

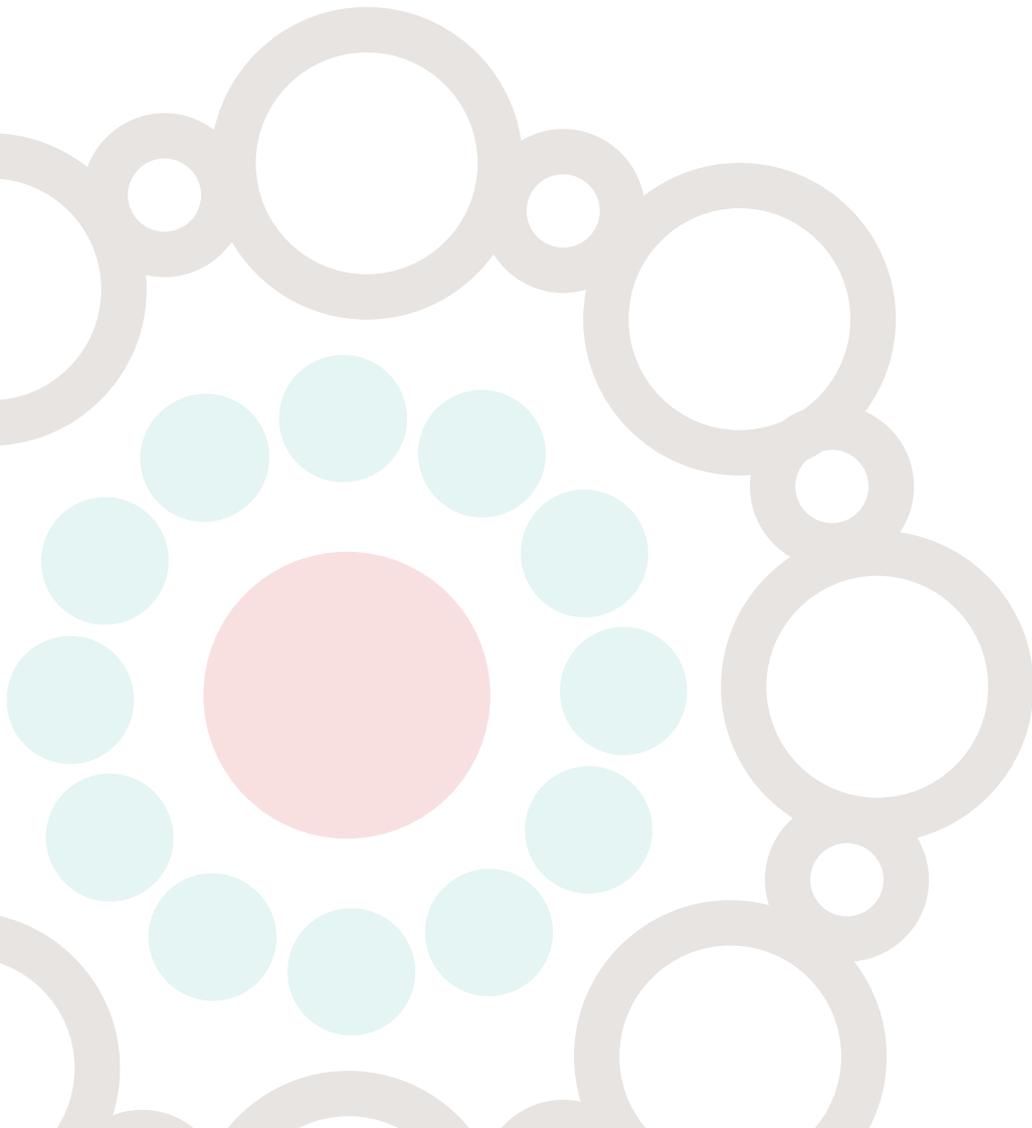


**Speak
Out
for
Change**

"Youth Voices on Youth Issues"
REPORT FROM THE 2015 SPEAK OUT FOR CHANGE SUMMIT



Save the Children Australia and the Youth Partnership Project acknowledge the traditional custodians of country on which this report was based, the Whadjuk Noongar people, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to their Elders both past and present.



Minister's Foreword



The report from the 2015 Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues highlights comments, perspectives and recommendations of young people. During National Youth Week, this Summit gave an opportunity for over 100 young people to speak about issues affecting young West Australians and their communities.

As Minister for Youth, I am pleased to endorse the *Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues Summit Report* which is an invaluable tool for government and communities to enact positive change informed by young people's voices.

We must recognise young people want to be engaged in their communities and it is important to work closely with them in decision-making. We need to genuinely take on board the voices of young people who are ultimately experts in their own lives and experiences.

I support the release of this report and hope it can act as a catalyst for change to enhance the quality of lives of all young West Australians.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Simpson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Hon. Anthony Simpson MLA

Minister for Local Government; Community Services;
Seniors and Volunteering; *Youth*

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The *Speak out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues Summit* was held during National Youth Week 2015, and was the largest youth advocacy event in Western Australia during this time. The Summit aimed to provide young people the opportunity to have their voices heard by decision makers in regards to key issues that affect them and their communities. Over 100 young people aged 11-25 from diverse backgrounds took part in the event, and this report documents the key outcomes and recommendations developed by those participants on what they believe are the best ways forward to overcome their current issues, challenges and concerns.

The Summit forms a key part of the initial phase of *The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project* (YPP), a Collective Impact initiative funded for two years by the WA State Government's *Social Innovations Fund 2014-2016*. Auspiced by Save the Children Australia, the YPP seeks to bring young people together with government and community agencies to develop more effective and efficient services and support to children and young people in the South East Corridor, in order to increase their opportunities for more positive development. Continually informed by its Youth Leadership Roundtable, the YPP's Summit was led by this group of diverse and inspiring young leaders.

A Youth2Youth approach was utilised to ensure a safe and effective consultation that was specifically focused on the genuine and real input of young people. Official Observers – adults and decision makers involved in government, youth and community services, as well as community leaders – were invited to attend to engage with the Youth Participants and witness the consultations first hand, providing a high-level audience for the young people to see the value that was being placed on their experiences, opinions and ideas.

The event was structured around an initial 'Open consultation workshop' that engaged all Youth Participants and Official Observers in discussions about their communities, followed by issue-specific workshops which focused on some of the key issues affecting young people. There were 14 different topics that were focused on including bullying, climate change, culture, disability, drugs and alcohol, youth access to education, youth employment, mental health, public transport, racism and discrimination, sexual identity, teen parenting, violence and youth justice.

EMERGING INSIGHTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of these workshops led to detailed and insightful discussions about the issues, where the participants had the opportunity to make recommendations about how these challenges and concerns could be better addressed. Discussion and analysis of the issue, as well as specific recommendations made by Youth Participants are included in the Youth Recommendations Section of this report, and provide an essential, experience-based, youth-focused understanding into each issue from the young people's perspective. **While a summary of these recommendations is provided in the following pages, we would strongly encourage you to read the Youth Recommendations Section in full; or, at a minimum, those issues that best relate to your areas of work and engagement.**

Additionally, there were a number of overarching themes which emerged throughout the Summit. The nature of the repeated identification of these themes tells us of current important priorities for young people.

Education as a Tool to Address Social Issues

In almost every issue-specific workshop, participants sought to address social issues through some form of education – such as a public education campaign, or the specific topic’s inclusion in the formal school curriculum. This emphasises the high value that both young people, and our society as a whole, place on education. However, this also likely reflects that for most young people, their life experience so far has had a heavy focus on education as their main ‘occupation’.

Need for Life Skills Education

Participants repeatedly identified feeling unprepared for independence and adulthood, and that they lack basic knowledge and skills needed for everyday life – ranging from finances, to health, housing and finding appropriate work. In order to ensure everyone is able to attain these essential skills, young people want to see such topics to be included in formal education.

Systemic Barriers

Throughout the Summit, Participants identified patterns of practice or behaviours within the current ‘systems’ in place in our society that create a perpetual position of relative disadvantage in a variety of contexts. These barriers are of significant concern to young people as such cycles go against their sense of a ‘fair go’ for all and thereby disempower young people, leaving little hope of being allowed to take control of the situation for themselves.

Discrimination and Perceptions of Young People

Participants were very aware of the prevalence of discrimination in many situations, and repeatedly object to it. They also highlight concerns with negative perceptions of young people in the community, and that they often feel they are discriminated on this basis. Participants identified that these negative perceptions are on the whole unjustified, and can prevent the valuable contributions that young people make from being seen, heard and acted upon, which in turn, limit their opportunities for engagement.

Enabling Young People’s Participation

Participants highlighted that young people often don’t get opportunities to be involved in the decisions that affect them. Young people expressed a desire for more genuine opportunities to be empowered to participate in such processes, identifying that there would be benefits of doing so such as addressing discrimination and negative perceptions of young people, as well as being able to draw on the valuable real life experiences and insights young people have to offer.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Participants identified a desire for services and organisations to engage in greater communication and collaboration with one another in order to provide improved continuity of support, and more holistic and individualised services. Participants saw an opportunity for services to work together to genuinely consider community needs and service gaps, and work as partners to address these in order to facilitate better outcomes for all.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Drawing on the invaluable insight provided to us by the young people who participated in the *Speak Out for Change Summit*, we now have an obligation to consider their recommendations, and look to enact positive change in these areas that are informed by the voices of young people, our relevant industry background and knowledge, and examples of best practice. We hope that this report will become a valuable tool in the future creation of youth policies and services in WA. **We need to ensure that we continue to listen to and act on what young people have to say.**

Summary of Youth Recommendations

Young People and Bullying

- B1** Encourage all young people to take action to prevent and stop bullying
- B2** Implement specialised action plans in schools for the prevention of bullying
- B3** Implement programs to give young people, teachers and parents the skills to address bullying situations in constructive ways

Climate Change

- CC1** Action the recommendations from existing and future climate change research
- CC2** Seek to make cities more sustainable and adopt climate-friendly policies, such as economic incentives and subsidies to “go green”
- CC3** Encourage individuals and community to make environmentally friendly choices and embrace sustainability
- CC4** Consider environmental issues and policy when electing government representatives, and continue to place pressure on government and elected representatives
- CC5** Develop greater awareness of sustainability and climate change issues through community and school-based education

Young People and Culture

- C1** Explore cultural diversity within the context of schooling - within the curriculum and by fostering multiculturalism in the school community
- C2** Ensure youth and community services are culturally appropriate and holistic
- C3** Contribute, as individuals, to making our vision of an “Australian Culture” a reality

Young People with Disabilities

- D1** Provide adequate, relevant, affordable training for those likely to be engaged with individuals with a disability
- D2** Ensure people with disabilities are adequately and appropriately represented in decision making and popular culture
- D3** Build understanding through community and school-based education and awareness about different disabilities

Drugs and Alcohol

- DA1** Address underlying causes of substance abuse
- DA2** Utilise school-based and community education opportunities aiming to increase awareness of and prevent substance abuse
- DA3** Increase availability of rehabilitation services
- DA4** Utilise family based approaches to support users
- DA5** Implement approaches in the criminal justice system that support rehabilitation of users and enforce harsher penalties on dealers as a deterrent

Youth Access to Education

- Edu1** Approach learners genuinely as individuals, rather than utilising a one-size-fits-all model
- Edu2** Facilitate more opportunities for one-on-one learning and support
- Edu3** Promote alternative and non-traditional forms of education
- Edu4** Provide education which is relevant to the 21st century learner
- Edu5** Fund programs that have an impact, not only those that have been around for a long time

Youth Employment

- Emp1** Provide better preparation for the workforce through schools and educational institutions
- Emp2** Supervise managers to ensure that they develop positive and productive working relationships with all employees, especially young people
- Emp3** Increase awareness of employee rights amongst young employees

Young People and Mental Health

- MH1** Ensure young people are informed and involved with decisions about their care, including being offered treatment alternatives
- MH2** Promote existing mental health services to young people
- MH3** Make mental health services more accessible to young people through youth-led drop-in centres, ongoing consultation, and services in schools
- MH4** Increase promotion and awareness of positive mental health and different mental health problems in the community, including through the media, workplaces and schools

Public Transport

- PT1** Provide more transit guards, lighting and surveillance cameras to help young people feel safe when traveling on public transport
- PT2** Ensure transit guards are approachable, respectful and understanding, including having training on engaging effectively with young people and people of diverse cultural backgrounds
- PT3** Investigate opportunities for public transport to help address social issues

Racism and Discrimination

- RD1** Stand up for ourselves and others. Assist those experiencing discrimination
- RD2** Reflect on our culture and question ideas we hold in regards to other groups
- RD3** Promote cultural diversity and awareness at an early age
- RD4** Foster opportunities to build connection and trust between people - for example through culturally diverse workshops
- RD5** Increase cultural diversity in media and advertising
- RD6** Clearly implement, and continuously review current policy protecting people from racism and discrimination

Young People and Sexual Identity

- SI1** Make progress towards a more sexually equal society, beginning with marriage equality
- SI2** Increased representation of diverse sexuality and gender in the media and advertising
- SI3** Include age-appropriate education and awareness about different sexual identities and preferences throughout schooling

Teen Parenting

- TP1** Further support for young parents to access and afford childcare
- TP2** Increased support financially and in accessing stable medium to long term accommodation for young parents **and** pregnant young people
- TP3** Increased genuine support for pregnant and parenting young people to access education
- TP4** Prioritise mental health screening and support for young parents
- TP5** Provide programs in parenting and life skills, healthy relationships and social support for young mothers **and** fathers
- TP6** Take action to change societal attitudes toward pregnant and parenting young people, with a focus on education and the media

Violence

- V1** Further rehabilitative support for first time offenders and harsher penalties for recidivist offenders, aiming to prevent reoffending
- V2** Greater investment to ensure emergency shelters are immediately available, accessible and meeting survivor needs
- V3** Increased funding for preventative programs, including better availability of support for substance abuse and mental health
- V4** Increased education about healthy and respectful relationships

Youth Justice

- YJ1** Ensure young people are engaged with making decisions for themselves throughout all stages of involvement with the criminal justice system
- YJ2** Work to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with young people who have engaged with the criminal justice system, both within the system and the community as a whole
- YJ3** Provide greater, accessible and relevant support to combat recidivism for young people leaving the justice system
- YJ4** Ensure diversionary services are more widely known and easily accessible
- YJ5** Increase awareness amongst young people of potential long term and short term implications of offending

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Introduction

The *South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project* (YPP) is a Collective Impact initiative, promoting collaboration between government, community services and young people to improve outcomes for children and young people in the South East Corridor of Perth, and all of Western Australia. A key foundation of the project is recognising that young people's voices and opinions are valuable, and it is essential that young people are able to contribute and be involved in the decisions that affect them.

