



# **Tasmanian Government Budget Submission 2019-2020**

December 2018

*Vision:* A Tasmania where young people are actively engaged in community life and have access to the resources they need to develop their full potential.

*Mission:* To work with young people, the Tasmanian youth sector, the community and all levels of government to increase the participation and contribution of young people in the State.

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## Contents

Introduction .....	4
Summary of Recommendations.....	6
Area One: Build capacity and knowledge .....	7
1.1    Tasmanian Youth Conference .....	7
1.2    Youth Week Tasmania .....	8
1.3    Strategic inclusion of young people across Government .....	9
Area Two: Support young people to reach their full potential.....	10
2.1    Effective responses to youth mental health .....	10
2.1.1    Youth mental health services.....	10
2.1.2    Youth mental health awareness and education in schools .....	11
2.2    Housing solutions for children and young people .....	13
2.2.1    Affordable housing for young people .....	13
2.2.2    Unaccompanied homeless children under 16 .....	14

## Introduction

This budget submission from the youth peak body Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), seeks to work with Government to address issues critical to the health, wellbeing and future of young people in Tasmania. The eight recommendations identified result from extensive engagement of, and consultation with young people and the youth sector during 2018.

YNOT represents the interests of 85,000 young people aged 12-25<sup>1</sup>, 60 member organisations, and approximately 300 youth sector workers state-wide. We have listened to the voices of our stakeholders to identify key issues, priority areas, and solutions so that young Tasmanian's can be more effectively supported to reach their full potential.

Young people in Tasmania face challenges vastly different to previous generations. Tasmania has the highest youth suicide rate<sup>2</sup>, the second lowest secondary school retention rate<sup>3</sup>, and the second highest youth unemployment rate<sup>4</sup> in the nation. Young Tasmanians have record low housing affordability and availability<sup>5</sup>, and are disproportionately represented in the State's homeless population<sup>6</sup>. Other challenges our young people face include geographic isolation, limited public transport options, and barriers to accessing services.

YNOT has the vital role of providing a coherent voice to Government on issues and concerns affecting young people in Tasmania. It is uniquely placed to bring a sector-wide view, to build sector capacity, and to play an instrumental role in building the confidence and wellbeing of young people.

YNOT recognises the difference that targeted investment in young people can make. We want to work with Government to address the areas young people have spoken up about, and which underpin the development of future resilient, productive, contributing citizens. During 2019-20 we want to partner with Government in two key areas:

Area One: Build capacity and knowledge with the youth sector, young people, and Government

- 1.1 Tasmanian Youth Conference
- 1.2 Youth Week Tasmania
- 1.3 Strategic inclusion of young people across Government

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001.0 Census of Population and Housing, accessed 10/11/2018

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania (2016), Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania (2016 -2020)

<sup>3</sup> ACARA (2016), Apparent retention rates for students, Year 10-Year 12, <<https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/apparent-retention#View1>>, Accessed 15/11/2018

<sup>4</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania (2018), Youth at Risk Strategy

<sup>5</sup> Social Action and Research Centre Anglicare Tasmania (2018), Rental Affordability Snapshot 2018 Tasmania

<sup>6</sup> Shelter TAS (2018), Fact Sheet – Homelessness in Tasmania 2018

Area Two: Support young people to reach their full potential

2.1 Effective responses to youth mental health

2.2 Housing solutions for young people

## Summary of Recommendations

### *Build capacity and knowledge*

**Recommendation 1:** YNOT to be funded for \$50,000 to convene the Tasmanian Youth Conference (TYC) in 2019 to build the skills, knowledge, expertise and networks of the youth sector.

**Recommendation 2:** The State Government fund and support Youth Week Tasmania for \$45,000 per year for five years 2020-2024.

**Recommendation 3:** The State Government consider the appointment of a Minister for Youth Affairs, development of a youth strategy, and engagement and involvement of young people in policy development and decision making.

### *Support young people to reach their full potential*

**Recommendation 4:** The State Government funds YNOT for \$155,000 to complete the Tasmanian Youth Mental Health Service System Mapping Project. This includes a part-time project officer, resources, and allowances for out-of-pocket expenses. The Project Officer will scope current services and gaps, and collaborate with sectors and experts to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve mental health services in Tasmania for young people.

