

Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Consultation Report

February 2021



**Mental
Health
Council**
OF TASMANIA

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Background

In March 2020, the Premier of Tasmania committed to developing Tasmania's first comprehensive, long-term, whole-of-government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy) for children and young people 0-25 years.

The Strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people in Tasmania and provide overarching guidance and coordination to the Tasmanian Government and key decision makers. Importantly, this Strategy will provide a better understanding of issues impacting children and young people in our State and identify priority areas for action to improve outcomes. The Tasmanian Government has committed to a co-design process with children and young people to ensure that their voices are heard, valued and considered throughout at all stages of developing the Strategy.

As part of the co-design process, the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) and the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) worked collaboratively to facilitate statewide youth consultations with young people aged 12- 25 years to inform the development of the Strategy.

Consultation Process

YNOT and MHCT delivered 11 workshops statewide between 1 December 2020 and 15 February 2021 (Table 1). Consultations took place across the West and North-West Coast (Queenstown, Smithton, Devonport, Ulverstone and King Island), South (Hobart) North and North East (Launceston, St Helens and Flinders Island). Consultations were held as a combination of school-based and community workshops to hear from young people 12-25 years.

Six workshops were offered in collaboration with Secondary Schools in regional areas. This was particularly important to ensure young people had opportunities to participate in areas with limited or no public transport. The remaining five workshops were open to all young people in the area. Community workshops were publicly advertised via Facebook, YNOT and MHCT websites, regional youth networks and known youth advisory groups. A young graphics designer was engaged to produce youth-friendly promotional material. E-gift vouchers were offered to young people, schools and youth advisory groups to remunerate participants.

Young people were also offered the opportunity to undertake free YNOT Youth Facilitator training to assist in facilitating the community workshops. Four young people registered for the training and three attended workshops. YNOT and MHCT staff supported trained youth facilitators to co-facilitate consultation sessions. Young people who attended the sessions were also remunerated for undertaking the training.

Each workshop was tailored based on the number of participants, but all workshops focused on small group work and discussions guided by the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Toolkit. Importantly, participants were asked to provide feedback on the definition of each wellbeing domain and to talk about what the domain meant to them. Young people who wanted to participate but were unable to attend the face-to-face session were given a questionnaire asking them about their hopes and dreams.

Results from the workshops were aggregated into a single analysis of themes, trends and solutions. While this Report generally presents the results of all young Tasmanians, some specific regional differences are also presented where relevant. The solutions contained in this report come directly from young people.

Table 1. Consultation session details.

Date	Location	No. participants, age range	Participant Details
1 Dec 2020	Ulverstone	113, 12-16 years	Beacon Foundation; Central Coast Council; Ulverstone Secondary College; Marist Regional College; Penguin District School
28-29 Jan 2021	Launceston Community	14, 12-21 years	City of Launceston Youth Advisory Group; headspace Launceston Reference Group
3 February 2021	Smithton Community	13, 13-24 years	Circular Head Youth Leaders; Circular Head Council; Waratah-Wynyard Reference Group
4 February 2021	Devonport Community	4, 14-17 years	Youth Making Changes Around Burnie; Hellyer College
5 February 2021	Flinders Island	17, 12-17 years	Flinders Island District High
9 February 2021	St Mary's	20, 14-15 years	St Mary's High School
9 February 2021	St Helens Community	4, 12-25 years.	
10 February 2021	St Helens	24, 12-17 years	St Helens High School
11 February 2021	Queenstown	13, 15-16 years	Mountain Heights High School
12 February 2021	King Island	41, 12-17 years	King Island District High School
15 February 2021	Hobart Community	18, 12-20 years	Derwent Valley Youth Future's Action Team; Clarence City Council; Glenorchy Youth Task Force; headspace Hobart youth reference group

Participants

281 young people from the West Coast (13), North-West Coast (130), North (14), South (18), East Coast (48) and King and Flinders Islands (58) participated. 54.4% of participants identified as male, 41.2% as female and 4.4% were non-binary or gender diverse. 84.3% of young people were aged 12-17 years.