As a result, the YPP, led by its Youth Leadership Roundtable (YLR), held the *Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues* Summit, which aimed to encourage and enable young people to have their voices heard on key issues that affect them. The Summit was held on the 15th of April 2015, and was the largest youth advocacy event during National Youth Week 2015 in Western Australia, engaging over 100 young people as well as over 90 key stakeholders from government, the youth sector and the community in open consultations and issue-specific workshops.

This report documents the Summit Journey – providing background into the YPP, the growth of the Youth Leadership Roundtable, the development of the Youth2Youth consultation approach and the format of the actual event. Furthermore, it highlights the young people's comments, opinions and perspectives on the key issues that are important to them, ranging from Youth Justice to Mental Health, Education to Public Transport. Finally, and most importantly, the report documents the key Youth Recommendations from the Youth Participants that attended the Summit that we hope will be considered, developed and implemented within all levels of government, as well as youth and community services.



Background:

WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM

About the Youth Partnership Project

The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project (YPP) is a unique and innovative two-year Collective Impact initiative (2014-2016) focused on providing more effective and efficient services and support to children and young people in the community, in order to increase their opportunities for more positive development.

The history of the YPP began in 2012 when a Youth Working Group was formed under the auspice of the South East Metro Human Services Regional Managers Forum (SEMHSRMF) to address anti-social and criminal behaviour of young people on the South East Metropolitan train line (the Armadale Train line). The Youth Working Group, with the assistance of Price Waterhouse Coopers, undertook an analysis of the current context of service delivery for young people in the South-East Corridor, which highlighted the lack of coordination and collaboration between services being a major contributing factor to the overall poor outcomes for youth intervention initiatives in the region.

In early 2013, the Youth Working Group, under the auspice of Save the Children WA, submitted an application to the Department of Local Government and Communities' (DLGC) Social Innovation Fund, and was successful in securing funding for *The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project*. Save the Children was appointed as the 'Backbone organisation' and is now providing leadership, strategic direction and administrative assistance to the YPP.

At its core, the Youth Partnership Project brings young people together with government and community agencies to work towards a shared vision, where *“all children and young people in the South East Corridor of Perth, develop and thrive in safe families and communities – having*

universal access to health, education and a prosperous future.” The YPP is structured around four main bodies: the Executive Committee, the Youth Leadership Roundtable, Youth Collaborative Action Networks (CAN) and the SEMHSRMF.

THE YPP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The YPP Executive Committee is the governing body of the YPP. It is comprised of key individuals from across the youth sector, and provides strategic guidance and advice on the successful delivery of the YPP (Memorandum of Understanding between Save the Children and The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project Executive Committee Member Organisations, February 28, 2015).

THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

The Youth Leadership Roundtable (YLR) is an inspiring and diverse group of young leaders between the ages of 16 and 26 from diverse backgrounds with incredible stories of struggle, hope and resilience who are now doing exceptionally well for themselves as university students, passionate activists, community leaders, young parents, and positive role models for their peers. The YLR provides the 'Youth Voice in Action' for the project and are engaged with every aspect of the YPP. A key project for the YLR has been to organise and host the *Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues* Summit during National Youth Week WA 2015, which provided an opportunity for the voices and opinions of other West Australian young people to continue to inform the work of the YPP, as well as the youth sector in Western Australia more generally.

Profiles of each of the current Youth Leadership Roundtable members can be found in the appendices.

THE YOUTH COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORKS

Youth Collaborative Action Networks (CANs) provide a forum for those engaged and working with young people on the ground to share challenges and successes, identify gaps and opportunities, and work better together to address key community-wide youth issues. Currently, the CANs of the South East Corridor of Perth have all been activated, with these groups being based in Armadale, Gosnells/Canning, and Belmont/South Perth/Victoria Park. The relevant local governments are taking the lead in chairing and driving these spaces.

In addition, the CANs are all working towards developing a 'Regional Youth CAN Action Plan' of key focus areas for the South East Corridor that will be context-specific to each local area. More importantly, the Youth Recommendations outlined in this report will influence and be included into developing each priority area of the plan ensuring that the voices of young people are embedded with the regions strategic direction.



THE YPP TEAM

As the Backbone organisation of the YPP, Save the Children has a dedicated team that provides the leadership, technical guidance, as well as the operational and administrative support to all aspects of the project. The YPP Team consists of the following people:

Ross Wortham

YPP Program Manager



Anania Tagaro

YPP Senior Project Officer



Hannah Woodward

YPP Casual Project Officer



Junie Baptiste-Poitevien

YPP Casual Project Officer



Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues Summit

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

The *Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues Summit* was the largest youth advocacy event in Western Australia during National Youth Week 2015, auspiced by Save the Children Australia. The Summit was a platform to encourage and enable young people to have their voices heard by decision makers on issues that affect them by utilising a Youth2Youth Consultation approach. The recommendations and outcomes from the Summit will inform government, the youth sector, and the community of Western Australia about what young people consider a priority in addressing issues that are relevant to them, and provide an understanding of what it means to be a young person in Perth today.

With the help of Save the Children's Youth Partnership Project Team, the Youth Leadership Roundtable acted as the coordinators and drivers of the Summit. They identified 14 key issues and concerns for young people, which became the focus of the Youth2Youth Consultation Workshops at the event, and were then responsible for facilitating these workshops on the day. They were also actively involved in visioning and planning other various elements of the Summit – including a DJ, fun activities and games, a Youth Services Fair, and catering. The YLR were also crucial in promoting the event throughout their networks and the media, as well as encouraging young people to attend.

ON THE DAY

The Summit was a great success! It was full of youthful energy, enthusiasm and generated an atmosphere filled with the young people's determination to make a positive change in their communities. Following Registrations,



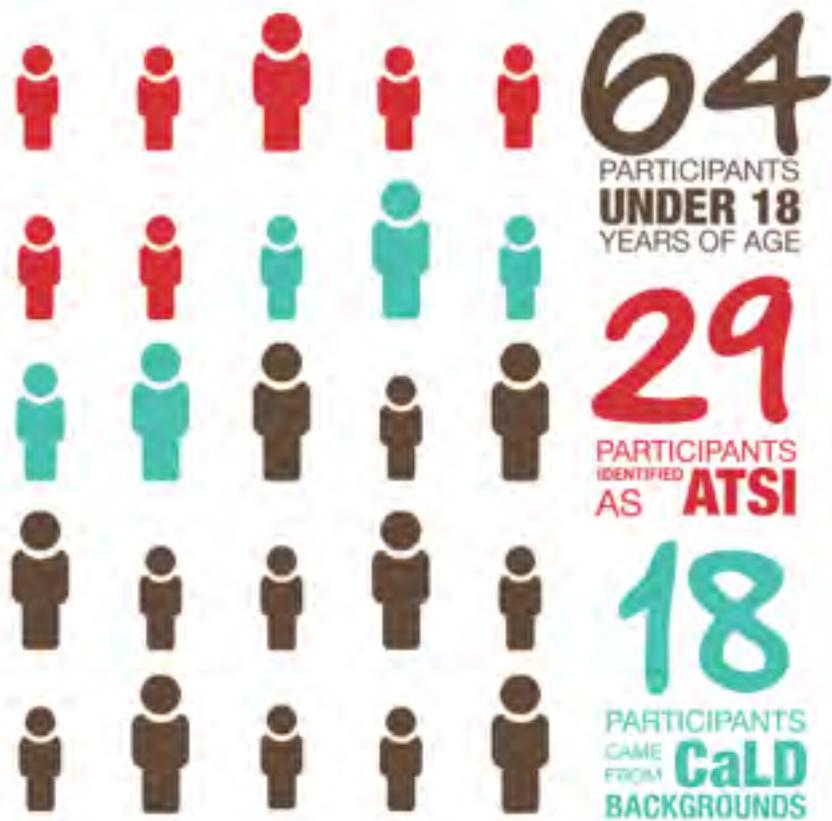
Opening Speeches by the YLR, an engaging Welcome to Country delivered Vanessa Culbong and family, and a welcome and endorsement from Megan Mitchell, National Children's Commissioner, Youth Participants and Official Observers joined together in the Ballroom of Government House for the Open Consultation Session.

There were 3 Youth2Youth Consultation Workshop sessions during the day, with each participant attending 3 of the 16 workshops on offer. In between each of the workshop sessions, there were breaks for participants to engage with the various activities on offer, such as the Youth Services Fair, large garden games, social media 'Hashtag Competition', live art exhibition and photo booth.

Following the Workshop consultations, the Youth Participants and the Official Observers gathered for the premiere screening of the short-film documentary titled '*Turning Point*', which is a collaborative project between Periscope Pictures, the Youth Partnership Project and the City of Gosnells, which explores and shares the journeys and stories of 3 resilient and inspiring young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences from the South East Corridor of Perth. The film was received with a standing ovation from the audience, with the three young people who starred in the film being invited on stage and awarded with gifts for their bravery in sharing their stories. Shortly afterwards, the YLR presented the preliminary Youth Recommendations from each Youth2Youth Consultation Workshop held on the day, before the final farewells.

WHO TOOK PART

There were 102 Young People who participated in the Speak Out for Change Summit.



Of the participants:

- 28% of participants identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander,
- 16.6% identified as coming from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds
- The majority (62.2%) were under 18 years of age
- 36% of participants were from the South East Corridor,
- 9% were from Regional WA, and the remaining were from throughout Perth Metro
- 41% of participants attended individually, the rest attended with a Youth Service

Our Approach and Methodology

SELECTING ISSUES TO FOCUS ON

As a group, the YLR chose the 14 topics that became the focus of the Youth2Youth Consultation Workshops during the Summit. This began with the group brainstorming the key issues and concerns facing young people today, which included those that each YLR Member have – and are currently – facing themselves. At the end of this exercise, the group had over 50 youth issues that they could choose from.

However, the YLR were mindful of the fact that they would only have a limited amount of time during the Summit, and they wanted to make sure that the topics they chose were broad enough so that all young people that participated in each workshop are able to have a say and provide some level of input into the discussions. As such, the Roundtable members proceeded to group related issues together, and worked to consolidate the options available.

The final workshop topics were then selected, which included bullying, climate change, culture, disability, drugs and alcohol, youth access to education, youth employment, mental health, public transport, racism and discrimination, sexual identity, teen parenting, violence and youth justice.



ENSURING A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION

In approaching such topics with young people, the YLR were aware of their sensitive nature, and the need to ensure that the workshops were:

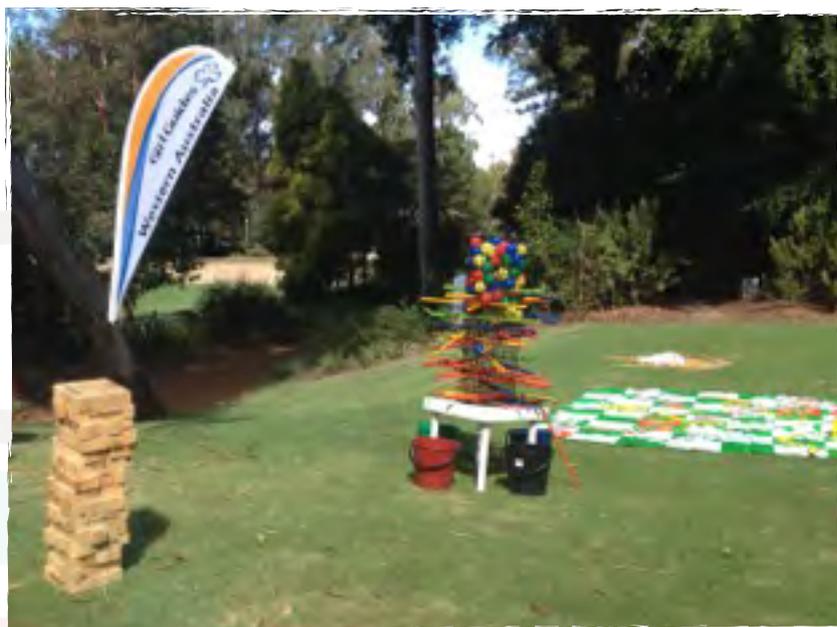
- Age appropriate
- Culturally sensitive
- Youth-friendly
- Incorporated with elements of confidentiality and anonymity for the participants
- Provided with suitable responses for dealing with non-conforming and negative behaviours, including support to participants reacting negatively to a lived experiences of a particular issue

Therefore, the YLR undertook significant Risk Management training in order to ensure that young people were in no way ‘harmed’ by participating in the Youth2Youth Consultation Workshops. The group made sure to have age-appropriate content for each workshop, and were ready to separate participants according to age groups if necessary. They took great consideration and care to make sure that each workshop incorporated culturally sensitive approaches, with each YLR member undertaking research on discussing workshop topics with respect to a diverse range of cultures, traditions and religions. In addition, the YLR members consulted each other on the best way to approach culture, as there was a diverse range of cultures within the group itself.

