

News In My Neighbourhood Challenge Rules

Years 7 – 9 (Lower Secondary)

There are four Challenges designed for students in Years 7 – 9 (Lower Secondary). This document provides details of the specific rules that students must follow when creating their entries for each Challenge. General rules that apply to all of the Challenges are also provided.

Term 1 Challenge

In a 200-word reflective essay, tell us about a news or current affairs topic that's prominent in or having an impact on your community. What is the issue and what do we need to know about it? What impact is it having on the community? Why is it important to you?

The Rules

- Students must submit a 200-word reflective essay
- Students must use appropriate language, structure, and tone for a reflective essay (such as writing in the first person)
- Students must write in English but can include words in other languages. For example, in describing specific events or occurrences, the student may wish to include words or ideas from other languages. An English translation must be provided alongside the non-English words
- Students can reference other sources in their essay, to help provide context or explain key terms, but must include details of this source in a short reference list. The reference list should be included after the essay (within the same document). For each source mentioned in the student's essay, the author/publisher's full name, publication date, title of source and a link to the source must be included
- The entry must be submitted in a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file format
- Students cannot work with a partner or in groups for this challenge
- Only one entry per student

Term 2 Challenge

Write an open letter (200 to 300 words) to an individual or group who you think can make a difference on an issue or topic that is important to you. Let them know why you think this and what they could do to make that change.

The Rules

- Students must submit a 200-to-300-word open letter
- Students must use appropriate language, structure, and tone for an open letter (such as clearly defining the issue or problem, explaining their connection to the issue, using evidence to support their perspective, and providing a proposed call to action or solution to the issue)
- Students must write in English but can include words in other languages. An English translation must be provided alongside the non-English words
- Students should reference other sources in their open letter, to help provide evidence and support for their argument/stance. A short reference list must be included (within the same document). For each source mentioned in the student's open letter, the author/publisher's full name, publication date, title of source and a link to the source must be included
- The open letter must be submitted in a .doc, .docx., or .pdf file format
- Students cannot work with a partner or in groups for this challenge
- Only one entry per student.

Term 3 Challenge

Create a photo essay (5-6 photographs) OR a radio news story up to two minutes long about a topic or issue that interests you and which you want to let other people know about. You can work individually or in a group of up to four.

The Rules

Students must submit either a photo essay (5-6 photographs) OR a radio news story that is no more than two minutes long.

Students can work individually or in groups of up to four for this challenge. Only one entry per student. Students cannot be named on multiple group entries, nor can they work in a group for the photo essay and submit their own individual radio news story (or vice versa).

For the radio news story

- Students must use appropriate language, structure, and tone for a radio news story (such as using everyday language and speaking in short sentences, as well as following the appropriate news story structure)
- Students should aim to include audio from an interview with at least one source who can provide insight or expertise on the students' chosen topic
- Students should make a contact list of the interviewed sources included in their story. The contact list should include the full name and email address or mobile phone number for each source. We won't ask students to share the contact list with us, but they should have it available in case we need to confirm any details
- Students can reference other sources (such as data from research studies) but must include a reference to these sources in a reference list. The reference list should be included in a transcript document (which will be uploaded alongside the audio file submission)
- The radio news story must be delivered in English. Students can include content in a language other than English, but a translation of this content must be included (spoken in English) in the story
- Students cannot use copyright audio material (including music and sound effects)
- The radio news story must be submitted in a .mp3 or .wav file format
- Students must provide a transcript of their radio news story. This transcript must be submitted alongside the audio file. The transcript must be in a .doc, .docx, or .pdf format

For the **photo essay**

- Students must give their photo essay a title and must include a short descriptive caption (no more than 75 words) for each photograph. The caption should build connections between the images and add detail and meaning to the overall story conveyed in the photographs
- Captions must be written in English but can include words in other languages. An English translation must be provided alongside the non-English words
- Students must get permission/consent from any individual featured in any of their photographs
- The photographs must be submitted in a .png, .jpeg or .jpg file format The photographs should be named Photo 1, Photo 2 etc.
- Photographs should be high quality (ideally 16x9, 1920x1080px) up to 300dpi)
- The captions must be numbered to correspond to the appropriate photo (e.g., Caption 1 for Photo 1) and must be submitted in a separate a .doc, .docx., or .pdf format



Term 4 Challenge

Produce a creative response in any format (video, audio, illustration, news article, short essay, creative fiction, photography) about an experience, event, or topic that stood out to you in 2025. Video and audio submissions must be no longer than 4 minutes. Written submissions should be 200 – 300 words. No more than 5 photographs.

The Rules

Students can use any format (video, audio, illustration, news article, short essay, creative fiction, photography) to create their entry.