Demographic characteristics identified by participants shows the consultations contained a diverse subset of young people (Fig. 1). 13.9% of young people identified as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and 4.3% were from migrant and/or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. A small number of young people identified as living with a disability and with parent or carer responsibilities. 10.3% of participants indicated that the identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer/questioning, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+). Young people were given the option to indicate other identifying characteristics. While there was no clear trend, many young people used this to identify themselves as LGBTQIA+ allies or as having an experience of mental ill-health.

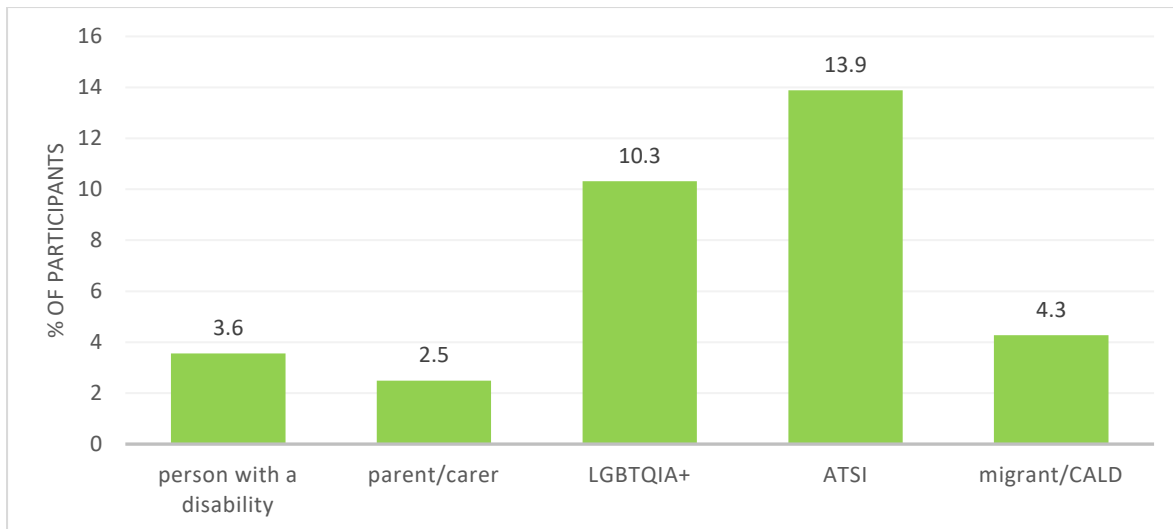


Figure 1. Identifying characteristics of consultation participants, statewide collated.

What they said

Consultation workshops were attended by a diverse range of young people including students, unemployed young people and those just starting their careers, young people in remote communities, young people exploring their sexual identity, connecting with their cultures and spiritual practices and passionate youth advocates.

As per the Strategy's consultation toolkit young people were asked to share their *hopes and dreams* for all children and young people in Tasmania as well their thoughts on the six domains outlined in the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework: *Being loved and safe, having material basics, being healthy, learning, participating, and having a positive sense of culture and identity.*



Participants from the City of Launceston Youth Advisory Group joining the Launceston workshop.

Hopes and dreams

What are your hopes and dreams for children and young people in Tasmania?

Young people spoke about their hopes and dreams for themselves, their communities and for all children and young people in Tasmania. Resoundingly, young people said that they hoped for all children and young people to have a safe, happy and loving home where they can access everything that they need to live their best life. Young people also said that they wanted to see equal access to opportunities that are not influenced by their background, identity, location, social status or resources.

“We want everyone to be treated fairly.”

Some young people had specific dreams for their future careers, like joining the defence forces, becoming a lawyer, owning their own business or starting a building apprenticeship with their father. Others talked about their dreams for travelling around Australia and overseas, and materialistic goods like buying a home and their first car.