In order to engage young people in vibrant and open dialogue, the YLR sought to ensure that the event was fun, energetic and youth-friendly, and that the Youth2Youth Workshop Consultations would be ‘safe spaces’ for young people. The group recognised that the physical setting of Government House Ballroom, while useful in emphasising the value we were placing on youth voices with the location being prestigious and prominent, was likely to be quite

intimidating for some young people. The YLR mitigated this by encouraging young people to feel 'at home', by having:

- The physical layout for each of the Youth2Youth Consultation Workshops deliberately designed to emphasise a casual setting, by using youth-friendly items such as bean bags, games and interactive methods
- A DJ throughout the day playing popular, youth-appropriate music
- Youth activities spread across the Government House Ballroom grounds, such as a Photo Booth, large board games area, and a live art exhibition
- A Youth Service Fair where young people were able to get freebies and ask questions about youth programs, activities and opportunities that are currently available to them
- A Youth Participant Passport where young people were able to 'tick off' all the activities that they took part in throughout the day, with this tool also being used as a risk management approach to guiding the behaviours of young people during the Summit
- Amazing youth prizes donated by local businesses



The YLR also took into account the possibility of young people reacting negatively to the content and discussions during the workshops. They recognised that some young people may display aggressive behaviours, as well as other negative emotions, that could be caused by related past trauma or negative lived experience of the subject of each workshop. As such, the YLR made sure to have qualified and experienced counsellors and youth workers 'on standby' that were able to appropriately respond to such behaviours if they were to arise. Furthermore, the YLR identified that there were some workshops with topics that were considered extremely sensitive in nature. As such, these were allocated as 'Closed Sessions', in that besides the YLR facilitators and young people in attendance, no one else was allowed to listen to what was being said, as well as linger around and enter within the workshop space. These Close Workshops included:

- Youth Mental Health
- Sexual Identity
- Violence
- Drugs & Alcohol

SEPARATING BOYS & GIRLS

It is important to note that there were two Youth Mental Health Consultation Workshops that took place during the Summit: one all male workshop and one all female workshop. Drawing on from their own lived experiences of mental health issues, the YLR decided that this would be of great significance in ensuring that young people felt safe and not judged when sharing their own stories of mental health and discussing such a sensitive topic.

Furthermore, there were two Young People & Sexual Identity Workshops that took place during the Summit: one all male workshop and one all female workshop. This was quite a hotly contested decision making process for the YLR, as:

1) The group wanted to move away from perpetuating the gender bias by separating the two majority genders, and excluding all other genders in the community through labelling the workshops 'only for boys' and 'only for girls'

HOWEVER

2) The group wanted to be respectful of different cultures that could be attending the workshops, and were thus mindful of the diverse cultural perspectives and norms in regards to sex and gender.

As such, the YLR consulted with the Freedom Centre in Perth – which is a group that advocates and raises awareness for the LGBTIQ community – and discussed the various options in regards to the format of the workshop. After much discussion and debate, the YLR decided that to separate the boys and girls with respect to cultural diversity, however, they did raise this issue during each of the workshops to gauge the opinions and inputs of the Youth Participants for future reference.

The majority of the Participants believed that in order to have a more accepting, aware and educated community and society, there needs to be more open conversations with all genders included, and as such, in moving forward, similar consultation workshops should be gender neutral.

RECORDING YOUTH VOICES

Building on the strengths of the YLR's developed Youth2Youth Consultation approach, the YLR wanted to provide a 'youth only' environment during the workshops, believing that this best enabled young people to speak frankly about issues that authority figures might reprimand them for, and avoiding entrenched power dynamics in cultures which favour 'adults' over young people. This sense of a 'safe space' and a 'youth only' setting was a key concern when making decisions about how young people's contributions in the workshop consultations sessions would be recorded.

YLR members identified that recording video or audio of the workshops would impede on the sense of safety and security that they had sought to develop, and so it was decided that this was not appropriate. The group chose to have a young adult sit in during the workshop and take de-identified notes of the Youth Participants' contributions. The YLR considered the feasibility of other YLR members acting as note-takers in addition to their facilitation roles, but decided that it would be more beneficial to engage some of the other 'older' young people volunteering at the event to take on this role, with the YPP team developing a template for their notes and briefing them on their responsibilities.



GIVING PARTICIPANTS CHOICE

The YLR decided that the young people attending the day should choose which workshops they would like to be part of, in order to give them ownership of the session, but also the opportunity to engage in youth issues that they were most passionate about. As such, prior to the day, each Youth Participant registered their preferences for the workshops they would like to attend, with their choices aimed to be best accommodated for with regards to appropriateness to (i.e. gender and age) and maximum capacities of each workshop session.



INVOLVING OFFICIAL OBSERVERS

In addition, the adults or 'Official Observers' that attended the Summit were asked by the YLR to not participate in any of the workshops, but to just listen and see how genuine Youth2Youth consultations take place. Nevertheless, the Official Observers were able to interact and engage with the Youth Participants during the 'Open Consultation' session at the start of the day, where young people and adults held roundtable discussions on "*What you like, what you don't like and what you want to change about your community?*" This session was extremely valuable in breaking down barriers and negative perceptions between adults and young people, and fostered excellent vibrant and useful discussions on youth issues today.

Furthermore, the YLR allowed Official Observers to observe the workshops that were not classed as 'Closed Sessions' for up to 10 minutes at a time. The Official Observers were put into groups and led through each of the open workshops by the Summit Coordinator one group at a time. They also took part in the 'Vision Workshop' towards the end of the Summit, whereby all the Official Observers were allowed the opportunity to provide their 'vision' on what an ideal world for young people would look like.



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S INPUT

Following the Summit, the YLR facilitators were asked to review and expand on the raw workshop data taken from each Youth2Youth Consultation Workshop. These were then analysed to determine the key themes, concerns and recommendations that were provided by young people on the day. Data from the 'Open Consultation' and the Official Observer's 'Vision Workshop' were also analysed and embedded within each youth issue. All of this information is in the following *Youth Recommendations* section of this report.

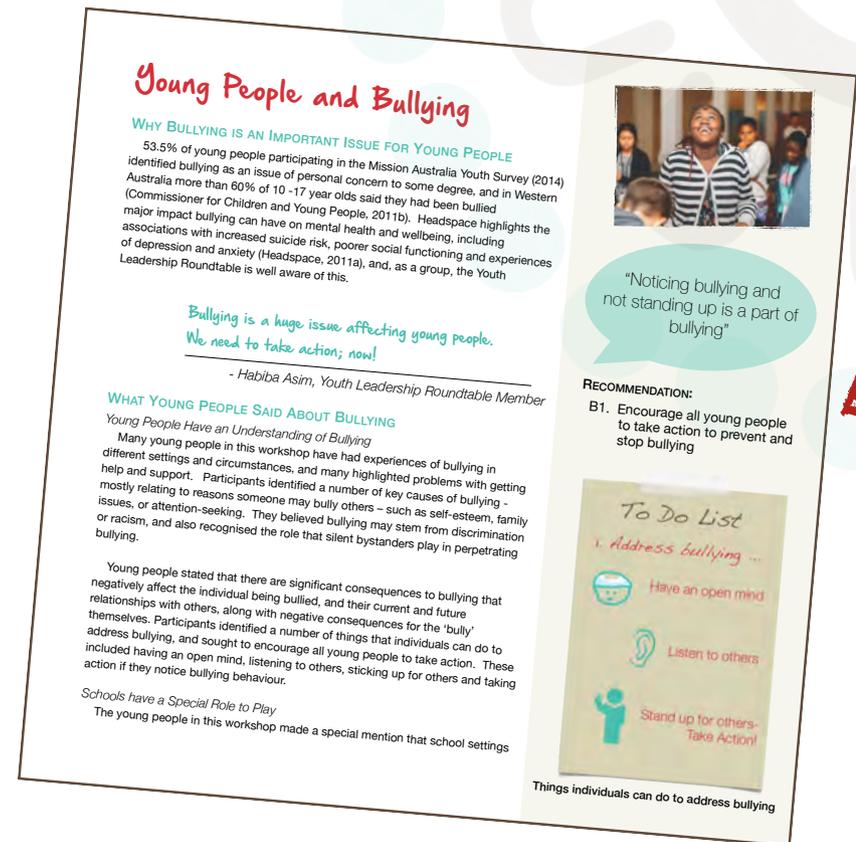
How to Use This Report

In the Youth Recommendations section of the report, comments and recommendations from young people are organised by the topics which formed the issue-specific workshops.

Within each of the workshop topics, a background into the issues' relevance for young people is provided, before moving into an overview of the key discussion and comments from each workshop and the recommendations made by the Youth Participants. The shaded inset on the side of the page highlights key recommendations made by the young people, and various quotations from the Open Consultation (seen in red speech bubbles), Official Observers Visioning Workshop (seen in white speech bubbles), and relevant issue-specific workshops (seen in aqua speech bubbles) have been included.

Additionally, overarching themes identified throughout various sessions of the *Speak Out for Change* Summit, are highlighted in the conclusion section.

Find key recommendations and quotations here



Comments from the Open Consultation are in red

Comments from issue-specific workshops are in aqua

And comments from Official Observers in the Visioning workshop are in white



Youth Recommendations



Young People & Bullying

WHY BULLYING IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

53.5% of young people participating in the Mission Australia Youth Survey (2014) identified bullying as an issue of personal concern to some degree, and in Western Australia more than 60% of 10 -17 year olds said they have been bullied (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2011b). Headspace highlights the major impact bullying can have on mental health and wellbeing, including associations with increased suicide risk, poorer social functioning and experiences of depression and anxiety (Headspace, 2011a).

Bullying is a huge issue affecting young people.

We need to take action; now!

- Habiba Asim, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

“Noticing bullying and not standing up is a part of bullying”

RECOMMENDATION:

- B1. Encourage all young people to take action to prevent and stop bullying



WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT BULLYING

Young People Have an Understanding of Bullying

Many young people in this workshop have had experiences of bullying in different settings and circumstances, and many highlighted problems with getting help and support. Participants identified a number of key causes of bullying - mostly relating to reasons someone may bully others – such as self-esteem, family issues, or attention-seeking. They believed bullying may stem from discrimination or racism, and also recognised the role that silent bystanders play in perpetuating bullying.

Young people stated that there are significant consequences to bullying that negatively affect the individual being bullied, and their current and future relationships with others, along with negative consequences for the ‘bully’ themselves. Participants identified a number of things that individuals can do to address bullying, and sought to encourage all young people to take action. These included having an open mind, listening to others, sticking up for others and taking action if they notice bullying behaviour.

Schools have a Special Role to Play

The participants in this workshop made a special mention that school settings were significant to many young people’s experiences of bullying. They felt that where bullying was occurring during school or between fellow students, it was appropriate and necessary for bullying incidents to be addressed by schools.

Things individuals can do to address bullying

However, participants identified concerns about how teachers address bullying. They noted that they felt teachers shrugged off accusations of bullying, or focused too much on the person being bullied, rather than preventing the bully from continuing to act in a negative way. Participants often felt that teachers did not “*get the facts*”, and some believed that teachers either did not know how they could appropriately address a bullying situation, or were not adequately understanding the extent to which the situation was negatively impacting on the person being bullied. They felt that a reason for this could be that teachers were brought up in a different ‘generation of bullying’ and so did not have a good understanding of what students might be facing today.

Young people recommended that **schools should have action plans** that students are aware of to address bullying, and that programs should be implemented to help prevent bullying and give students and teachers the skills needed to address bullying situations in a constructive way.

“What I don’t like about my community is bullying at school”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- B2. Implement specialised action plans for prevention of bullying in schools
- B3. Implement programs to give young people, teachers and parents skills to address bullying situations in constructive ways



“We want to get taught how to deal with ... bullying”



“I don’t like the lack of climate change action in our community... we should be teaching young people how to be environmentally friendly in different areas of their lives”

Young People & Climate Change

WHY CLIMATE CHANGE IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2010, over 45% of young people identified the environment as a key area of concern (Mission Australia, 2010). Strazdins and Skeat (2011) emphasise climate change as an environmental issue with a particularly broad scale, as it will affect many systems that are fundamental to health and survival. It is a problem for future generations, created by the current and preceding ones (Strazdins & Skeat, 2011).

Climate change is a huge issue facing our world, and we know prevention is better than a cure.

Abdi Ali, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

Young people clearly recognise the significance of climate change. They are aware this is an issue that affects everyone through its impact on the environment and living standards. While it might be considered a ‘slow moving’ issue, the potential seriousness should not be underrated.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Society doesn’t recognise the importance of climate change

However, it is evident to young people that many do not consider the environment to be of crucial importance. Participants noted that other issues seem to take priority, and are critical of attitudes that place immediate financial aims or concerns above opportunities to address long term environmental issues. They identified that “we have the technology [to address climate change] but we don’t use it - it all comes down to money”. While participants recognised the importance of funding, they urged decision makers to ensure the concern remains focused on the environmental issues at hand, rather than the dollar amount.

People Feel Powerless to Make a Positive Change

They also recognised that people can feel powerless to address an issue as big as climate change. When considering climate change on a global scale, it is hard for people to understand the things that they can do as an individual to make a difference. As such, young people believed that it is important for the public to be informed about the difference they can make, and to encourage people to take

“People don’t realise how important it is”

action to address this growing issue. In doing this, participants recommended that it is vital to increase awareness and educate the community about climate change – in particular, what they can do individually to help address it. They felt there is generally a lack of awareness of the significance of climate change and positive actions that can be taken by individuals. Young people recommended raising awareness, and that both government and individuals can take the lead in this regard.

The Government Should Take Action

Young people called on government to invest in research into ways to combat climate change, and look to take on board the subsequent results and recommendations. Participants believed that government at all levels should seek opportunities to make cities more sustainable, and look to adopt more climate-friendly policies. Young people recognised the importance of ensuring there are affordable, readily available options for individuals and businesses to ‘Go Green’, and that economic incentives may assist in this regard.

Individuals Should Take Action Too

However, the young people did not believe individuals need to wait for decision makers to make the first move. They emphasised there is much that individuals can do to help address climate change, and that they should not feel that their small efforts are overshadowed by the enormity of the issue. They asked individuals to lead the way by making environmentally friendly product choices and embracing sustainability. **Participants also called on community members to recognise the power of their voice;** to consider environmental issues when voting, and for the community to continue to place pressure on governments and elected representatives, keeping them aware that climate change is, and will continue to be, an issue of public concern.

Education & Awareness Is Key

Young people also recognised that education should be a key strategy in raising awareness of climate change and encouraging individuals to act. They recommended that from the early years of schooling, the curriculum should teach children about the importance of climate change, encourage sustainability and foster environmentally friendly habits in students’ day-to-day lives. Schools also have the opportunity to lead by example, taking sustainability beyond the curriculum into all aspects of the school community. Participants also recommended that education about sustainability should also be available and promoted to the general community, to help raise awareness of ways in which people can take action on environmental issues in their daily lives.