**Recommendation 5:** The Department of Education to include mental health and wellbeing education oversight and agreed benchmarks within the Action Plan. If this is not possible, YNOT will engage with the Department to progress the issues of mental health and wellbeing education and the development of oversight and benchmarks.

**Recommendation 6:** Funding is provided for teachers to be trained and supported to deliver mental health information to students and achieve the best outcomes for the investment in mental health education.

**Recommendation 7:** Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy prioritises housing solutions for young people.

**Recommendation 8:** State Government to invest in a policy response and a continuum of services to address the care and accommodation needs of unaccompanied homeless children aged under 16 years in Tasmania.

## Area One: Build capacity and knowledge

For YNOT to fully contribute to the future of young people in Tasmania, it needs to be a professional and respected organisation backed with appropriate resources. The organisation plays a key role in building capacity and knowledge of the interests, risks and priorities of young people. YNOT has key roles in convening the Tasmanian Youth Forum, coordinating Youth Week Tasmania, and ensuring young people are considered in policy and program development processes across Government.

YNOT is a very small organisation. We have a full-time CEO, 0.65 FTE project and policy officer, and 0.65 FTE administration and finance officer. This small staffing compliment, with no discretionary funding, limits our capacity to represent and deliver on behalf of the youth sector and young people across Tasmania.

To address this constrained resourcing, which impacts on the scope and volume of work we are able to deliver, we are requesting key project funding. This will build our capacity, and reflect our role and importance to the future of Tasmania. Young people are our future, and the role YNOT plays in progressing their issues and concerns is vital to that future.

### 1.1 Tasmanian Youth Conference

The Tasmanian Youth Conference (TYC) is the only Conference in Tasmania dedicated to youth work, and the only sector-wide professional development opportunity for the youth sector workforce.

The Conference is a highly valued and very effective opportunity for the Tasmanian youth sector to learn about evidence-based practice, hear about government directions and reforms, and examine new ideas and practice approaches. It is a rare opportunity for the sector to network and connect to create a more cohesive workforce.

The biennial two-day Conference, which started in 2004, has grown steadily. In 2015 and 2017 TYC attracted over 280 delegates including young people and professionals from the community sector, government, education, and health and human services.

A Conference of this size and nature requires substantial investment in time and resources. We have researched the cost of YNOT convening the Conference in 2019 and the cost is \$50,000. While we are exploring other forms of financial support and partnership opportunities, the Tasmanian Youth Conference needs funding from Government of \$50,000.

**Recommendation 1:** YNOT to be funded for \$50,000 to convene the Tasmanian Youth Conference (TYC) in 2019 to build the skills, knowledge, expertise and networks of the youth sector.

*Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania*

*Cost: \$50,000 biennially*

## 1.2 Youth Week Tasmania

Youth Week Tasmania (YWT) is the largest single celebration of young people on the Tasmanian youth calendar. The inaugural YWT was fully funded by the Tasmanian Government in 2018 and funding is in place for 2019.

YWT provides young people aged 12-25 years with a unique platform to display their talent and skills, express their views and ideas, raise issues of concern, and actively participate in activities to celebrate being a young person in Tasmania. It is a powerful showcase of young people and provides opportunities for them to voice their opinions on decisions that directly affect them. It is also an opportunity for the wider community to hear young people and acknowledge their positive contributions and achievements.

YWT 2018 was incredibly well supported by the Tasmanian youth sector, young people and the wider community with event attendance consistently exceeding expectations across the state. Young people were supported by the youth sector to plan and deliver a diverse range of activities and events across Tasmania, with significant in kind contributions made by some organisations and local councils including Burnie City Council, City of Launceston, YMCA Launceston, and Launceston LINC. The weeklong event fostered a sense of belonging and social connectedness with many organisations and young people working collaboratively to ensure the success of events in their local area.

YNOT needs funding and support from the Tasmanian Government beyond 2019 to coordinate YWT.

**Recommendation 2:** The State Government fund and support Youth Week Tasmania for \$45,000 per year for five years 2020-2024.

*Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania*

*Cost: \$45,000 per year for five years to 2024*

### 1.3 Strategic inclusion of young people across Government

A key role for YNOT is to ensure young people have a voice to Government. We are keen to ensure Government has the mechanisms to hear, consider, and act as appropriate on the messages they deliver. A strategic approach to youth related issues would provide a more integrated and consistent message across Government and allow for a more proactive approach to addressing emerging, established, and to some extent alarming issues affecting young people.