Young people hoped for their local towns to be safe and free from violence. They talked about the things they thought were lacking from their towns, like services and infrastructure, and that they hoped the Tasmanian Government could help them improve. Most of the young people said that they hoped to see more community events, activities and programs that celebrate diversity and are inclusive to all members of the community.

What gets in the way of achieving these hopes and dreams?

The most common barriers of achieving their hopes and dreams are summarised below:

- Lack of affordable, safe and appropriate housing
- High youth unemployment, high underemployment and reliance on casual employment and volunteering
- Antisocial behaviour, family and domestic violence, assaults, bullying and abuse
- Alcohol and other drug misuse and passing this behaviour onto their children
- Financial stress, insufficient income support, low wages and high costs of living
- Disengaged young people and their families
- Unsupportive and unloving homes
- Uneducated parents who don't know how to best help their child
- Racism, discrimination and inequality
- Insufficient public transport options
- Not being prepared to live independently
- Not knowing where to find help, supports or programs when in need
- Not having enough money to pay for essential services, like building upgrades, school resources, community activities and events
- Mental ill-health and limited access to services
- Limited access to confidential sexual and reproductive health services
- Not being able to access services because they aren't offered where they live, they don't have transport to get there, can't afford it or the services are full

What is one thing we can do to help achieve these hopes and dreams?

“The government needs to help out small towns because if they do help, young people will be successful.”

Helping young people be resilient - Young people thought that they needed resilience training and support in schools so that they can better cope with challenging times.

Helping young people be mentally well - Young people want mental health training in schools, for teachers to be better trained to support people’s mental health and to reduce the stigma of asking for help.

Helping young people be as skilled as they can be – Young people think that everyone should have free tertiary education that leads to employment.

Helping young people enjoy their education - Young people want to have the option to tailor their education experience and have more choice in soft option subjects like languages and creative arts, and classes that focus on teamwork and hands-on activities.

Helping young people be prepared for work – Young people want to see better career pathway planning in schools and have opportunities to build their employability skills to find work after school.

Helping young people be active in their community – Young people said that they want to see more activities and events for children and young people. These included arts and crafts, interest clubs, internet cafes and local entertainment.

Helping young people be safe in the community - Young people said that they would like to have a youth centre safe space in their towns so that they have somewhere to hang out, connect with friends and speak to youth workers if they need to.

Helping young people be healthy - Young people spoke about creating public spaces that encourage fitness, like pump tracks, outdoor gyms, motorbike trails, public pools and running tracks. Young people also thought that the cost of healthy food should be cheaper than junk food.

Helping young people get around – Young people thought that free community transport could help all young people engage with activities after school and on weekends.

Helping young people to speak up - Young people want to be meaningfully consulted with and included in decision making processes for issues impacting them.

Helping young people to be inclusive and included - Young people said that event or service planning sometimes does not cater for people of diverse backgrounds. They want these young people to be spoken to and considered so that no one is left out or left behind.

Helping young people avoid alcohol and other drug misuse - Young people acknowledged that adolescence was when many people experiment with alcohol and other drugs, they want to see targeted youth support in their communities to help young people who misuse substances.

Being loved and safe

What does being loved and safe mean to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what being loved and safe meant to them. The most common responses are summarised below:

- having a safe, loving and supportive home
- being able to afford your own home and basic necessities
- feeling valued and respected
- have people listen to what you say and believe you
- not being bullied

“Being in an area where you don’t feel threatened and you feel like you can be yourself, feel valued and respected.”

What gets in the way of children and young people being loved and safe in Tasmania?

Young people said that they were concerned about children growing up in unsupportive or unsafe home environments, where they are subjected to neglect, abuse or domestic violence. Young people were most concerned for other children from lower socio-economic areas or neighbourhoods where parents seemed to not care for them.

