS is currently active in 6 dioceses around Australia and in 85 countries across the world. The Movement was inspired by a young priest named Joseph Cardijn who believed that young people could, and must, be the ones who took action in their daily lives to bring about the Kingdom of God. Therefore YCS has always ensured that students talk, review, plan and co-ordinate the Movement together with other students. Adults (including Chaplains) are important for supporting the YCS, but they must never run the Movement.

The method developed by Cardijn for doing this is called the *Review of Life*. This method has three main sections: SEE, JUDGE & ACT. Beginning with the See Section, students examine a situation that is happening in their life, challenge each other to look at the impact of the situation on the people involved, and investigate what truly caused it to occur. They then make a judgement about what they have seen. This judgement is reflective rather than critical, students relate the situation to their faith and what they think should be happening. In doing this they are able to decide what their beliefs and their faith are calling them to do. Following from this, in the Act section, the students work out what they would like to change and plan an action to achieve this.

As you would be able to tell, the *Review of Life* can lead to a wide variety of actions being taken by students. This is one of the strengths of YCS because the Movement is always relevant to whatever the concerns of students currently are. It is therefore important to make sure a YCS group has the freedom to be creative in their use of the *Review of Life* and the in actions that they take.

*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>4</sup>



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Structure

The YCS functions at the local, diocesan, national and international levels. The most important level is local, amongst the groups that exist in Schools, Parishes and Communities. Two members of each group represent the group at the diocesan level, these members make up the Diocesan Council or Co-ordination Team. Then every 6 months there is a meeting of the National Executive. This team is made up of one or two representatives from each diocese. Finally there is the international level, with co-ordination meetings held once a year and a World Council every 4 years. This structure ensures that all members are represented at each level of the Movement.

Where possible the Diocesan Council and the National Executive employ people to work for the Movement. While these workers are obviously not secondary school students, they are employed by students and are always directed by the student leaders of the YCS Movement.



*judge...*



*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>5</sup>



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## YCS Creed

As Young Christian Students we believe in God. We believe that God created the universe and that we, as part of God's creation, are invited to help complete God's plan.

We believe that the earth has been entrusted to us, to care for, to nurture and to respect. People, as God's creation, have a dignity and worth beyond measure, and deserve to be treated with respect and understanding.

We believe the Holy Spirit empowers us to live active lives following the example of Jesus Christ. We do this through communicating our thoughts, opinions and emotions and accepting and loving each other unconditionally.

We believe that our schools should promote these values through encouraging students to form and question their own opinions and beliefs, and treating each student as a worthwhile individual who has unique needs and talents. Our schools should educate for life.

And we believe that Jesus calls us to live through actions, not just words.

Amen.

## YCS Prayer

Dear Jesus,  
Please fill us with your spirit of love.  
Help us to SEE the world as you do,  
To JUDGE with your heart, and to ACT with  
The strength and courage you have shown us  
As we work to transform our world  
Amen



*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>6</sup>



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## YCS Principles

1. The Young Christian Students' Movement of Australia is led for, by and among secondary school students.

2. It is inspired by and wants to live the mission of Jesus Christ among secondary school students.

3. It has a specific task of formation and education of secondary school students.

4. It believes in the Review of Life (it reflects on the encounters of students, judges these encounters in light of their faith and develops action) as its method of education.

5. Its faith in Jesus Christ challenges students to an active response among, with and on behalf of all secondary school students.

6. It commits itself to working for justice and peace, especially among secondary school students.

7. It is a Local, Diocesan, National and International Movement and accepts that it has responsibility at all these levels.



*Never Underestimate the Students!*



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## The Three Truths

*The Three Truths* is something that was used by Joseph Cardijn to explain the mission and spirituality of the YCS Movement. Understanding *The Three Truths* gives an integral understanding of what YCS aims to achieve.

### **1. The Truth of Faith**

We believe that every single human being has a dignity and worth beyond measure. As Cardijn said, we believe that everyone is worth "more than all the Gold in the world."

See... The reason that we believe this is because every person was created by God and created in God's image. And because everyone is created by God, we all have a part to play in creating the Kingdom of God here on earth. When you believe someone is created by God and has a unique role to play in the world, then they are definitely worth more than any amount of money. This is what our faith is truly about.

Because everyone has this dignity and worth, each person has the right to be able to live in peace and justice, the right to be free from exploitation and war and hate, and the right to be treated with respect by every other person.