“People don’t think they will be able to make a difference”

RECOMMENDATION:

- CC1. Action recommendations from existing and future climate change research
- CC2. Seek to make cities more sustainable and adopt climate friendly policies, such as economic incentives and subsidies to “go green”
- CC3. Encourage individuals and community to make environmentally friendly choices and embrace sustainability
- CC4. Consider environmental issues and policy when electing government representatives, and continue to place pressure on government and elected representatives
- CC5. Develop greater awareness of sustainability and climate change issues through community and school-based education

Cultural diversity was identified over 15 times by young people taking part in the Open Consultation Workshop, as a key thing they valued in their communities.



Elements of culture identified by participants

Young People & Culture

WHY CULTURE IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all children have the right to practice their own culture, language and religion. Culture is fundamental to young people's identity and wellbeing (Save the Children Australia, 2013), and the absence of culture may contribute to low self-esteem and a poor sense of self (Commissioner for Children and Young People, n.d. a, *Aboriginal children and young people speak out about culture and identity*). The Youth Leadership Roundtable recognise the importance of culture and consider it from a holistic perspective.

Culture is about more than the specific traits of a group; about being a blackfella. It is about how we view the world and see it evolving. It isn't about the past either; it's about the here and now. It's in the present and it's evolving.

Preston Culbong, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

Participants of this workshop defined culture as 'belonging to a group' or a feeling of belonging. They identified that this sense of belonging was comprised of elements which gave it an identity such as family, language, beliefs, community, story, cuisine, fashion, entertainment, tradition and support.

Young people are aware of the vast cultural diversity in Australia. Participants made mention of many different traditions, belief systems and other elements of belonging (see graphic), and also of celebrations such as NAIDOC Week and Harmony Day which are promoted by schools, communities and government. They believed that a strong culture needs to be supported by mutual respect, understanding, education, open mindedness, conversations, listening and reflection.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT CULTURE

We Want to Explore Culture Through Education

In particular, young people believe that there should be greater opportunities to explore this cultural diversity in the context of schooling and education. This was identified in the Culture workshop, but also throughout the Open Consultations. They identified a desire to learn about different belief systems, traditions and about

culturally significant history from different perspectives. They also recommended that schools are settings that should reflect and support the cultural diversity of our society. They recommended not only that cultural understandings be integrated in the curriculum, but also that school canteens should provide multicultural foods, and schools be sure to engage in the celebrations of different cultures, as well as in celebrations of cultural diversity.

Services Need to Consider Culture

Furthermore, participants believed there was a need to develop culturally appropriate and holistic services. Through such an approach, they sought to ensure equitable community development, and that culturally diverse groups are able to access services such as education and housing support in order to promote positive outcomes such as employment and community engagement.

Young People See an 'Australian Culture'

Finally, participants emphasised an 'Australian Culture'. By recognising the vast cultural diversity in Australia, they saw this as contributing to a broader Australian Culture; one that is inclusive, respectful, accepting and diverse. In bringing further identity to culture, young people recognised elements already strongly accepted in our society such as mateship, egalitarianism, 'laid back' approaches, value of education, love of the outdoors and barbeque cuisines. However, they felt that this sense of culture and belonging needed further development, and we need to have a vision for an Australian culture to become one that was openly and consistently proud of its multiculturalism and diversity that is founded in respect, appreciation and acceptance, and had a safer drinking culture. In this regard, young people recommended that we all have a role to play in making this vision of an 'Australian Culture' a reality.

Finally, participants also made mention of a belief that governments needed to listen to young people and act on their recommendations.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- C1. Explore cultural diversity within the context of schooling - within the curriculum and by fostering multiculturalism in the school community
- C2. Ensure youth and community services are culturally appropriate and holistic

"We are a lot more better as **one** rather than being **divided**"

RECOMMENDATION:

- C3. Contribute, as individuals, to making our vision of an "Australian Culture" a reality



Young People with Disabilities

WHY DISABILITY IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The United Nations recognises that all young people with a disability should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self resilience and facilitate active participation (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007). Nearly 8% of West Australians aged 15-25yrs old have a disability, and while young people prefer to highlight what they are able to do and enjoy, they also recognise that they face challenges other young people do not (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2013)

Young people consulted on this issue identified particular strengths that young people with disabilities have, specifically in regards to their positive mind sets and ability to adjust to different situations. However, they also emphasised that young people with disabilities face many significant challenges.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT DISABILITY

Young People with Disabilities Face Challenges

On an individual level, participants identified many practical concerns. These included issues such as long emergency department waiting times, lack of wheelchair access (particularly in schools), and having someone to talk to about these and other unique challenges. They valued the much-needed support of family, friends and doctors in overcoming these challenges. Additionally, they stated that many people in the community do not know how to help someone with a disability, and that making first aid courses more accessible and providing relevant training for those likely to be engaged with individuals with a disability could be of great benefit.

Inclusion is Important

Young people also identified a number of larger, community-wide challenges for young people with disabilities, particularly around inclusion within society. Youth Participants identified that society is “*starting to accept that there are people who live with disabilities*”, but despite this, they believe that they still are not equally represented in community groups and that their challenges are not fully embraced by society. Young people spoke of difficulties ‘fitting in’, and experiences of being discriminated against or feeling ignored. It was recommended that ensuring people with disabilities are appropriately represented (in decision making, and in popular culture) would lead to both a more empowered voice and a greater understanding



RECOMMENDATION:

- D1. Provide adequate, relevant, affordable training for those likely to be engaged with individuals with a disability

“Society treats people with disabilities different”

RECOMMENDATION:

- D2. Ensure people with disabilities are adequately and appropriately represented in decision making and popular culture

and acceptance for people with disabilities.

They also recommended that people be educated about the various different disabilities people in our communities face (both obvious and 'invisible'), so that there can be further awareness and understanding generally. The promotion of extra-curricular activities for young people with disabilities was also recommended as a positive step that could enable other young people to engage with those with disabilities, and increase opportunities for participation and awareness.

RECOMMENDATION:

- D3. Build understanding through community and school-based education and awareness about different disabilities

"If we teach students at a younger age... they'll have a better attitude when they are older"



"[Society is] starting to accept that there are people who live with disabilities"

Drugs & Alcohol

WHY DRUGS AND ALCOHOL IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people in Australia identified drug and alcohol use as one of the top 3 issues in the country, with about 3 in 10 Western Australian young people identifying it as an important issue (Mission Australia Youth Survey, 2014). This issue is particularly relevant in the South East Corridor, with an analysis of youth offending in the Burswood area finding rates of alcohol and illicit drug use to be significant, showing that 33% of juveniles arrested had been drinking, and 41% having used illicit drugs (WA Police, 2013). In research conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (2011b), young people identified that drug and alcohol use affects many domains of life, from family and their enjoyment of activities, to feelings of safety.

Smoking and the use of drugs and alcohol were identified in the open consultation sessions in more than 30 instances, as an aspect of young people's communities that they did not like and wanted to change.

Young people are well aware of the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol; unfortunately, though, many have first-hand experience with the issue. They know the consequences that substance use can have on the individual, including direct effects on the mind and body, the development of dependencies, and the impact this can have on everyday life. Furthermore, young people are conscious of the negative impacts drugs and alcohol use can have on the community and wider society. Young people's understanding of this focused on the impacts on families and relationships, but also ranged to include increases in violence, crime, motor vehicle accidents and homelessness.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Young People Use Drugs and Alcohol

Though young people recognise the negative impacts of drug and alcohol use, many still drink alcohol and use some recreational drugs due to social norms. Workshop participants pointed out that most young people are exposed to an environment where substance use is considered "cool", 'normal' and 'social'. For some young people, choosing to drink or use recreational drugs was a way of expressing their freedom and independence. They recognised that the culture of what substances and their level of use is considered acceptable changes depending

"What I don't like about my community is the people smoking and selling drugs, and alcohol"

"I don't like the drugs. The amount of young children walking around on drugs or drunk... seeing our elders drinking and misbehaving"



The multi-level impacts of drugs & alcohol identified by participants

"If I could change something, I would lower the level of drug and alcohol access in schools"

on the situation, and described that their experiences have told them that, generally, any substance in moderation was considered acceptable. They noted that **alcohol use was basically universally accepted, even in underage contexts.**

More Affective Awareness & Access to Support Services can Help Prevention

However, participants believed more should be done to prevent and assist young people using drugs and alcohol for the ‘wrong reasons’, and identified that it is necessary to address prevention, intervention and policy issues to do so.

In regards to prevention, young people identified that “*prevention must start early*”. They recognised the value and necessity of drug and alcohol education being included in the school curriculum, but recommended that the content should go beyond the “*scientific stuff*” – such as different types of substances and the effects they have on one’s body. Rather, they felt it would be more effective to include **education on the effects that drug and alcohol abuse has on people’s lives, families, and relationships by using real life stories.**

Furthermore, young people also recognised that it is necessary to provide better education for the general public as well, and recommended a public health campaign associated with an annual drug and alcohol awareness day, focusing on the reasons behind drug and alcohol abuse. Participants also identified that generally encouraging good mental health, as well as promoting sport and community participation could work to address some of the underlying causes of substance abuse; providing positive activities, community engagement, and encouraging a sense of belonging.

Support is Needed for Those Struggling with Drug and Alcohol Abuse

In discussing the importance of intervention services, young people felt that there was a distinct lack of support available, and in many cases they felt support services were not understanding or sympathetic to the struggles faced by young people with drug and alcohol issues.

Youth Participants said that there were no services available, and **recognised a need to address availability of addiction services.** They felt that long wait times to get into rehabilitation was not realistic for addicts, and that once the individual had made the decision to enter rehab, they needed to be supported to act on this positive choice as soon as possible, before they found a reason to change their minds. They also felt specialised drug and alcohol wards in hospitals should be considered.

RECOMMENDATION:

- DA1. Address underlying causes of substance abuse



‘Wrong reasons’ for using drugs and alcohol

“It feels like there’s no places for people like us to get clean. There is no hope”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- DA2. Utilise school-based and community education opportunities aiming to increase awareness of and prevent substance abuse
- DA3. Increase availability of rehabilitation services

“I want to see street drinking stopped in our community”

“Talk to them.
Encourage them to stop”

RECOMMENDATION:

- DA4. Utilise family based approaches to support users



RECOMMENDATION:

- DA5. Implement approaches in the criminal justice system that support rehabilitation of users and enforce harsher penalties on dealers as a deterrent

“We need to be more supportive and understanding”

Youth Participants also identified a need for more collaboration, where stakeholders from schools, medical services, police and families to come together for the support of individuals, and in addressing substance issues in the community as a whole.

Young people understand the significant impact drug and alcohol issues have on relationships, as well as the value that support from these relationships could have in helping young people to overcome such issues. As such they felt it was important to encourage understanding and give tools for family to be able to support young people, through family based approaches with options such as family group counselling in intervention settings. Participants also identified that there can be extra challenges when a person struggling with addiction is surrounded with others in their family facing similar issues, and that family based approaches could help to address these kinds of situations.

Finally, young people identified that drug and alcohol programs must have more consultation with users in order to provide services that are meaningful and supportive.

These Issues Need to be Considered at a High Level

From a bigger picture and policy perspective, young people had a number of recommendations relating to penalties, programs and funding.

In regards to penalties for drug offences, participants recommended that a supportive, rehabilitative approach should be taken with drug users – seeking to recognise and address the challenges they face and support them to make positive changes. However, participants also felt it was necessary for there to be significantly harsher penalties for those supplying illicit substances to others, as a deterrent and to help limit the availability and prevalence of substance abuse.

Young people also recommended that drug and alcohol programs be considered on a national level, rather than a state level, identifying a need for continuity of service between states, and the need for services of a higher standard. However, perhaps most importantly, Youth Participants identified that funding needs to be allocated to prevention and intervention programs and services to ensure they are available, accessible and effective.

Young People & Access to Education

WHY EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all children have the right to an education that allows them to reach their fullest potential. Educational settings have a significant impact on the lives of young people, and in many cases being the main 'occupation' of young people, as well as having a major role on the development of identity (Save the Children, 2013). The 2014 Mission Australia Youth Survey (2014) revealed that 68.6% of young people considered school or education as 'very important' or 'extremely important', but that school and study problems were the highest issue of personal concern.

"It was something that a lot of us felt failed when we were younger, and that a lot of us had dropped out of school, struggled with or hated school... They [YLR] saw a lot of simple things that could be done to improve the experience of other young people"

Preston Culbong, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

For young people taking part in the *Speak Out for Change* Summit, education was highly significant. They recognised the importance of education and placed a lot of value on it. In particular, they focused on how education leads to greater and more opportunities, and its importance in achieving success in a certain career or profession. They saw it as a key avenue of developing life skills and gaining employment. While they highlighted the importance of education for achieving future goals and successes, they also emphasised the value of education in the present lives of young people - such as the support young people receive from education institutions, social aspects, opportunities students receive, as well as benefits to health and wellbeing. Participants showed a very holistic understanding and approach to education, focusing on the development of the whole person, and a greater focus on how and where education takes place - including formal, informal and non-formal contexts, rather than the content of what students learn.

"I enjoy school - I learn heaps"



"Education needs to include life skills"



“There is a lack of educational structure that meets different learning needs”



“The education system needs to cater for **all** youth, with pathways to work and opportunities to get work experience”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Edu1. Approach learners genuinely as individuals, rather than utilising a one-size-fits-all model
- Edu2. Facilitate more opportunities for one-on-one learning and support
- Edu3. Promote alternative and non-traditional forms of education

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT EDUCATION

Overall, while Youth Participants had a very positive attitude towards education, they identified a number of key concerns with the education system.

Education Needs to Cater More Effectively for Difference

The first of these was about catering for differences between individual students. Young people believe there is more than one way to learn, and identified various aspects of this including different learning styles or preferences (auditory, visual, practical etc.), as well as different education settings (traditional classrooms, vocational education, alternative education settings etc.). They noted that there are differences in learning approaches between **all** individuals, as well as “*diagnosable*” differences such as those related to learning disabilities, physical accommodations and mental health concerns.