They thought that this was influenced by alcohol and other drug use, some parents not wanting children and by some parents having good intentions but lacking education to raise their child in a happy and healthy household. Young people thought that some families could benefit from targeted support from social workers and community classes to help with family education. Some regions acknowledged local programs for parents and young mothers, but there was a distinct lack of support or classes for young fathers.

Young people thought that the high costs of healthy food meant that some children and young people were eating less healthy foods at home. They thought that families may not have enough money or be well educated on the importance of nutritious foods to help children and young people grow, learn, be healthy and mentally well. Young people also thought that feeding children and young people quality and nutritious food was also a reflection of living in a loving and happy home.

Participants in all regions spoke about how they generally did not feel safe in their communities, on public transport or alone at night. Young women reported this insecurity more strongly than young men. Young people said that bullying and violence were common on public transport and school buses and feel as though no one was doing anything about it. A couple of young people said that they had reported bullying on the buses to their teachers but were dismissed because it was not on school property. Young people feel schools should act seriously on bullying between students regardless of the location. One young woman said that she is scared waiting for the bus as she has previously been assaulted by other students and approached by adult male strangers offering her a lift to school.

“There isn’t enough punishment to bullies, I am tired of doing the same thing over and over again.”

Young people also talked about antisocial, violent, racist, and prejudiced behaviour in their communities from some people and they thought that this was heavily influenced by alcohol or other drug misuse. They also reported there were *“a few bad kids from bad families and neighbourhoods who scare everyone else.”*

The housing market was consistently raised as an issue for young people. Some young people said they planned to stay home with their parents for as long as possible but noted that many do not have this option. They thought that the expensive and competitive rental market was pushing young people to rent in more rural and lower socio-economic areas where they felt less safe. This in turn reduced their access to public transport, increased transport costs and reduced accessibility to essential services that are found in areas like Devonport, Launceston and Hobart.

Young people said they were having to choose between overcrowded accommodation, private and unregulated rental agreements, and living in poverty to afford rent. One young person from the South recently realised that they are “*technically homeless*” because they had been couch-surfing for several weeks.

A lack of new housing, few rentals, house prices above local wages and the increased number of short-stay rental accommodation were identified as key issues preventing young people from accessing affordable housing on the East Coast, Flinders Island and King Island.

What can we do to help children and young people be loved and safe?

Therapeutic support for alcohol and other drug use - young people think intensive and holistic support is needed to help people who are misusing alcohol or other drugs. Young people do not want children to be exposed to or learn the behaviour from their parents and think a supportive model could help break the cycle.

Breakfast clubs in schools and affordable healthy canteen foods- young people spoke highly of the Breakfast Club program at schools and think it should be run statewide, not just in lower socio-economic areas. Young people said that all students should have a healthy breakfast and not be excluded because of the finances or homelife. One young person suggested creating a partnership between schools and their local RSL or Rotary Club to help fund the initiative. Young people also thought that the price of healthy school canteen food should be cheaper to encourage healthier food choices.

Helping people break free from negative influences - young people think that youth workers, social workers and support workers are essential to prevent children and young people from disengaging from studies and displaying antisocial behaviour. One young person spoke about how they were on a path to violence and drug use because of peer pressure but turned their life around with the support of a close friend, community youth program and a trusted youth worker.

“We need people to help us when we think we don’t need it...which is challenging. We need positive support networks to help [young people] break free from people who bring them down.”

Better communication - young people said that they often do not know what supports, services, organisations or grants may be available to help them when they need it. They suggested a central resource such as a website and advertising on platforms that they use (not just TV or Facebook).

Infrastructure to improve safety - Young people suggested adding more streetlights, putting youth workers on school buses and adding CCTV surveillance cameras at bus stops to make them feel safer.

Housing support for young people - Young people feel that there should be further investments to help young people find and keep affordable and safe housing.