### **2. The Truth of Experience**

The truth of faith (above) is what we believe. But when we look around us we experience so many situations where people aren't treated with that dignity and worth. We see poverty, wars, lies, huge gaps between the rich and the poor, racism, unjust treatment of refugees, consumerism, people who only care about material things, and generally a world where money is worth more than people.

In the student world we can see discrimination against young people, pressure for exams, boredom, bullying, unacceptable student/teacher ratios, and schools where students have no "say" in how things are done.

In each of these situations we see or feel a contradiction between our faith and our experience. And every time we see a contradiction, our faith calls us to do something about it, to play our part in building the Kingdom of God.

ACT!

*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>8</sup>



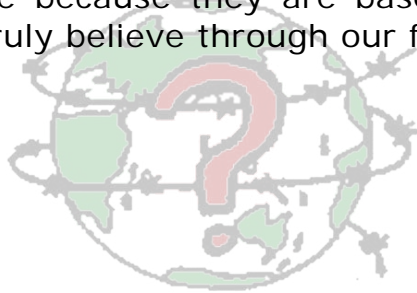
# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## 3. The Truth of Method

In order to really change the contradictions we as students need a Method and a Movement.

The Movement must be organised and committed to its mission. The YCS is that movement, our mission is to take actions that can overcome these contradictions so that what we experience is equal to what we believe should be happening. If we take actions on our own we can fix part of the problem, but by working in a Movement that is for all students across the world, we can work on fixing the causes of these problems.

We also need to have a "method" which is used by this Movement. And that method is the Review of Life. This method was developed by Cardijn based on the Three Truths as a way to overcome these contradictions in our everyday lives. The best YCS actions come from the Review of Life because they are based in our real experience as well as what we truly believe through our faith and our values!



judge...



*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>9</sup>



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Review of Life Questions

### SEE

***The SEE Section is about finding out exactly what is happening in a situation that the students want to talk about.***

1. What exactly happened? What was your action in response? (the facts)

2. What caused this to happen and why? (the causes)

3. How were people affected? (the consequences)

### JUDGE

***The JUDGE Section is about applying our faith and beliefs to the situation and developing an idea about what we are called to do.***

4. What do you think about this?

5. What does your faith say about this situation? What would Jesus do here?

6. What *should* be happening? (the ideal situation)

### ACT

***The ACT Section is about deciding what we can do to change the situation in the way that our faith and beliefs are calling us to.***

7. What exactly do you want to change? (Long term aim)

8. What action could you take this week that would be a worthwhile step towards achieving this change? (Short term action)

9. Who else could you involve in your action?

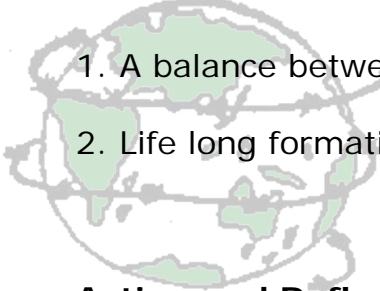


# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Holistic Formation

One of the key elements of the YCS Movement is that it provides students with holistic formation. This can be broken into two main parts:

1. A balance between action and reflection.
2. Life long formation



### **Action and Reflection**

Through using the Review of Life, YCS aims to get students to reflect on their lives in the light of their faith and beliefs and then challenges them to act in the way their faith calls them to.

It is often easier to just focus on action or just focus on reflection, but if the two aren't joined together then we miss key aspects of who Jesus calls us to be.

One of the great things that this means is that YCS can cater for students starting at a broad range of points of understanding or identification with their faith. For example, if students already identify as Christians or have a relationship with Jesus then being involved YCS can help them develop that further by encouraging and empowering them to act in the courageous, loving and challenging way that Jesus did.

Alternatively YCS can also be attractive to students who see something wrong in the world and want to make a difference. Often this might be because of more 'humanist' beliefs, but through the Review of Life and doing Gospel Reflections they can see that the way Jesus spoke and acted actually is an inspiring example of the things they believe in and this can show them that Jesus and the Gospel are relevant to their lives and the world today.





# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Life Long Formation

Another key aspect of YCS formation is that it is a long-term process, with long-term results. We aim to train students to form and question their own opinions and beliefs and to live those beliefs out in their everyday lives. This involves them taking actions and making a difference, right now. But just as importantly, it means they are learning to do that every day for the rest of their lives. And this isn't something that can be achieved through one event, or one retreat, or even over a month or two. The events, retreats and programs have their place in attracting and engaging people but they can't replace ongoing formation.