Participants believed that these individual difficulties are often not well catered to. They recommended that educators needed to genuinely approach their learners as individuals, rather than using a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model. Young people felt that different learning styles needed to be better catered for, and that support and adjustments should be more widely available to accommodate for individual differences. This was relevant not only in teaching, but also in assessment, and participants specifically identified a number of concerns with high-stakes testing that is not accommodating of different learning styles. They also felt that there was a significant lack of opportunity for one-on-one learning or support, and that addressing this would be beneficial for all students.

In addition, participants believed that more alternative, and non-traditional teaching and learning should be developed and implemented for young people, and that young people who undertake such pathways should not be at a disadvantage when seeking higher or further education. Furthermore, they felt that there should also be alternative methods and settings available for higher or further education. Participants firmly believed that catering for difference would allow more students to be able to truly access the full benefits of education.

Education Should be Relevant for 21st Century Learners

A second key area of concern for participants related to the importance of education that is relevant to 21st century learners. While participants did not use this phrasing as such, they identified many core elements of this concept such as collaborative and creative approaches, a focus on imparting skills rather than knowledge, and the use of technology. Young people identified that technology, the internet and a continuous, pervasive media cycle is not only a setting for learning,

but that these “*define the way we learn*”, and will, consequently, also define ways of working and living in the future. As such, developing skills in accessing and using technology and information in these settings is particularly important.

Additionally, participants recommended that it is more beneficial to “*help students without telling them the answer*”, and comments reflected a preference for authentic, project and discovery based learning. Young people explicitly recommended that there be more use of collaborative learning strategies, and opportunities for students to develop creativity.

Further to this, young people wanted education that is relevant to real life. This was identified throughout the Education Workshop, the Open Consultation Workshop, and the other Youth2Youth consultations throughout the Summit. Many felt that they ‘missed out’ on being taught important practical life skills. Some specific examples included understanding taxation, reading payslips, completing official paperwork, as well as general communication and social skills. Participants of the workshop were big promoters of education that included the development of a wide variety of life skills. As such, they were also keen to see more vocational education, developing general and specific skills relevant to life and post-formal education.

Education has a Significant Impact on Young People’s Lives

Participants’ awareness that **education can be a source of considerable pressure for young people**, and that schools and other educational institutions can be emotional environments. They recommended that while education is important, young people need to have a work/education life balance, and be adequately and appropriately supported to deal with stress. While participants recognised there may be need for change in the education system and that in some ways this continual development can be positive, there is also a need for some consistency, so that students, teachers and institutions are able to focus on their core business, without feeling lost in a rapidly changing environment.

Funding is Important

Finally, young people were particularly aware of and concerned about issues relating to education funding. They recognised the need to fund education, but also the need to fund it well – specifically, in ways that are most supportive to students, schools and the community. They recommended there was a need to ensure government is funding programs that have an impact, not only programs that have been around a long time, and that alternative and non-traditional education settings are developed and funded in order to be accessible and beneficial to young people.

RECOMMENDATION:

Edu4. Provide education which is relevant to the 21st century learner



“I would like more support during education without it being expensive - having people help with homework and stuff”

RECOMMENDATION:

Edu5. Fund programs that have an impact, not only those that have been around for a long time

“Education delivery must align to the 21st Century”

“I'd like there to be more employment opportunities in my community”



The 'work-experience cycle'

“I would change my community so that there are people to help you apply for jobs”

Youth Employment

WHY EMPLOYMENT IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Young People face significant levels of unemployment with 14.6% of 15-25 year olds nationally being unemployed in February 2015 (ABS, Feb 2015). As “any period of unemployment can increase the chance of subsequent and ongoing unemployment” (State Training Board of WA, 2013), this is a significant issue for young people, impacting on their future employability. Additionally, young people also face challenges of being underemployed - having a job, but not being able to get enough work hours - with the rates of underemployment at twice that of the working population (Brotherhood of St Lawrence, 2014).

During the Open Consultations, employment emerged as one of the key issues where young people desire change in their communities. They identified a lack of employment opportunities as a negative aspect of their communities, and were concerned by how young people’s age affected their credibility to potential employers. Having more employment opportunities, and more support to move into the workforce were key changes that young people wanted to see in their communities.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

Entering the Workforce is Difficult for Young People

Participants in this workshop identified that young people find the workforce daunting, and in many regards, feel unprepared. They recognise it is difficult for young people to find employment and that this is exacerbated by a ‘work-experience cycle’ where prospective employers require young people to have experience in order to get a job, yet young people are unable to gain such experience if they are unable to gain employment.

Young people also expressed confusion in regards to general skills related to employment; such as finding a job, writing cover letters, understanding tax, superannuation and other financial literacy issues. They struggled to identify individuals and/or organisations that can assist them with these skills, and suggested **that they need help finding help.**

Young people saw a great opportunity for schools and educational institutions to assist in this regard, and recommend that **topics such as writing cover letters, looking for work and financial literacy (including tax, superannuation and**

saving) be covered from the early years of secondary schooling. Participants recognised that even those students seeking to pursue further education post-school were likely to seek employment of some sort before they completed such further education, and therefore identified the advantages of facilitating a smoother transition from high school to employment, by developing skills and providing experiences that give young people the opportunity to explore different careers and industries, and enables them to be work-ready.

Participants also encouraged the use of 'Christmas Casual' positions. They recommended that employing young people in these positions enables them to get workplace experience and skills needed for them to break the 'work-experience cycle', with the advantage that even those young people studying at secondary or tertiary levels are often available to take on a position during the Christmas period, as many of the responsibilities and commitments they have throughout the rest of the year are significantly reduced during this time.

Young People are Concerned about Discrimination in the Workforce

Young people also raised concerns about experiences of discrimination in finding work and within the workplace. They perceived that many employers have negative attitudes towards young people, which were further exacerbated by the 'work-experience cycle' and a **desire for employees to have 'life experience', which young people are generally perceived not to have.** Participants also identified that they had felt discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, religion and culture in the workforce or in finding work.

Young People are also Concerned about Harassment & Employee Wellbeing

Participants identified issues in the workforce, and raised concerns about how young entry-level employees can be treated by managers. **They identified experiences that showed a lack of respect between managers and young employees,** ranging from use of manners and friendly language, to bullying and harassment. The young people in the workshop recommended that there should be some level of supervision for those in management roles (which they felt was lacking or non-existent), to ensure they were developing positive and productive working relationships with all employees. Participants also recommended that young employees should be made aware of their rights upon employment, including an awareness of policies and procedures to address such concerns, and be reminded and aware of these rights and processes to address concerns throughout the term of their employment.

"We need help finding help"



"You shouldn't need connections to be able to get a job"



RECOMMENDATION:

Emp1. Provide better preparation for the workforce through schools and educational institutions

“There should be more ‘work experience’ or ‘job roles’ within training and education, so that you are able to apply for jobs with experience”



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Emp2. Supervise managers to ensure that they develop positive and productive working relationships with all employees, especially young people

Emp3. Increase awareness of employee rights amongst young employees

Additionally, some other concerns regarding employee well-being were also raised, such as ensuring appropriate breaks, and enabling employees to have easy access to someone within the company (other than their manager) who they could feel comfortable with and welcome to go to in order to discuss issues related to their role, and discuss concerns about their workplace environment.

It is Important to have Young People in the Workforce

Participants recognised that there were many benefits of fostering and genuinely encouraging young people in the workforce, both in regards to young people’s own development (personally and financially), and in the development of a strong, experienced, and diverse workforce.

Youth Mental Health

WHY MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Mental health has been identified as the most significant health issue facing young Australians (Headspace, 2011b; ABS, 2015). In Western Australia, over one third of young people aged 16-25 experience mental health problems annually (Mental Health Commission, 2010). Young people recognise and are concerned about the significance of this issue (Mission Australia, 2014), however, many young people experiencing mental health problems will not access mental health services (Mental Health Commission, 2010).

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

It is important to note that there were 2 Youth Mental Health Consultation Workshops. Please see page 10 in the Methodology Section for further explanation.

Young People have Understandings of Mental Health

Youth Participants at the Speak Out for Change Summit were aware of the significance of mental health issues within the community and had some basic understandings of mental health. In particular, participants in the Mental Health for Boy's workshop identified experiences and symptoms of mental health and mental health problems, as well as a variety of ways by which individuals could keep mentally healthy such as engaging in activities, being physically active and talking to someone about concerns.

Participants in the Mental Health for Girl's workshop showed a more 'clinical' understanding, including an awareness of different types of mental health issues, not just depression, anxiety and suicide. They also identified that there are many factors that contribute to a person's mental health, including the environment in which they grew up in or are currently living in, as well as genetic pre-dispositions. They also identified ways in which the community could address mental health concerns.

Support from Family & Friends is Important

Participants in both Mental Health workshops highlighted the importance of support from family and friends, and the benefits of having someone to talk to. As one participant stated, "[mental illness] makes you want to hide, but telling friends really helps". Given the importance of these supportive relationships, participants also identified the benefit of having support available for those who provide daily or regular support to friends or family members with mental health issues.

"The stigma around mental health, phobias and anxieties is a real negative about our community"



The Open Consultation workshop identified mental health promotion and support services, with sports and other activities which can help promote good mental health, as key things they liked about their communities.

"It takes away enjoyment of your favourite activities"

“It just drags you down. It makes you want to hide, but telling friends really helps”

“Case workers don’t care, you’re just another case to them”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- MH1. Ensure young people are informed and involved with decisions about their care, including being offered treatment alternatives
- MH2. Promote existing mental health services to young people
- MH3. Make mental health services more accessible to young people through youth-led drop-in centres, ongoing consultation, and services in schools
- MH4. Increase promotion and awareness of positive mental health and different mental health problems in the community, including through the media, workplaces and schools

“Talking removes stigma”

Young People have Concerns About Mental Health Services

Participants in both Mental Health workshop groups and the Open Consultation identified issues in finding help and accessing mental health services. This included not only being unaware of services available and a reluctance to access such services, but many young people also identified having had negative experiences with mental health services. **They spoke of a lack of genuine care from professionals and felt that services were disconnected from young people.** Additionally, young people often felt that they had limited input into their treatment. In accessing services, they felt options were not made available to them, particularly in regards to alternative methods of treatment, and stated that there was a dependence on doctors prescribing medications as the only means to overcome mental health issues.

In this regard, participants recommended that young people be offered treatment alternatives, and be informed and involved in decisions about their care. They recognised a need for services to be client focused, providing genuine care and consideration of each individual. They recommended that accessibility and awareness of different services needs to be improved, and emphasised that the school setting could be advantageous as a place to spread awareness of issues, or even basic services. In seeking to address issues of services being disconnected from young people, participants identified that they would be keen to engage with a youth-led drop-in centre, or to be able to make meaningful contributions from a youth perspective to services in other ways, such as youth suggestion boxes. Participants also recommended that ensuring those who work with young people, such as teachers and youth workers, are trained in how to assist those with mental health concerns as this could ensure young people receive positive and constructive support when first reaching out for help.

Society needs more Mental Health Awareness to Address Stigma

Participants, particularly in the Mental Health for Girl’s workshop, recognised society’s general lack of awareness and understandings of mental health issues, and the importance of addressing stigma surrounding mental health. Participants considered stigma to be detrimental to awareness; that open conversation could help to reduce stigma and also people’s ability to provide appropriate support to those around them.

In addressing this, young people recommended that mental health be age-appropriately addressed in all stages of education in ways that promote mental wellbeing and also increase awareness and reduce stigma surrounding mental health problems.

Young People & Public Transport

WHY PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

For young people, public transport offers the prospect of independence, as they do not have to rely on others to know where they are going or to get them there (Save the Children Australia, 2013). In 2009, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (n.d. c, *Children and Young People Speak out about Safety*) found that almost 60% of young people used public transport, however, most young people identified that they do not always feel safe on public transport at night.

We chose public transport as one of the workshop topics as we felt there were growing issues, particularly with late night train rides.

Keneasha Lindsay, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

Young people value the public transport system, and participants identified that it enabled them to get to places they wanted to go – such as school and work. Public transport workshop participants recognised that most experiences with public transport are positive; however people are more likely to recall negative experiences that they have had. They appreciate public transport facilities such as air conditioning in summer, and light at night, and the ease in ticketing using the SmartRider system.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Participants felt public transport is an important service for our community, and as such many believed that public transport should be free. However, young people in the workshop and Open Consultations also recognised that there are a number of issues with the public transport system.

Young People are Concerned about Safety on Public Transport

Participants felt both safe and unsafe using public transport. They identified that the presence of transit guards, security cameras, good lighting and intercoms were factors that made them feel safe highlighting that trains offer a safe avenue of ‘escape’ from situations where they felt unsafe such as fights caused by drugs and alcohol, particularly at night. They believed that mostly, trains are peaceful.

Public transport was one of the key positives that young people in the open consultations workshop identified in their communities.

“I like that my community is easily accessible by public transport”



“I like that the public transport is clean”

“I would like to feel safe by myself on public transport”



“Guards can be intimidating”

“Transit guards need some sort of training to make innocent people feel safe instead of targeted. More mutual respect.”



“It’s confusing when you are buying a ticket for the first time”

However, people congregating at public transport stations, and experiences of violence and harassment in such settings, made young people feel unsafe. Young people felt intimidated by groups of people, and other passengers, as well as by boisterous or rowdy displays of behaviour on public transport. They felt concerned for their personal safety, and unsure – not knowing how to respond in these situations. Safety after dark was a particular concern, with one participant stating, “I don’t travel on the train at night - I hate it”.

Transit Guards are the Face of the Public Transport System

For young people, transit guards are the face of the Public Transport system, yet issues with transit officers were identified as a key concern during the workshop consultation. While the presence of transit guards contributed to feelings of safety on public transport, the relationship with guards embodied many of the concerns that young people had. They identified that they often felt unsafe around transit guards as they feel unfairly targeted or discriminated against. Further, young people believe transit guards are not equipped with the skills and knowledge to appropriately respond to or address youth issues that may arise on public transport. Youth Participants wanted to be treated by transit guards with mutual respect and a positive attitude.

Young people also identified racism and discrimination as a common concern in the public transport setting. Youth Participants had felt discriminated against on the basis of race and age, by both other passengers and by transit guards. They highlighted a number of instances of being “*picked on*”, or a difference in attitude or treatment towards people of colour, along with a poor ability of transit guards to deal sensitively and appropriately with language barriers. An effect of this discrimination was that young people are made to feel guilty and restless even though they had done the right thing, or even feeling that their presence is unwanted, and scares or intimidates other passengers.

