

To whom it may concern,

**Re: Response to Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan – Community Consultation Draft**

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) welcomes the opportunity to provide this response to the *Healthy Tasmanian Five Year Strategic Plan – Community Consultation Plan* released by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

YNOT is the peak body for the non government youth sector in Tasmania and represent the interests of young people aged 12-25. We aim to represent these interests via collaborative partnerships with young people and service providers, and do this through forums such as Co-Chairing the Statewide Youth Collaborative group, which has a focus on youth health and wellbeing. The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) is an initiative of YNOT and is the peak consultative body for young people in the State. In the past few years TYF has conducted a range of consultations on a wide range of health and wellbeing research areas, including body image, physical and mental health.

Given that the scope of our work is with young people aged 12-25; our response will focus primarily on responding to the consultation questions with this cohort in mind.

*Overarching framework for Healthy Tasmania*

YNOT believes that the social determinants of health should form the foundational framework for the Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the social determinates of health as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age<sup>1</sup>. These conditions are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at all levels.

The social determinants of health are responsible for health inequities, such as the differences in health status seen within communities and cohorts. Within Tasmanian, young people are subject to the same types of social disadvantage that can occur in other jurisdictions, such as lower educational attainment, unemployment and poor access to appropriate housing, however this disadvantage occurs at a higher rate within the Tasmanian community.

The social determinants of health are used as foundational principles for a wide range of Australian and international documents, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023, as they provide an established, evidenced based way to approach improving health outcomes within the community.

*Approach to Identifying priorities*

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation, *Social Determinants of Health*, 2012, [http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/B\\_132\\_14-en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/B_132_14-en.pdf?ua=1)



YNOT believes that it is premature to set priority areas in this community consultation draft, as these are outcomes that should occur after considerable community consultation and incorporate this feedback in identifying any priorities for a Tasmanian strategy.

This is because YNOT believes that any priority areas set should be identified by research, evidence and by the community concerned. There are many in the community, such as specialist workers, sector groups and key cohorts, who have a considerable depth of knowledge and experience to contribute to this discussion. This community led approach will result in greater ownership and input from the community in which you are aiming to affect change. For example, YNOT considers this as an opportunity to consider cohort specific work such as aligning concerns regarding young people's tattooing and piercing of other young people through a health promotion approach, as opposed to a punitive, legal approach.

YNOT is also concerned that in prioritising areas that are not identified as key concerns by the community the *Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan* is also at risk of not coming from an informed evidence base. For example, considerable work has been done to address the smoking rates among young people through the Department's own Public Health *Smoke Free Young People* initiative. This work has a strong evidence base and has considerable resources behind it, as well as the benefit of sector, community and cohort endorsement.

There has been considerable work done recently within Tasmania, as well as nationally and internationally, and YNOT believes it is essential that this work be considered and drawn upon in the development of the *Healthy Tasmanian Strategic Plan*. This includes work conducted by a range of community groups, by the State Government and by international agencies, and includes:

- *Rethink Mental Health Better Mental Health and Wellbeing – A Long-Term Plan for Mental Health in Tasmania 2015-25*
- Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Public Health, Department of Health and Human Service's *Smoke Free Young People*
- TYF Health and Wellbeing Report
- TYF Mental Health Reports

#### *Identified priorities*

YNOT does not believe that the legal age restricting the access of tobacco should be increased. Rather, YNOT seeks to endorse the increase of early intervention, educational and health promotional strategies, such as has recently been developed, resourced and implemented by Public Health, Department of Health and Human Services through the *Smoke Free Young People* initiative. The *Smoke Free Young People* Strategy, which is evidence based and well supported, takes a health promotion and intervention approach, rather than a punitive legal approach as the outlined strategy in the *Healthy Tasmania* paper. A punitive approach clearly ignores one of the paper's other priority areas, that of health literacy.

In order to inform the identification of priorities and the development of the strategy YNOT wants to emphasise the importance of collecting and analysing data, and measuring and evaluating the strategy's impact on an ongoing basis.

#### *Governance*

YNOT believes that the governance, which includes the monitoring of the strategy, must be an independent process, and is one that is resourced and accountable. It is important that the strategy be long term, bipartisan and utilise partnerships in order to ensure its reach and impact. Further, YNOT would encourage consistent evaluation, including transparent reporting on the progress and outcomes of the strategy.

YNOT looks forward to being involved in future consultations for the *Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joanna Siejka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joanna Siejka  
CEO  
Youth Network of Tasmania