Elements of a strategic approach include Ministerial responsibility, an overarching youth strategy, and youth engagement and involvement in policy development and decision making.

Currently Aboriginal people, people with disability, and women have dedicated Ministerial representation. We recommend that young people also have a dedicated Minister to provide a direct voice in Government. A second, but less preferred option, would be the appointment of a parliamentary secretary for young people who would help to consolidate the voice of young people to Government.

A minister or parliamentary secretary could also have carriage of the other two capacity-building responses YNOT is advocating. An overarching youth strategy would provide a strategic view, increased knowledge across government, and a stronger focus on the issues affecting young people. We recognise the *Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania* and *Youth at Risk Strategy* and their importance and strengths in providing responses to key issues affecting young people in Tasmania. However, it is essential to understand the wider context within which young people are growing, developing and emerging into adulthood and to develop robust foundations for future success that make these issue-specific strategies redundant. For example, transport access, availability, and affordability has a pervasive and direct influence on young people's health, wellbeing and access to jobs.

A minister or parliamentary secretary would also be well positioned to convene appropriate youth engagement and involvement in policy development and decision making.

**Recommendation 3:** The State Government consider the appointment of a Minister for Youth Affairs, development of a youth strategy, and engagement and involvement of young people in policy development and decision making.

*Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania*

*Cost: Cost of Ministerial office and support*

## Area Two: Support young people to reach their full potential

YNOT's consultations with members and young people revealed two major areas of concern which prevent young people from reaching their full potential: the urgent need to improve their mental health and wellbeing; and the need for appropriate, available, affordable accommodation.

### 2.1 Effective responses to youth mental health

#### 2.1.1 Youth mental health services

Mental health was the leading issue identified by the Tasmanian Youth Forum on Health and Wellbeing, encompassing anxiety, depression, stress, and feeling overwhelmed and pressured<sup>7</sup>. While participants were aware of limited available support options, access to appropriate services was a significant issue. Barriers included cost, transport, and location of services. Youth sector workers identified barriers including lengthy wait times, availability of services in regional areas, and a lack of integrated care pathways for young people seeking treatment or support.

Research demonstrates that up to 75 per cent of major mental illnesses are presented before 25 years of age<sup>8</sup>, suggesting greater investment in prevention and early intervention, and initiatives specifically tailored to young people, will reduce the demand for costly tertiary services and save lives. At its worst, mental ill-health manifests in youth suicide. Tasmania has the highest per capita youth suicide rate in Australia<sup>9</sup>. The Tasmanian Government has committed to reducing the suicide rate of young people in line with the national average<sup>10,11</sup>; although we are failing to reach multiple targets around accessibility and establishment of services<sup>12</sup>.

In light of these results, we need to better understand the gaps in the service system to inform wise investment. YNOT is seeking funding to do this work. With funding, we will deliver a Tasmanian Youth Mental Health Service System Mapping Project which will focus on issues and gaps specific to the youth sector.

The project has three phases over a period of two years:

1. Map the youth mental health service system at a regional level and produce local resources to provide communities with accurate information on current mental health services available to young people. To do this we will:

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<sup>7</sup> Youth Network of Tasmania (2018) Tasmanian Youth Forum report: A report on young people's ideas about health and wellbeing

<sup>8</sup> McGorry PD and Mei C (2018), Early intervention in youth mental health: progress and future directions. Evidence Based Mental Health

<sup>9</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania (2016) Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania (2016 – 2020)

<sup>10</sup> Tasmanian Liberals (2018) Building Your Future

<sup>11</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania (2015) Rethink Mental Health - A long term plan 2015-2025

<sup>12</sup> National Mental Health Commission (2018) Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, 2018: Progress Report

- a. Conduct a needs and gap analysis
  - b. Review client pathways and service entry/exit points for young people
  - c. Identify referral options over the continuum of mental ill-health.
2. Report on gaps in services, and identify future needs and best practice regional models to inform planning. To do this we will:
  - a. Consult directly with young people to understand their experiences and mental health concerns
  - b. Collaborate with young people, the youth and mental health sectors, and experts to develop appropriate regional models.
3. Recommend youth mental health service system improvements to create integrated care pathways for mental health treatment and to assist access to the system by young people.