Ticketing for Public Transport can be Confusing

A final area of concern was in regards to ticketing. There was some confusion over a number of aspects of ticketing, specifically student concessions – particularly utilising the student concession without a SmartRider, which was seen as an important need – as well as default fares. Since public transport is a necessary part of daily life, young people believed that increasing ticket prices are of no benefit to society. They believed that in some instances this leads to people not buying or incorrectly buying tickets, and if caught, this leading to fines. For young people who may not have the capacity to pay such fines, the accumulative debt can be significant, and have alarming implications on other aspects of their lives, such as

getting a drivers licence. Participants were also particularly concerned that transit guards would not be understanding or listen to young people's circumstances if they were found to be traveling on an incorrect ticket or without a ticket, and felt that guards had an objective to give fines, rather than being there to help passengers and encourage safety.

Young People have Ideas to Improve their Experiences on Public Transport

Drawing on these concerns, young people participating in the workshop consultation were able to make a number of recommendations. Firstly, they recommended that there be a focus on ensuring that transit guards are more approachable, understanding and respectful. They also felt that transit officers should undertake more training in how to engage appropriately and positively with youth, and more sensitively with those of diverse cultural backgrounds. Further, recognising that the presence of transit guards made young people feel safe, participants recommended that two transit guards should be accessible at every station at all times.

Secondly, young people recommended that ticket prices should be fixed, concession processes clearer and more accessible, with significant concessions available to those that may not be economically stable. They also recommended having unpaid public transport fines not act as a detriment to young people obtaining drivers licenses or other types of financial assistance.

Public Transport Could be a Tool for Community Development

Finally, young people recommended that public transport could provide a key opportunity for addressing bigger social issues that have an indirect impact on problems experienced on public transport. They identified that community and social services (such as drop in centres, counselling and domestic violence support) near public transport hubs and having advertising on buses and trains for community events and activities could be used to help engage people with their local community, address issues such as boredom and use of drugs and alcohol, and provide opportunities to support those in need within our community.

“If people can't afford a train/bus ticket, what makes you think they can pay a fine?”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

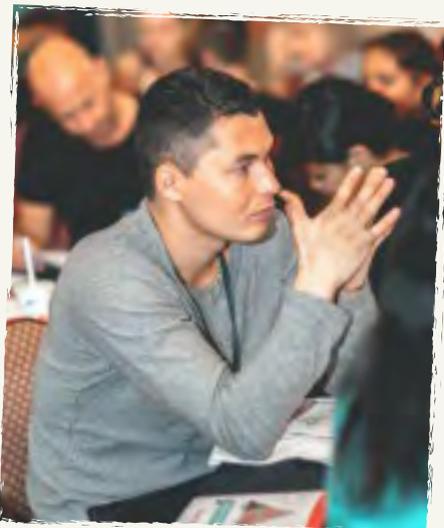
- PT1. Provide more transit guards, lighting and surveillance cameras to help young people feel safe when traveling on public transport
- PT2. Ensure transit guards are approachable, respectful and understanding, including having training on engaging effectively with young people and people of diverse cultural backgrounds
- PT3. Investigate opportunities for public transport to help address social issues



Racism and discrimination was clearly and repeatedly identified as a concern by young people taking part in the Open Consultation



“What I don’t like about my community is the underlying racism that is still with us”



“I wish there was less negative stereotyping of young people”

Racism & Discrimination

WHY RACISM & DISCRIMINATION IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

More than 1 in 5 West Australian respondents to the Mission Australia Youth Survey identified equality and discrimination as a major issue facing Australia (Mission Australia, 2014). Research in Perth’s South-East Corridor in 2013 found that many young people feel that they experience discrimination for crimes or behaviours they have not done (Save the Children Australia, 2013). Experiencing prejudice makes it more likely that young people will feel they do not receive equal opportunities and that their identity and culture are devalued (Save the Children Australia, 2013).

You aren’t born to hate anyone.

Abdi Ali, Leadership Roundtable Member

And no one should be made to question their origin

Habiba Asim, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

The majority of young people that took part in the Young People and Culture Workshop had stated that they had faced some form of discrimination in their lives. Many spoke of experiences of racism, but issues of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, upbringing and appearance were also raised. Participants recognised that such experiences of discrimination had negative impacts on the individuals, leading to low self esteem, isolation, not feeling welcome and accepted, and that it “*make[s] you feel bad about who you are*”.

Young people also identified that such impacts are not limited to the individuals experiencing discrimination, but have a flow on effect into the community and society as a whole. They suggested that discrimination leads to unfair stereotypes of different groups, which are particularly prominent in the media. Discrimination can impact on how people treat one another, and specific examples were given in regards to how teachers treated different students. They also mentioned that discrimination can make it hard for individuals from certain groups to get opportunities, specifically related to housing, education and employment.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

Recognising these two different levels of impacts, young people suggested two different levels on which racism and discrimination can be addressed.

Individuals Can Take Action to Address Discrimination

The Youth Participants recommended that individuals should stand up for themselves and others, assist those experiencing discrimination, and “*call people out*” when they observe discrimination occurring. They also recommended that individuals should take time to reflect on themselves and their culture, and question ideas they hold in regards to other groups.

Schools are Important Settings for Addressing Discrimination

Young people also made recommendations about how discrimination can be addressed at community, state and national levels. In particular, they believed that schools had an important role to play, in promoting diversity through events such as Harmony day, NAIDOC week, and other multicultural celebrations. They also emphasised that education could provide opportunities for increased awareness, such as addressing these issues from the early years of schooling.

Discrimination Should be Addressed at All Levels

On a community level, participants recommended that the misunderstandings which underlie discrimination could be addressed through holding culturally diverse workshops, and taking other opportunities to build connections and trust between people.

On a national level, young people valued events such as NAIDOC week and Harmony Week, and also believed that promoting more cultural diversity in advertising and the media would have significant value and impact. They recommended it was necessary to have well implemented policies protecting people from racism and discrimination, and more importantly, that young people know how to access assistance when they need to use such policies as protection. Young people firmly believe that “***THERE IS NO ROOM FOR RACISM***” in our community.

“You have to stand up for yourself and others”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- RD1. Stand up for ourselves and others. Assist those experiencing discrimination
- RD2. Reflect on our culture and question ideas we hold in regards to other groups
- RD3. Promote cultural diversity and awareness at an early age
- RD4. Foster opportunities to build connection and trust between people - for example through culturally diverse workshops
- RD5. Increase cultural diversity in media and advertising
- RD6. Clearly implement, and continuously review current policy protecting people from racism and discrimination

“I dislike that there is racism and bullying at school”

Young People & Sexual Identity



RECOMMENDATION:

- SI1. Make progress towards a more sexually equal society, beginning with marriage equality

“All ages should be educated”

WHY SEXUAL IDENTITY IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

People who are members of minority gender and sexual identity groups experience entrenched prejudice and discrimination in Australian society (Headspace, 2011c). The Second National Survey of the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTI Australians identified that LGBTI young people report lower levels of health than the national average (Leonard et al., 2012). Young Australians who are same sex attracted experience homophobia, which manifests through verbal abuse, physical abuse, exclusion and rumour spreading (Hillier et al., 2010)

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT SEXUAL IDENTITY

It is worth noting that there were 2 separate Young People & Sexual Identity Consultation Workshops that took place during the Summit: one all male workshop and one all female workshop. Please refer to page 10 in the Methodology Section for further explanation.

There is Differing Acceptance of Diverse Sexualities and Genders

Young men in the Sexual Identity for Boys workshop were aware that in today’s society there are many different gender identities and sexual orientations beyond those traditionally recognised. However, they also identified that due to social constructs – how we are taught and a lack of understanding, there are many people with a limited acceptance of such diversity. Indeed, there was evidence of this within the Sexual Identity workshops, particularly amongst the young men; when asked if it is okay to be gay, some participants responded “no”, “it’s not right”. However, overall, young men recognised the need for legal protection and support for people of diverse sexuality and gender.

Young women participating in this workshop were generally more accepting, and looking for social change to address challenges faced by individuals in the community. They believed that there needs to be more sexual equality in society, and looked to progress towards Marriage Equality as being an important step.

Further Awareness and Education is Needed

Importantly, both workshop groups recognised many challenges and obstacles faced by those who do not identify as heterosexual. All participants believed further education, greater social awareness, and understanding would lead to this no longer

becoming a 'taboo' subject, and contribute in advocating for a more gender equal society. In particular, they identified that schools and the media have a significant role to play in making progress towards this issue. They recommended that there be more representation of diverse sexuality and gender in the media and in advertising. They also felt that students should be taught about different sexual identities and preferences in an age appropriate way throughout schooling and in 'sex ed.', without it being treated as a taboo subject, and that this be linked with education about the negative effects of discrimination.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- SI2. Increased representation of diverse sexuality and gender in the media and advertising
- SI3. Include age-appropriate education and awareness about different sexual identities and preferences throughout schooling

"Marriage equality must be legalised"

"I don't like that there is a lack of acceptance of LGBTI students being open about their sexual identities"

"There is a bit of negativity towards the LGBT community"

Teen Parenting

WHY TEEN PARENTING IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2013, over 14 500 Australian teenagers became young parents (ABS, 2014). Parenthood has far-reaching impacts for the lives of young people, and often leads to interruptions to schooling, an increased likelihood of dependence on government support, and limitations for current and future job prospects (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2014). However, it is recognised that when pregnant and parenting young people are supported to improve their outcomes, this also means improving prospects for their children (Boulden, 2010).

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT TEEN PARENTING

Reasons Behind Teen Pregnancies are Varied and Complex

Nearly all participants in this workshop had a child at a young age or knew someone else who had, and recognised that the reasons behind this were varied and complex. The vast majority identified adolescent pregnancies as being accidental, often relating to reasons such as impaired decision making due to drug or alcohol use, sexual abuse, choosing not to use or having a lack of knowledge about contraception. However, participants pointed out that this did not account for all teenage pregnancies, and that in some cases such pregnancies were planned by couples in a relationship.

Pregnant Young People Face Specific Challenges

Youth Participants identified a number of struggles that come with being a pregnant or parenting young person. Specifically in regards to pregnancy, teens often find that their parents are ashamed of them and face rejection from their families and friends. They also stated that this rejection could lead to further issues, such as homelessness and being cut off from support networks.

Young people emphasised that **the period of pregnancy was an essential time for future parents to be supported**. They recommended that support be improved in areas of key struggles, such as securing affordable and appropriate housing, having a steady income, learning how to save, and accessing other relevant parenting and child support. It was recommended that these services should be provided to young pregnant girls, enabling them to be settled and better prepared for their child's arrival.



“No one cares until your baby is born. If no one supports you through pregnancy you start off life as a mother with nothing”

“There are not enough services for pregnant young women”

Financial Concern for Young Parents

One of the key challenges faced by pregnant and parenting young people that participants identified was financial concerns. They recognised that financial stability and access to financial resources is particularly important when welcoming a new child to the world, but this is often something young people struggle with. Not only are pregnant and parenting young people unlikely to have access to savings that other parents do, but it is also difficult for them to get an adequate and steady income.

Participants noted that employment opportunities for young people are already limited, and even more so when flexibility is an issue due to pregnancy or parenthood. Employers are likely to choose another candidate over a pregnant or parenting young person due to perceived assumptions about their character, their assumed level of commitment, or more complex employee needs related to their pregnancy or parenting responsibilities. Complicating this, young parents - particularly young mums - are often perceived to have skill gaps, due to time away from education or the workforce, as well as limited workplace experience compared to other young people and other parents re-entering the workforce.

Access to Childcare is Important

Young people also have difficulty accessing childcare services due to financial concerns and limited availability. This makes entering the workforce or returning to education seem impractical and, for many, impossible. Participants highlighted that it was important for pregnant and parenting young people to be supported by social services for their own wellbeing and that of their children, but recognised that relying on Centrelink payments alone was extremely difficult, and potentially inadequate. They recommended that more financial support be available for teenage parents, and additional support be available to assist with finding and affording childcare for teenage parents who are pursuing education or employment.

Support for Housing and Accommodation is Needed

Housing was also another key area of concern for pregnant teens and young parents. Participants recognised that **consistent accommodation was essential for a stable home life** to give young parents and their children the best chance of settling into family life. As such, they recommended that it was essential for pregnant young people to be supported to find stable medium to long-term accommodation before the birth of the child.

However, financial concerns and a competitive market for rental accommodation and public housing make this extremely difficult. Participants discussed that while



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- TP1. Further support for young parents to access and afford childcare
- TP2. Increased support financially and in accessing stable medium to long term accommodation for young parents **and** pregnant young people



RECOMMENDATION:

TP3. Increased genuine support for pregnant and parenting young people to access education



Practical challenges faced by young parents trying to pursue education

many pregnant and parenting young people resort to 'couch surfing', this is far from ideal, and can lead to unsafe situations where parents have limited control or ability to make decisions about the environment around their child. Furthermore, this instability is a particularly stressful situation, which is undesirable for new or prospective parents' wellbeing.

Education is Important, But Challenging for Young Parents

A third key challenge participants identified was education. They recognised the importance of education, particularly in regards to improving employment outcomes, and that many young parents may want to continue their education after their child is born. However, they felt that the challenges faced by pregnant and parenting young people pose a considerable barrier and that there was a lack of support to address these.

As previously highlighted, financial concerns in regards to childcare were particularly significant, with participants emphasising the prevalence of the cycle where education was needed for employment to gain income, but without income, parents are unable to access childcare in order to continue their education. They also identified practical challenges about the need for alternate and flexible education in order to meet the unique needs pregnant and parenting young people.

In addition to practical challenges, young people also identified a number of personal challenges. They stated that it is difficult for pregnant girls and young parents to continue their education, when they will be judged and potentially excluded by their peers and educators. Participants also highlighted the difficulties of returning to education after a long break, with minimal support to help you to 'catch up' after a period of absence, and many schools not being willing to let people repeat grades. There were also additional challenges for mums who find it challenging to be away from their children throughout the school day, and the potential stress this puts on the mother and child's relationship.