It is this life long formation, which produces committed Christian leaders both now and well into the future that really sets the YCS method apart in terms of ongoing benefit. Pope Benedict 16th has called for a 'new generation of apostles' and YCS is about engaging young people and providing them with the formation and training that is needed to become a life-long apostle.



judge...



*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>12</sup>



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## A Student Run Movement

YCS is a Movement that is run **for**, **by**, and **among** secondary school students. This is a crucial part of what the YCS aims to do.

We believe that students are capable of reflecting on their faith and living it out in a way that actively builds the Kingdom of God. In order to do this effectively they not only need to be able to reflect, pray and understand the world around them; they also need to be equipped with the skills necessary to engage with and transform that world in response to the challenge of the Gospel. They therefore need to develop a range of leadership and organisational skills.

One of the key ways that YCS develops this is through being a student run Movement. Students take ownership and responsibility for the Movement and this allows them to develop the skills needed to lead an organisation (such as how to run meetings, take minutes, handle finances, etc) as well as those needed to play an active leadership role in their own community and among their peers (such as setting a positive example, being prepared to go against the trends, etc).

Any organisation or Movement that aims to develop the spirituality of humans, especially young people, needs to make sure that in doing so they don't discount or disempower their abilities as a person. To simply run something FOR young people can never have the full impact of developing committed and capable Christian leaders. In the local group situation this means that the leaders of the group are students and that Adults involved are there to support and empower students, rather than to run the group or the Movement. This is why adults in YCS are known as Adult Assistants.





# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## The Role of An Adult Assistant

YCS groups are led and run BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS. This is one of the key principles that separate YCS from other youth groups or Movements and it is essential to the method of Faith Formation that the Movement uses.

The role of the Adult Assistant is to support, empower and positively challenge the student leaders. There are basically two parts to this role:

### **Outside Meetings**

The main work of an Adult Assistant is behind the scenes and therefore outside the group meeting. The Assistant is actually vital to the formation of leaders and members. They do this by:

- Meeting with the Key Leader/s before the group meeting in order to plan how they will run the meeting. This should be particularly focused on how they will lead the Review of Life and the Gospel Reflection.
- Follow up with the leader afterwards to review how the group meeting went and how they could improve things.
- Build friendship with the group leaders and members through activities outside the meeting.
- Keep Parents informed about what is happening with the group.

### **In The Meeting**

The Assistant also has a role in the meeting, but it is more of a "backseat role." They need to:

- Attend YCS Meetings.
- Ask questions that positively challenge students. You are inviting them to look deeper and take the next step.
- Supervise.
- Assist the leader when and where they need it.

### **Key Points**

There are a few key points to remember:

- Adult Assistants should **never** make decisions for the group.
- They should **never** be referred to as a leader.
- Assistants do have an **active role** to play, but it happens behind the scenes.
- **The students are the leaders and the experts.** This is difficult because it reverses the roles we normally play, but it is essential to the Movement.
- We're all human and we're all learning. We don't expect you to be perfect at this role. We just ask that you do your best in the spirit of supporting the Students to develop as people, as leaders and as Christians.



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## What can YCS offer the Adult Assistant (AA)?

- An opportunity to discover more about their own mission in the world, and how they contribute to building a more just, equal and loving world. Much of this comes through being challenged by students or inspired by them.
- A chance to contribute their own experiences and talents, and to learn from the faith journey of others
- Contact with the life experiences of students
- A challenge to work out their own values and life options

see...

*"Upon whom does the thorough transformation of the students depend? I have no hesitation in saying it depends completely on the assistant."*

*"...above all, the Assistant must communicate the person of Christ..But it isn't enough to reveal their mission. The Assistant must go further: he (she) must stir in them a desire for the apostolate; he (she) must help, encourage and guide them in their understanding. For this, he (she) must know them...and finally, these lay apostles may be formed."*

judge



Cardinal Joseph Cardijn  
Inspiration of YCS



*Never Underestimate the Students!*



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## What the Assistant can bring to the Group

- 1) A specialised knowledge of scripture, theology or prayer that they can place at the service of the students.
- 2) An understanding of different groups (at schools, parishes, tertiary institutions) and an ability to work with them, providing a breadth of experience and perspective, and a capacity to link YCS groups with other currents in the church or city.
- 3) An understanding of the history of the church's struggle to renew and adapt itself and state its message in language appropriate to each age and culture.
- 4) Differing life experience (of decisions, work, church, interests age) that widen the outlook of the group.
- 5) A commitment to developing their own faith, and to helping students develop their faith.
- 6) A link between the hierarchy of the church, or with religious institutes, thus creating links between students and the wider Church.

judge...





# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## How Assistants can help in Faith Development

### **Through their relationship with the group**

- The assistant must first understand where the students 'are at' in their faith – what they believe in and what influences their faith. It is only then that you can help the students move on from there. You 'see' what the students' faith is, you 'judge' the areas where it can be developed and you 'act' to aid that development. We can find out about their faith through their conversation, what they do and simply trying to get to know them better in between meetings. If an assistant does not develop an ongoing understanding of their students, his or her actions to develop faith could become completely ineffective and he or she may begin to feel alienated from the group in this area.
- Faith is often very personal and many people find it hard to simply start talking about it. So, it is important for the atmosphere within the group to be one of trust, openness and concern.
- More than any number of Gospel reviews, it is through our example of Christianity that we will most influence students. It is through us – what we say, do and the love we show – that we can best present to them the person of Christ.

### **Through the group meeting**

- Bringing faith into the review shouldn't be an academic exercise. Sometimes we tend to talk about a reading from the top of our heads, rather than from the heart. Often an assistant needs to initiate this through sharing their faith with the group and relating the Gospel message to their own lives.
- Asking questions to help the students make a connection between their faith and their lives: eg. What are the positive and negative influences in the situation? In the light of the Gospel, how do you think Christ would have felt about the situation? What would he have done about it? What do you think of this situation? Why do you feel this way?
- Asking 'What does your faith say in this situation?' and 'Where do you see God Present in this situation?' are good questions as they can help students to start thinking about Christ's life.

### **Through meeting with Leaders in between meetings**

- Until such time as working through the Judge section becomes natural to a group, it helps to prepare with the leaders specific Judge questions. The Leaders and Assistants Kit is useful for this, as is the resource kit.
- Encourage spending time on prayer and the Judge section of the review.
- Review with the leaders how the last meeting went and hence what can be built on to improve the next meeting.
- Suggest that prayer and gospel readings be chosen that relate to the issues of concern raised by the students about their lives.



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## YCS Adult Assistant Code of Conduct

- Relationships with students are prohibited.
- Remember that this is a student run movement and Adult Assistants are there to assist and support the students, not make all of the decisions for them. Adult Assistants are involved in the decision making process, but do not make all of these decisions.
- The Adult Assistant must ultimately accept what the students decide and be prepared to let them make their own mistakes. The Adult Assistant should, however, intervene where there is a reasonable belief that an action will cause serious harm or damage to people or property.
- The Adult Assistant must keep in mind the 'faith' aspect of the movement. The Adult Assistant must avoid spreading prejudice, using unfounded or unsubstantiated statements, or encouraging courses of action that would be contrary to this faith.
- If the Adult Assistant is facing problems with the group they should review these with their fellow assistants and / or the Diocesan Adult Assistant or the National Adult Assistant Representative. The Adult Assistant should not discuss these problems with individual students unless they are brought up in an open review with the group.
- Adult Assistants must abide by the same rules as students, i.e. no smoking, drugs, or alcohol.
- When talking with a student 1 on 1 it is important that another adult knows where you are and that you meet in an open area.

### **Legal Issues and Requirements**

- All adults are covered by the National Movements insurance as volunteers.
- Possess a current "Working with Children" card/ or relevant Check in your state.
- Important that someone knows basic First Aid and has access to a First Aid Kit during the meeting.

**Remember, the Adult Assistants are there for the students. The students are not there for the adults.**



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Starting a YCS group

This is an eight step process. It is fairly simple to do with the resources provided, but we are always extremely keen to help out with any difficulties or issues that might arise.

### **1. Contact the YCS Co-ordination Team for your Diocese or the Australian YCS.**

These co-ordination teams can support your progress using this resource plus provide information from their own personal experiences with the YCS. Because YCS is a movement it is important that groups are linked together and support each other. Details of each Diocesan YCS Co-ordination Team are included in this book.