Students can work individually or in groups of up to four for this challenge. Only one entry per student. Students cannot be named on multiple group entries, nor can they work in a group to create an entry in one format and then submit an individual entry in another format.

For written entries

- Must be 200 – 300 words
- Students can take an imaginative, informative, or persuasive approach but must adhere to the appropriate vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, structure and language features for that approach
- For references to other sources and writing in languages other than English, students should follow the rules outlined for the Term 1 Challenge
- Written entries must be submitted in a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file format

For video entries

- Must be no longer than 4 minutes
- Video entries can be in a documentary or news story style
- Students should aim to include footage from interviews with one to two sources who can provide insight or expertise on the students' chosen topic
- Students can reference other sources (such as data from research studies) but must include a reference to these sources in a reference list. The reference list should be included in a transcript document (which will be uploaded alongside the video file submission)
- Video entries must be in English. Students can include content in a language other than English, but a translation of this content must be included (spoken in English) in the video

- Students cannot use copyright material, including footage, graphics, still images, music, or sound effects
- Video entries must be submitted in a .mp4 or .mov file format and should be 16x9 (1920x1080px)
- Students must provide a transcript of their video. The transcript should include details of the spoken content that occurs in the video, any text that appears on screen, and descriptions of the visuals. This transcript must be submitted alongside the video file. The transcript must be in a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file format

For audio entries

- Must be no longer than 4 minutes
- Audio entries can follow a radio news story or podcast style (conversational or interview) format
- For a radio news story entry, students should aim to include audio from an interview with at least one source who can provide insight or expertise on the students' chosen topic
- For a podcast entry, students should aim to have one to two co-hosts (if following a conversational style) or one guest (if following an interview style)
- For use of copyright material, reference to other sources, and permissions/consent, students should follow the rules outlined in the Term 3 radio news story Challenge
- Audio entries must be submitted in a .mp3 or .wav file format. A transcript must also be submitted in a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file format.

For photography entries

- Must submit no more than 5 photographs
- Photographs should follow the photo essay format
- Students should follow the rules for the Term 3 photo essay Challenge
- The photographs must be submitted in a .png, .jpeg or .jpg file format
- Photographs should be high quality (ideally 16x9 (1920x1080px) up to 300dpi)
- The captions must be submitted in a separate a .doc, .docx., or .pdf format

For illustration entries

- Students can follow any illustrative style (such as graphic novel, comic strip, painting, watercolour, digital art)
- Students can create their illustration using digital software (such as illustrations done via a tablet application). These entries should be exported and submitted at a high resolution (1920x1080px at 720dpi)



- Students can also create offline illustrations and submit a high-quality photograph (16x9 (1920x1080px) up to 300dpi)
- Students cannot include copyright material in their illustrations (including icons, text, graphics, or images)
- Students should try not to include brands, logos or other commercial imagery/content in their illustrations
- Students can submit a maximum of 3 files.

Other General Entry Rules

These rules apply to all four Challenges.

- Students must be in Year 7, Year 8 or Year 9 to participate in the Lower Secondary Challenges
- Students' work must be fundamentally their own and must be original (cannot have been published, submitted, or reproduced elsewhere)
- Students cannot submit work that has been generated by artificial intelligence, plagiarised, or produced by someone else
- Students must follow safe media practices when creating their entries. Students must avoid including personal or identifying details (such as addresses or full names) for themselves or others, and consent/permission must be sought from any individuals featured in students' work (such as friends or family members captured in photographs or interviewed as an expert source for a documentary or radio news story)
- Students' entries must only include material created by them, or material they have permission to use including, but not limited to, any use of footage, drawings, artworks, illustrations, photos, essays, articles, and scripts. For more information, please see the competition Terms and Conditions
- Students' entries must be submitted by a teacher, and parents or guardians must have given their permission/consent to enter. Please see the Terms and Conditions for further information
- Entries must be submitted to the following deadlines:
 - **Term 1 Challenge** before **4 April 2025, 5:00pm (AEDT)**
 - **Term 2 Challenge** before **4 July 2025, 5:00pm (AEST)**
 - **Term 3 Challenge** before **22 September 2025, 5:00pm (AEST)**
 - **Term 4 Challenge** before **23 November 2025, 5:00pm (AEDT)**
- Student entries for all four challenges must adhere to the specified file types. Entries submitted in other file types may not be able to be viewed/accessed and will therefore not be considered for the competition. Specified file types include:
 - For written entries: .docx, .doc, .pdf
 - For audio entries: .mp3, .wav
 - For video entries: .mp4, .mov
 - For image/photographic entries: .png, .jpeg, .jpg

It is recommended that students' entries be carefully reviewed by the submitting teacher prior to submission.