Importantly this Project supports and addresses several directions and actions detailed in Tasmanian Government strategy documents including Key Action 2.2 *Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania*, Reform Directions 2 and 6 *Rethink Mental Health*, and Action Areas 5 and 21 *Youth at Risk Strategy*.

**Recommendation 4:** The State Government funds YNOT for \$155,000 to complete the Tasmanian Youth Mental Health Service System Mapping Project. This includes a part-time Project Officer, resources, and allowances for out-of-pocket expenses. The Project Officer will scope current services and gaps, and collaborate with sectors and experts to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve mental health services in Tasmania for young people.

*Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania*

*Costing: \$155,000*

### 2.1.2 Youth mental health awareness and education in schools

As demonstrated above, young people in Tasmania are very concerned about mental health and recognise that it needs urgent attention. Mission Australia's national 2018 Youth Survey found that 43% of young people identified mental health as the top issue facing them today<sup>13</sup>. This is up from 33% in 2017 and has doubled since 2016.

Young people particularly want more information about, and a reduction in the fear and stigma surrounding mental health. Tasmanian schools play a key role in providing this information. One of

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<sup>13</sup> Mission Australia (2018), Youth Survey Report 2018

the challenges for Tasmanian schools implementing youth focused mental health and wellbeing education and awareness is the numerous programs available to them. For example, Beyond Blue has just released “Be You”, a national education initiative that adds to the mix.

YNOT believes there is an urgent need for the Department of Education to have oversight of mental health information delivered in schools to ensure consistent and evidence-based mental health and wellness information is available to students. There are currently no guidelines or standards to support school-based decision making about which mental health program best meets their needs.

To address this situation, oversight of program selection and delivery needs to be implemented. This should include a list of compliant programs from which schools can select to meet their needs, and the development of agreed benchmarks that clearly define what program content needs to cover. These benchmarks would include prevention and early intervention, factors contributing to anxiety and depression, and other key defined indicators and issues of mental health.

YNOT understands the Department of Education will be releasing their Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan in 2019 specifically targeting resilience, emotional wellbeing, depression and anxiety. This welcome Plan recognises the challenges facing young people in schools and YNOT encourages the Department to include mental health and wellbeing education oversight and agreed benchmarks within the Action Plan. If this is not possible, we would like to engage with the Department to progress the issues of mental health and wellbeing education and the development of oversight and benchmarks.

Teachers also face challenges in delivering mental health and wellbeing education and awareness. In addition to professional learning packages, teachers require their own training and support to improve confidence in the delivery of mental health education to students. YNOT believes that teacher training is necessary and will achieve the best returns on investment in mental health education and awareness. YNOT recommends that any additional direct cost to the Department of Education of teacher training in mental health education be funded through the budget process.

This proposal directly strengthens and supports several key Government strategies to improve mental health education in schools, reduce stigma, and build resilience in young people. These include Reform Directions 3, 4 and 6 *Rethink Mental Health*, Key Action 3 *Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania*<sup>14</sup>, and the *Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy*.

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania (2016), Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania 2016 – 2020

**Recommendation 5:** The Department of Education to include mental health and wellbeing education oversight and agreed benchmarks within the Action Plan. If this is not possible, YNOT will engage with the Department to progress the issues of mental health and wellbeing education and the development of oversight and benchmarks.

**Recommendation 6:** Funding is provided for teachers to be trained and supported to deliver mental health information to students and achieve the best outcomes for the investment in mental health education.

*Responsible Department: Department of Education*

*Costing: Funding for training and support of teachers, and any whole-school program costs to be determined by the Department of Education*

## 2.2 Housing solutions for children and young people

### 2.2.1 Affordable housing for young people

Young people living independently from their parents are struggling to find safe, secure, affordable, and appropriate accommodation in close proximity to their work and education needs. There are two key factors driving this situation: low income levels, and a shortage of low-cost housing to rent. Tasmania is now the least affordable rental market in Australia<sup>15</sup>. For people on Youth Allowance, there are no affordable private rental properties in Tasmania and for those on Newstart without children, less than two per cent of properties are affordable<sup>16</sup>.

Young people are also experiencing increased competition for jobs. Part-time and casual work is increasing, leading to challenges in finding full-time employment and the ability to pay market rent. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports that the youth unemployment rate in Tasmania in 2016 was almost 16 per cent<sup>17</sup>.