Participants recommended that there should be specialist teenage parent programs or centres available within each schooling region that go out of their way to ensure that they are accessible and supportive of pregnant and parenting young people. They recommended that financial and practical assistance with accessing childcare would be required for parents wishing to access education, which also considers young parents transportation and other needs. Finally, participants identified that **it is essential teachers and other educational staff are respectful, understanding and supportive of teenage parents.**

Participants recognised that it is hard to look after young children, particularly if there is no other family available to support young parents. This related to general parenting skills, but also other specifics such as first aid, cooking and budgeting. They felt “no one really teaches you this kind of stuff”, and that young parents find it difficult to identify where to turn for support, with many being too overwhelmed to actively go out in search of assistance. They recommended that parenting skill courses and one-on-one support be available for teen parents – both mothers and fathers – especially during pregnancy so that parents are more prepared before the child is born.

Mental Health Issues Affect Young Parents

Mental health was another key issue that participants felt is particularly relevant to young parents, which is likely to be complicated by the unique and difficult challenges that they already face. They recognised that parents’ wellbeing is paramount to the wellbeing of their children; however young parents are often distracted from focusing on their own wellbeing. They recommended that mental health screening and support for pregnant and parenting young people become a high priority for teen pregnancy support services.

Young Parents Face Challenges with Relationships and Social Isolation

Young people highlighted the significance of a number of relational challenges faced by pregnant and parenting young people. Relationships with family and friends are often challenged by pregnancy and parenthood during the teenage years. They identified that parents and family of teen parents and pregnant young people may not be supportive, as they are ashamed of the young person’s life choices and current situation. Additionally, young parents often lose contact with friends, as they are unable to participate in the activities of their peers, particularly partying and playing sport. They highlighted that pregnancy could be a significantly socially isolating experience, and that this has far reaching effects for their support networks and mental health.

Participants recognised that having support from family and friends makes a massive difference and recommended that family be encouraged to support young mums, with one potential example being to ensure young parents are invited to bring family as support to programs or appointments. They also recommended that social support programs for teen parents be established to ensure young parents do not become socially isolated.

Participants also understood that the relationship between young parents could be challenging. They spoke of situations where one parent – participants identified



RECOMMENDATION:

TP4. Prioritise mental health screening and support for young parents



RECOMMENDATION:

- TP5. Provide programs in parenting and life skills, healthy relationships and social support for young mothers **and** fathers:

“People think that you are stupid, immature and not capable of looking after a child. You are seen as unfit parents”

RECOMMENDATION:

- TP6. Take action to change societal attitudes toward pregnant and parenting young people, with a focus on education and the media



that this was usually fathers who ‘take off’ or otherwise continue their lives as usual, leaving the other young parent looking after the child/children and having more responsibility and less support than they may have expected. Other concerns were around using children as a way of asserting control over the other partner, either by threatening to keep the child from one partner, or causing a partner to become overly dependent and using this as a form of control. Participants also highlighted issues of domestic abuse, and felt that the presence of a child or pregnancy in the relationship makes it harder for young people to escape such a situation. Participants recommended that young mums be educated on what emotional abuse and controlling behaviour is and how they can address it.

Young Fathers Face Specific Challenges

Participants also recognised a number of specific challenges that are faced by young fathers. They recommended that parenting and peer support programs should be available for young fathers to help them develop skills to be good dads and face the challenges of being young fathers. Participants also recommended that fathers needed to be made aware of their parental rights, and responsibilities.

Society has Negative Attitudes towards Pregnant and Parenting Young People

Finally, Youth Participants pointed out challenges that some may face from societal attitudes towards pregnant and parenting young people. They felt that people always look down on young mums, thinking they are “*too young to have kids*”, “*won’t know how to look after children*”, and that they are “*bad parents*”, “*sluts*” or “*no-hopers*”. These attitudes can have significant impacts on young people’s sense of self, and has consequential effects on all other issues which young parents face – from housing and employment, to accessing support services, relationships, and their mental health. Participants recommended that there needed to be action to change societal attitudes towards pregnant and parenting young people to be accepting and supportive, rather than judging.

Young People & Violence

WHY VIOLENCE IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Violence is a significant issue in our society affecting young people both within the community, and within their homes, with almost 20% of children and young people identifying that they do not always feel safe at home (Commissioner for Children and Young People, n.d. c, *Children and Young People Speak Out About Safety*). During research conducted by Save the Children (2013), an 11 year old girl said “*Too many people use physical contact to solve problems and all it does is make it worse. I think we should use words instead.*” Engaging in violence and antisocial behaviour during adolescence has been linked with difficulties into adulthood (Hemphill & Smith, 2010).

*Some people don't know any other way but violence.
That needs to change.*

Jenna Woods, Youth Leadership Roundtable Member

Participants were aware of violence in their community and are concerned by its prevalence. **Participants believed that violence impacts the individual, family, community and society, and those impacts go beyond individual experiences to our collective sense of safety.** They were aware of physical, verbal and emotional violence in domestic and community settings, and stated that such violence damages people's personal and community identity, and creates a sense of powerlessness. Young people stated that violence affects their interactions with people, the places they go and makes them “*scared to be alone*” (Violence Workshop Participant) and “*scared of going out*” (Comment from Open Consultations).

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT VIOLENCE

We Can Overcome Violence

While young people are very aware of violence in their community, they didn't believe that things need to be this way. Instead, they felt that everyone needs to be involved in encouraging positive, respectful and equal relationships between people. Young people stated that we can overcome violence by working with perpetrators and families, as well as through changing community perceptions. They noted that we need to provide emotional support to one another, and that the family can play a key role.

“We want to see a cohesive community with less violence and crime”

“It's dangerous to be out at night by yourself”



“There are fights almost once a week”

“We need to address family violence and it's intergenerational cycle”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- V1. Further rehabilitative support for first time offenders and harsher penalties for recidivist offenders, aiming to prevent reoffending
- V2. Greater investment to ensure emergency shelters are immediately available, accessible and meeting survivor needs
- V3. Increased funding for preventive programs, including better availability of support for substance abuse and mental health
- V4. Increased education about healthy and respectful relationships



By being willing to listen to and help others, trying to be understanding of situations, and not using the word ‘victim’, we can make others feel comfortable in disclosing domestic violence or abuse, and then assist them to access relevant services and support.

State and National Government have a Role to Play

Participants also recommended that there are a number of things that can be done on a state and national level to address and prevent violence. They believe that first time offenders should be supported and assisted to discourage re-offending, but that subsequent offences should be met with tougher penalties.

There should also be a greater investment in emergency shelters and safe places for those experiencing violence in the home or family, and that such services are available and accessible to everyone, particularly those who might be marginalised in society.

Prevention and Awareness can Help Combat Violence

Youth Participants recommended increasing funding to implement preventative programs, providing victim-to-victim support, and better availability of support for substance abuse and mental health. Furthermore, they felt that awareness and education could be a key way to combat violence. In particular, they focused on the possibility of providing workshops in schools on developing healthy relationships, and recommended that generally there should be more education about respectful relationships and ways to respond to violence.

Youth Justice

WHY YOUTH JUSTICE IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

According to the WA Department of Corrective Services, in June 2014, there were 149 Juvenile Offenders in detention in Western Australia, with over 70% of this population identifying as Aboriginal (Department of Corrective services, 2014). A further 698 young people were on community based orders, and 406 young people referred to the Juvenile Justice Team (Department of Corrective services, 2014). For young people, there are many factors which can increase the risk of offending, but where a number of these factors are present, the probability of involvement with the justice system increases (WA Police, 2013).

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT YOUTH JUSTICE

Young People have An Awareness of the Justice System

During the workshop consultations, young people identified that they have some knowledge and insight into the criminal justice system. In many cases, this awareness came from the young peoples' own experiences or the experiences of their friends and family – whether from being in contact with the police, involved with the courts, or being placed in juvenile detention.

It was interesting to note that young people view police as largely being helpful to the community, yet they did not see police as having a role in helping young people. Participants raised a number of issues that they have with youth justice, believing that young people often do not know their rights, do not know where to get support, and felt that the justice system rarely allows young people to have a say.

The Justice System can be Disempowering for Young People

One of the significant points discussed was that young people who offend often do not understand how the criminal justice system works or are unaware of the rights afforded to them in this system. This can lead to young people feeling disempowered, being caught up in a process where decisions are made for them, and they have limited opportunity to regain control and get back to their lives.

The majority of participants believed that in cases where young people have had previous contact with the criminal justice system, they become accustomed to such feelings of disempowerment and lack of control. They recognised that this could negatively impact on their ability to feel fully in control of their decisions and actions in other parts of their lives, potentially leading to recidivism when they later rely on,

“We need to reduce the number of children in contact with you justice systems”



“Young people do not have a voice”

“Decisions are made for us”

RECOMMENDATION:

- YJ1. Ensure young people are engaged with making decisions for themselves throughout all stages of involvement with the criminal justice system

“Youth committing crime should not be put in jail straight away. They should undergo programs ...and be put into AOD support services”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- YJ2. Work to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with young people who have engaged with the criminal justice system, both within the system and the community as a whole
- YJ3. Provide greater, accessible and relevant support to combat recidivism for young people leaving the justice system
- YJ4. Ensure diversionary services are more widely known and easily accessible
- YJ5. Increase awareness amongst young people of potential long term and short term implications of offending

“People need to be guided when out of prison, not just let out”

or follow, the choices of others. In addition, participants did not know what support was available to assist young people involved in the justice system, or where they can get support to stop the cycle of reoffending.

Young People Involved in the Justice System Need Additional Support

Participants made a number of recommendations in regards to young people involved with the criminal justice system, beginning by identifying that young people need to be encouraged to be engaged decisions for themselves throughout all stages of involvement. They recognised that young people need to be “*guided*”, rather than “*just let out*” when exiting the justice system, but that this needs to occur in a way which is supportive, empowering and youth-friendly. They felt that in order for this to be most effective, **attitudes towards and perceptions of young people who have engaged with the criminal justice system should be addressed; within the system and the community as a whole.**

They recommended that supportive programs would help encourage young people to make positive life choices that further assist them in gaining opportunities that lead to more positive development. Young people suggested that role models who have inspiring stories of change can work with other strategies such as life skills programs and **individual guidance** that positively alter young people’s attitudes to reduce or stop offending behaviour. While participants recognised that programs such as this might already be available, they recommended that they needed to be more accessible and attractive to all young people who have come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Prevention is Better than a Cure

Finally, participants also recognised the importance of finding alternative ways to **prevent young people from becoming involved in the justice system.** They recommended that it was important for fun and engaging activities, such as sports, community activities, and diversionary services to be available and widely known to young people, as they provide positive influences and create a sense of belonging. They also recognised the benefit of having opportunities for young people to gain employment, develop life skills and being encouraged to make decisions for themselves. Participants also felt it was important that young people be made aware of the potential long and short-term implications of offending – both for themselves and others in the community.



Conclusions

Overarching Themes

Throughout the Speak Out for Change Summit, there were a number of overarching themes that continued to emerge throughout the Open Consultation session, the issue-specific workshops and the Official Observers Visioning Workshop. These common themes identified repeatedly and in different settings tell us of important priorities for young people.

EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES

One of these overarching themes is the tendency for young people to turn to education as a way to address social issues. For almost every issue discussed, there were recommendations that related to education - whether through formal education institutions, public awareness campaigns or some other form. The prevalence of education as a proposed solution to a wide variety of social issues shows the high value placed on education by young people, and also our society in general.

However, this prevalence is also likely to be influenced by young people's experience. For almost all young people, schooling or some form of education is been their main 'occupation' for their entire lives. It follows that with a life experience so heavily focused in education, it may be natural for young people to see education as a key way to address the issues they see in the world.

A NEED FOR LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

A second key overarching theme was a feeling of unpreparedness for independence and adulthood. Specifically, young people feel they are lacking many essential life skills and basic everyday knowledge, particularly relating to areas such as finances (including budgeting and taxation), health, cooking, seeking employment and renting. This was highlighted briefly in the

discussion from the Education workshop, but was also a key theme throughout the workshops on other issues, and particularly in the Open Consultations session. Young people want to ensure they are equipped with these essential everyday skills, and repeatedly identify that they believe such skills should be embedded into formal education.



SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

Throughout the Summit participants identified 'systemic barriers' within a number of different contexts. Such barriers are patterns of practice or behaviour which occur in various spheres of society, and create a **perpetual position of relative disadvantage**. One of these cycles that participants highlighted as a key concern was the need for work experience to get a job, but an inability to get experience without a job. Additionally they also noted similar systemic barriers around the disempowerment of those involved with the justice system, in cycles of drug and alcohol abuse, and in many of the challenges faced by teen parents.

It seems that such cycles are of particular concern to young people, as it goes against a sense of justice or being able to get 'a fair go'. Such systemic barriers have an effect of disempowering young people, taking control of the situation out of their hands, and leaving little hope of being able to break the cycle.

DISCRIMINATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Another emerging theme throughout the Summit was one of discrimination. Young people are very aware of instances where they believe they (or others) are unfairly discriminated against, and consistently object to it, as it goes against a collective sense of justice or fairness. While this theme was discussed to some length in the Racism and Discrimination Workshop, it's noted here as it continued to reoccur throughout other issue-specific workshops, as well as in the Open Consultation. Participants identified concerns with instances of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, appearance, sexual orientation, disability and parenting status.

Notably however, many young people identified feeling discriminated against, due to the simple fact that they were young people. Participants felt that **there is not a good perception of young people in the society at large**, and this on the whole is unjustified. Young people feel it limits their ability to take control, and for people to see the valuable contributions they can make to their communities. In this way, discrimination on the basis of age is concerning, disempowering, and stops young people from being able to participate actively in decisions that affect their lives.



ENABLING YOUNG PEOPLES PARTICIPATION

Relatedly, a further overarching theme was around young people's participation. Youth Participants and Official Observers constantly identified that they'd like more opportunities for young people to have their say, be genuinely listened to and participate in decision making. By encouraging further participation we are able to address issues of discrimination against young people, and help young people to feel empowered to make valuable contributions to the community. This theme goes to highlight the importance of an event like *the Speak Out for Change Summit*, where young people's voices are put in the spotlight, genuinely valued and taken on board by key decision makers. It also reinforces the importance of the Youth Partnership Project's focus on ensuring young people are engaged at all stages of the project.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Finally, and also clearly related to the work of the Youth Partnership Project, another overarching theme arising through comments at the Summit was a desire for services and organisations to increasingly collaborate and work together. There is a desire for further continuity between capacities and expertise of different organisations in utilising open communication to provide altogether more holistic and encompassing services for young people.