### **2. Get the support of the School or Parish.**

It is important that you get this support first. It seems obvious but not everyone does it! Make sure that the person you are asking (ie Principal, APRE, Parish Priest) understands what YCS is. Also you should be asking for their support rather than just permission. This doesn't necessarily mean a massive commitment, but it is important that the YCS group be seen as a valued part of the school or parish community rather than an outside "add-on."

### **3. Find an adult who can be the Adult Assistant to the group.**

It is important to have an Adult Assistant in place BEFORE the group starts because this person will be an integral part of the group and they need to be accepted in that role by the students. School Chaplains or Campus Ministers are a good place to start looking with school groups. The Parish Priest could be a Chaplain for either a school or parish group if they are available, however it is important to recognise how much they have on their plate. Enthusiasm and commitment are the most important qualities for the Assistant to have. A staff member or parish member who is enthusiastic and connects with students will make a good Adult Assistant and the YCS can usually provide further training for their role if necessary. Using a ratio of one adult to every eight students is a good way to work out whether you need more than one Adult Assistant.

### **4. Find a core group of students.**

The Assistant then needs to find four students that they can invite to be the leaders of the group.

### **5. Plan the starting of the group.**

The Assistant should meet with those 4 students who will be key leaders and plan the advertising of the group and the first meeting. Here are a few suggestions:

This leaders group should meet at least twice before the first meeting of the program.



# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement



Advertising of the group should be done as creatively as possible. This can include posters, newsletter notices, speaking on assembly, speaking at mass, flyers to be handed out in homeroom, etc.

There is a template of a basic notice included on our website, but use that as a guide of what information to include.

Advertise for around 2 weeks in a school and 4 weeks in a parish.

Be aware that while advertising is good for raising awareness, most students will only come if personally invited. Using the template invitations (on the website), each of the 4 leaders should invite 3 others to the first meeting.

It would also be good to get a list of about 15 names of people that teachers at the school think might be interested and give them invitations too.

## **6. Run the first meeting.**

Each week it is the role of the Adult Assistant to meet with two of the students outside the group meeting in order to prepare the meeting. The meeting agenda and activities are all set out in the NUTS Program, so the preparation is just about making sure that the students understand the questions they are asking and the roles they are taking. It is also important to prepare the Gospel Review or Faith Reflection with them. Even the first meeting should be run by the students as this sets the standard for the way the group will work.

## **7. Continue running the NUTS Program for 8 Weeks**

The assistant needs to continue meeting for preparation with the leaders before each weekly meeting. Two leaders should take on the running of the meetings for two weeks at a time. It is suggested that each week should include one of the original 4 leaders, plus one other student. When running the meeting there are two roles. One student runs the Review of Life and the other runs the reflection and the administrative parts of the meeting. The idea is that they do this as a pair, and the second week they swap over so that both get a chance at both roles and they can learn from the mistakes made previously. This means that eight students (four pairs) should get a turn at running the meeting.

## **8. After the program.**

The National YCS can support you with the transition from using the NUTS Program into being an ongoing group. We are currently developing a resource that will assist with this transition. Please contact us on the details provided in this book when you are approaching this stage.



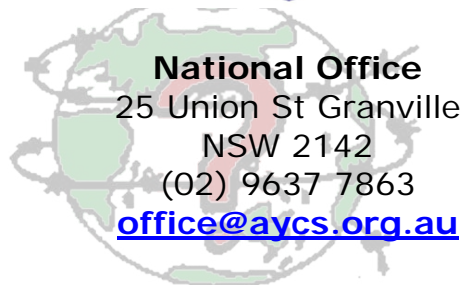
# Australian Young Christian Students' Movement

## Other Resources

For information regarding the other resources visit [www.aycs.org.au](http://www.aycs.org.au) or contact the relevant office in your state or contact the National Office on the details below.



see...



### **National Office**

25 Union St Granville  
NSW 2142  
(02) 9637 7863  
[office@aycs.org.au](mailto:office@aycs.org.au)

### **Melbourne YCS**

Brunswick St North  
Fitzroy Victoria  
(03) 9489 4387

[melbourne@aycs.org.au](mailto:melbourne@aycs.org.au)

### **Parramatta YCS**

25 Union St  
Granville NSW 2142  
(02) 9682 6719

[parramatta@aycs.org.au](mailto:parramatta@aycs.org.au)

### **Perth YCS**

40A Mary St  
Highgate WA  
(08) 9422 7911  
[perth@aycs.org.au](mailto:perth@aycs.org.au)



*Never Underestimate the Students!*<sup>21</sup>