The numbers don't add up. Low incomes and housing scarcity means many young people are shut out of the rental market or are paying an unaffordable proportion of their income on rent. Affordable rent is recognised as about 30 per cent of total income<sup>15, 16</sup>.

YNOT recognises that *Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy* is delivering a mix of housing solutions, including for young people. The Private Rental Access Incentive is assisting lower income Tasmanians into private rental housing, but there continues to be high demand for government

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<sup>15</sup> SGS Economics & Planning (2018), Rental Affordability Index: Key Findings

<sup>16</sup> SARC Anglicare Tasmania (2018), Rental Affordability Snapshot Tasmania

<sup>17</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001.0 Census of Population and Housing, accessed 10/11/2018

provided social housing. Currently Housing Tasmania has 3216 applications on its register, and the average time to house priority applicants is 60 weeks<sup>18</sup>.

YNOT encourages the Tasmanian Government to do further research and policy development around housing solutions that meet the needs of young people, and fund affordable housing that suits the needs and income levels of young people.

**Recommendation 7:** Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy prioritises housing solutions for young people.

*Cost: Funded under Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy*

### 2.2.2 Unaccompanied homeless children under 16

There are no long-term care and supported accommodation options available in Tasmania for unaccompanied homeless children under 16 years. These children do not meet the threshold for a statutory child protection response from Child Safety Services but cannot live at home. They are largely dependent on the support of adults in their communities and are not developmentally mature to transition to independent living.

The true size of this cohort is unknown as available data only includes children who present to Specialist Homeless Services (SHS). This data does not include unaccompanied homeless children who do not present to SHS, homeless children under age 13 who are not eligible to access SHS, or those living in insecure accommodation.

Tasmanian SHS are not designed or appropriately resourced to respond to the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless children. It is highly likely that many children seeking support from SHS have experienced trauma or abuse and require specialist therapeutic care<sup>19</sup>.

Consultation with youth specific SHS identified a number of unresolved issues including legal responsibilities, and policy and service gaps. There is a lack of clarity around duty of care responsibilities, lack of appropriate services, limited exit points, and staff who are not equipped to provide ongoing developmentally appropriate therapeutic care and support.

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<sup>18</sup> Department of Human Services. Human Services Statistics Dashboard. [https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/humanservicesstats/human\\_servicesdashboard](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/humanservicesstats/human_servicesdashboard), Accessed 21/11/2018.

<sup>19</sup> Ombudsman NSW (2018) More than shelter – Addressing legal and policy gaps in supporting homeless children: A special report to Parliament under section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974.

A policy framework, and appropriate program and service responses are needed to address this highly vulnerable group of children who cannot live at home and don't have access to care, income, or housing.

Two key elements are required:

1. A policy framework that includes:
  - a. Cross-departmental acknowledgement of responsibility for unaccompanied homeless children
  - b. A legal basis for service providers to make decisions about care
  - c. Lead case management responsibility and accountability.
2. A continuum of appropriately resourced services to effectively respond to unaccompanied homeless children under 16 years including:
  - a. School-based, state-wide early intervention services with the potential for outreach to address youth homelessness. This would complement work undertaken by the existing Reconnect Service.
  - b. Greater investment in short term responses (under 6 months) state-wide, that focus on family reunification or exits from Out of Home Care (OoHC), similar to Colville Place in the South (12-15 years).
  - c. Investment in medium to longer-term care and accommodation options which focus on the provision of stable, therapeutic care for unaccompanied children under 16 years where family reunification or exit to OoHC is not possible. Currently there are no long term care options available for these children and limited transitional supported housing services available in each region. Existing services are youth specific and usually respond to the needs of young people 16 years and over for up to 12 months. Long-term therapeutic wrap around care and supported accommodation is required in each Tasmanian region for children under 16.
  - d. Therapeutic outreach will prepare children to transition into other care services or independence. It is required to support children who are transitioning from home into early intervention care, entering longer term care or supporting their exit from longer term care into semi-independent living. Additional investment is needed within the Targeted Youth Support Services (TYSS). TYSS is the key service providing intensive support and ongoing casework for at risk children and young people aged 10-18 years.

**Recommendation 8:** State Government to invest in a policy response and a continuum of services to address the care and accommodation needs of unaccompanied homeless children aged under 16 years in Tasmania.

*Cost: Funded under Government services provided by Communities Tasmania and the Department of Education*