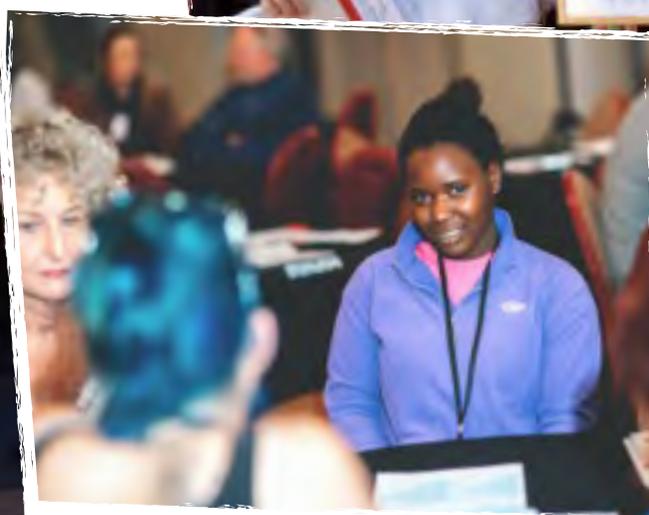
Young people want to see holistic services co-located for ease of access, the sharing of relevant information and the use of best practice approaches for services to work together, genuinely considering the needs of the community, and seeking to address gaps in services.

Where Do We Go from Here

Recognising the value of the *Speak Out for Change Summit* in enabling the unique and genuine input of young people, who are ultimately the experts in their own lives and experiences, it is important we now take time to consider the comments young people have made, documented in this report.

We must consider the recommendations made by young people, and look to enact positive change in these areas, which are informed by the voices of young people, our relevant industry background and knowledge, and examples of best practice.

In some instances, that may include looking for further opportunities to involve young people in relevant consultation and decision making within our departments, organisations and programs. Similarly, the Youth Partnership Project looks towards our own opportunities for further youth engagement, through both the Youth Leadership Roundtable and through further ongoing consultations, to ensure that young people aren't just engaged for tokenistic purposes, but instead are 'Youth Voices in Action'.





References and Appendices

Glossary

YPP	Youth Partnership Project
SEMHSRMF	South East Metro Human Services Regional Managers Forum
DotAG	Department of the Attorney-General
PwC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
SEC	South-East Corridor
DLGC	Department of Local Government and Communities
YLR	YPP Youth Leadership Roundtable
CAN	Collaborative Action Network
CCYP	Commissioner for Children and Young People, WA

Meet the Youth Leadership Roundtable

JENNA WOODS, 24

Chairwoman of the YPP Youth Leadership Roundtable



My name is Jenna Woods and I am a 24 year old Noongar woman. I have a 6 year old son and have lived in the South East Metro region of Perth for most of my life. I am the Chairwoman of the Youth Leadership Roundtable and am involved with a few other community programs. I am also in my last year of my degree at Murdoch University,

majoring in Community Development and Political Science.

I have had to struggle to get to where I am in life and had a lot of obstacles to overcome. I know that life isn't very easy, and very often, it's not fair. I want to see things change. I want to live in a society where we all have equal access to opportunities and this is why I am part of this Summit. We need to speak out and we need the decision makers to listen. We face these issues every day, we are the experts on them, and we hold within us the best chance at fixing them!

CHACE HILL, 22

My name is Chace Hill. I am a 22 year old Koori man born in Dandenong, Victoria. I moved to Western Australia 12 years ago. 10 years of that have been spent in Armadale where I am currently living.



I have recently finished my degree in Criminology from Murdoch University. I am passionate about youth imprisonment and youth justice, as I believe that young people are the future, and we cannot make the necessary changes from a small prison cell.

COURTNEY LYON, 17

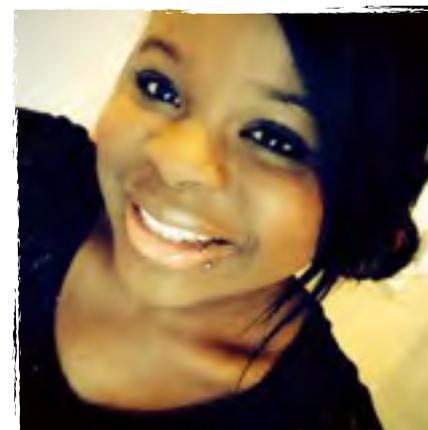
I'm Courtney, 17 years old, and I love my life. I study at Central TAFE in Northbridge doing my Diploma in Events Management and will be continuing on to do my Diploma in this subject as well. Besides being part of the Youth Leadership Roundtable, I am also the Chairwoman of the City of Gosnells Youth Advisory Council (GOZYAC), which is the youth voice for our community.



I'm extremely passionate about the youth problems in our community. So that's why I'm part of the YLR – I want my voice to be heard. I want to help today's young people and make their lives better. Things need to change for young people for them to stand a chance at getting the most out of life. I, myself, have been a victim of depression and bullying. I know I'm not the only one. I want it to stop. I don't want anyone to go through what I went through. I believe there can be a change.

MERCY TENGBEH, 19

My name is Mercy and I am 19 years old. I was born in Nigeria, but I have lived in Perth, Australia since I was about 3 years old. I have not returned back to Africa since then. I don't know much about my background, which is a shame. I come from a big family of 8 kids and 3 grandkids.



I am a teen mother – I had my daughter when I was 17. She is almost 2 and I have to say that she is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I am currently studying legal services at TAFE, and one day I dream of becoming a criminal lawyer. Then maybe after that, I want to study psychology.

LLOYD LAWRENCE, 20



My name is Lloyd Lawrence, and I'm 20. I am currently studying my Diploma of Community Services at Central TAFE in Leederville. I am a member of the Youth Leadership Roundtable because I want to help young people.

I understand and uphold the value of everyone's safety and happiness, regardless of background or beliefs. I am passionate about working with people, advocating on their behalf and empowering them to be the best that they can be, and feel the best that they can feel. I have had first and second hand experience with the devastating effects of mental health illness – factors that cause it and the impact it has – not just on the individual, but everyone around them. I want my work to be focused on preventing this happening to anyone and everyone. I want everyone's voice to be heard, no matter who they are.

RACHAEL RALSTON, 18



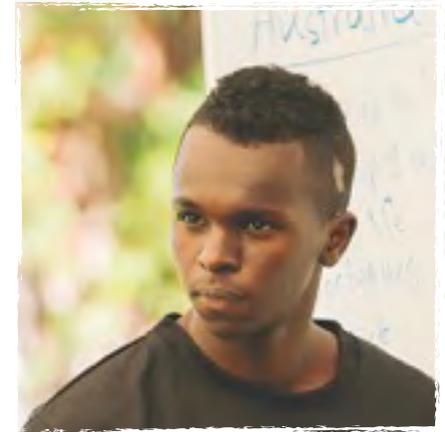
I'm Rachael. I am involved with the Youth Leadership Roundtable because I have Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. What this means for me is that I have daily joint dislocations (such as hips, ribs, elbows, etc.), organ issues, high risk of organ rupture, and will have a shortened lifespan. This has meant that I have had multiple hospital stays and had to drop

out of school, meaning that I have been separated from my peer group.

Because of my condition and my experiences as a young person with a disability, I am extremely passionate about helping all young people, especially those with disabilities. I want for young people with disabilities to be more involved with their able-bodied peers. I believe that young people with disabilities can do amazing things. They just need some help to get there.

ABDIRISAK ALI, 20

My name is Abdirisak, but most people call me Abdi for short. I am 20 years old and in my last year of a Chemical Engineering degree from the University of Western Australia. I came to Australia in 2004. Born in Kenya, raised in Australia, I have seen two very different and contrasting societies. From my experiences as a migrant young person, I have become very passionate about education, racism and climate change.



Here in Australia, we take most things for granted, such as education. In developing countries, this is not the case – a quality education is only possible if you had the means necessary to obtain it. This shouldn't be the case. Every child has the right to access an education, so why can't we make this happen? The environment is another that is taken for granted in developed countries such as Australia. The lifestyle that we lead is unsustainable. We, as individuals, need to step up if we are to ensure the survival of our Earth for future generations.

KENEASHA LINDSAY, 19

My name is Keneasha Lindsay, and I am a Bardi woman from One Arm Point and also a Torres Strait Islander studying a double major in Criminology and Forensic Biology and Toxicology from Murdoch University. I was born in Paraburdoo, raised in Geraldton moved to Perth at the age of 12.



My childhood was quite hard as my family experienced financial hardship. I was exposed to alcohol abuse and violence at a young age. I am very interested in youth issues because I experienced them myself and would like to be involved in making a change rather than seeing the same cycle repeat itself for other young people. I strongly believe that the change should be made through the voice of young people rather than the political sector.

HABIBA ASIM, 17

Stereotype. This means categorising a person or thing under a particular theme or idea. Often we think only a particular group of people stereotype, but truth be told, we're born into a society which is constructed on the basis of stereotypes.



My name is Habiba Asim. I am a 17 year old high school student. I was born in Pakistan and raised in New Zealand. As you have probably guessed – yes, I have been stereotyped on the basis of gender, colour, religion, size and even accent. Often it is hard for people to understand that I am a true Kiwi with a solid Australian accent. But because I don't fit the 'ideal' image of what a Kiwi should look like, I face derogatory comments from arrogant, uneducated members of the community.

Alongside me, there are members of the community who face rude remarks on a daily basis for being who they are. This must be brought to an end. For some, this may seem impossible. But that's exactly what some people said 50 years ago when we were told we could put a man on the moon.

ANDREW YARRAN, 19

My name is Andrew Yarran. I am 19 years old. I am a young, intelligent Indigenous Australian. I have lived in Beckenham for 14 years and have finished all my schooling in the City of Canning. I currently go to Murdoch University and play various sports.



Education is the best thing you can have in life because it makes everyone equal. I have a passion for education because it's able to put everyone in the same boat. Through education, I have met Julia Gillard, Queen Elizabeth II, Ian Chappell and a lot more people who are considered larger than life. I know that because of my education, I can be as successful as they are.

DIANNA WRIGHT, 26

My name is Dianna Wright. I'm a 26 year old Nyangumarta woman from Bidyadanga in WA's Kimberley Region. Over the past ten years, I have been involved in many community events and projects including joining Millennium Kids Inc. in 2006 and has since been involved with the MK Team. I was a finalist in the Environment Category of the 2007 WA Youth Awards, and in 2009, completed the 10-day sailing journey across the Bass Strait on the Young Endeavour giving her a new perspective on leadership and team dynamics.



After working as an Aboriginal Health Worker for 18 months, I found my passion for Aboriginal issues and Mental Health, and became an Enrolled Nurse in 2014. I am now studying my Bachelor of Nursing at the University of Notre Dame. I am aspiring to become a Remote Area Nurse specialising in Aboriginal Mental Health.

PRESTON CULBONG, 22

My name is Preston Culbong, and I have been getting my culture back all my life. I am a Nyoongar/Yamitji man who has a passion for supporting others to be the best that they can be.



I believe that we do not have a strong culture, and it is us young people that will be creating this culture for the future. We are a young nation of diverse and remarkable people. Young people are the future of this country, and now is the time for our voices to be heard.

TAYLOR-JANE BELLOTTI, 20



My name is Taylor-Jane Bellotti and I am a Yamatji woman with my family mainly in Carnarvon and Shark Bay. I am currently a second year student, studying a double major in Psychology and a major Criminology at Murdoch University. I am also a qualified Vet Nurse.

My life sounds pretty sweet, but it has not always been this great. I attended Melville Senior High School and in my early years, got into a lot of trouble and my grades suffered. I thought that living my dream at the time was impossible, especially when I had my soon-to-be school principal tell me I would never be a Vet, which was my dream at the time. I believed her and started to skip class, got kicked out of class, and argued a lot with the teachers.

In Year 11, I got the break I needed and was offered an opportunity to go to TAFE once a week and school 3 days a week. I embraced this opportunity and completed a Cert II in Animal Studies. When I left school I continued to study and complete my Cert III in Companion Animal Services and a Cert IV in Veterinary Nursing. During this time, I felt that I would help troubled kids and adolescents more, so I enrolled in my current degree in the hopes of one day being able to incorporate animals into therapy.

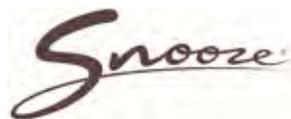
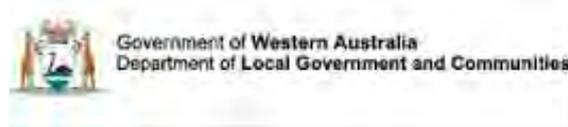
I never thought I would be able to achieve my dreams, but with family support – I was inspired by my grandfather – and a little determination, I was able to achieve all the things I want in my life...So far. And you can do the same!

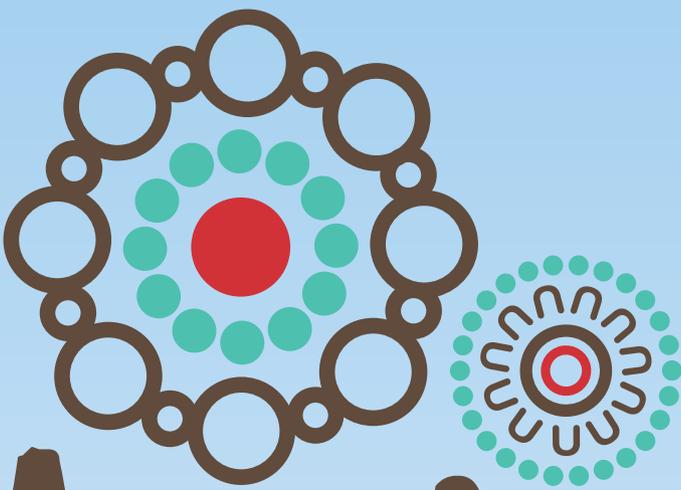
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