Having material basics

What are the material basics according to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what material basics all young Tasmanians should have access to. The most common responses are summarised below:

- Nutritious food
- A safe, stable and hygienic home
- A good education
- Easy access to health care and medication
- A supportive family
- Access to technology/internet
- Adequate clothing
- Recreational opportunities
- Freedom (physical, thought)
- Access to feminine hygiene products

What gets in the way of children and young people having the things they need in Tasmania?

Young people see the main barrier to having access to the material basics in life as economic disadvantage or 'poverty'. They feel as though the cost of living is high in Tasmania, particularly in many rural and remote communities. Since reduced access to financial resources restricts access to the material basics, young people identified that high rates of unemployment is a barrier to families not being able to afford them.

One of the biggest issues that many low-income families are facing in Tasmania is housing instability. In almost every location where young people were consulted, they expressed precarious housing situations where rental prices had increased exponentially which were forcing families to downsize or move further away into more affordable housing. They report that there are very few rental properties available in their communities and expressed that competition for the limited rental properties available is incredibly high. Home ownership is becoming increasingly unattainable for many Tasmanian families and young people wishing to move out of the family are finding it incredibly challenging to find affordable share-houses. Young people mentioned that wealthier Tasmanians and people living interstate are buying up property and turning them into their holiday shacks or converting them into short-stay accommodation properties.

"It's hard to find stable housing with no rental history or work, some families have to go through private housing arrangements which are risky."

Young people also identified a 'bad home environment' as a barrier to having the material basics. They described this as abusive, neglectful or unsupportive families and homes that are impacted by family violence, parental substance use or poor mental health or chronic unemployment. Young people feel that in the absence of stable and supportive family the community needs to fill these gaps by providing alternative avenues to receive support and meet the material needs of young people. They advised this could be done by having community facilities and drop-in centres however this is not commonly available.

"Young people need a safe drop-in space for after school, like a youth centre."

Another regularly reported barrier was not having access to public transport that is affordable, frequent and within a close enough distance to where they live. Young people advised that poor access to public transport creates barriers to accessing support services, community events or activities and employment opportunities.

What can we do to help children and young people access the things they need?

Raising Centrelink payments – young people advised that many low-income families are living off some form of payment from the government, they feel that the rate of payments should be increased so that families are able to afford to provide young people with the material basics.

Address housing affordability issue – ideally young people would like to see an increase in the supply of rental properties. They believe that it does not seem fair to have rental increases that are so high that families need to move out, therefore they feel the rental market should be better regulated or the government should subsidise rental payments for low income families.

More employment opportunities – young people have identified a need for more employment opportunities to be available, particularly in rural and remote communities. They also advise that employers should be incentivised to create new opportunities to employ young people.

Free after school community activities – young people feel there should be free after school activities made available for every young person so that those that don't have an enriching home environment have alternative opportunities to have some of their material and social needs met. This would ideally occur via youth drop-in centres where young people have space to feel safe, a place to access food, social support, and engage in activities that are fun and inclusive.

Increase funding to material aid organisations – young people identified the great work that many charitable organisations do in their communities such as providing meals, grocery vouchers or support to families that are struggling with social issues. Young people felt that these organisations should be allowed greater opportunity to widen their support in communities.

Subsidising the essentials for low income families – to counter the financial limitations of poverty young people believe the government should subsidise 'the essentials' for those families most in need including school uniforms, feminine hygiene products, textbooks, laptops, internet, and heating.

Education and support for parents – young people believe most of the responsibility for providing material basics comes from parents, therefore they feel all parents should have access to education on the importance of providing these basics to ensure the wellbeing of their children but also support with substance use, family violence or budgeting and financial counselling.

Being healthy – physical health

What does being physically healthy mean to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what being physically healthy meant to them. The most common responses are summarised below:

- Eating healthy and nutritious food
- Being physically active
- Getting adequate sleep
- Spending a balance of time inside and outside
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol
- Feeling comfortable in your own body
- Having confidence and good self-esteem
- Having enough things to do and;
- Practicing good sexual health

What gets in the way of children and young people being physically healthy in Tasmania?

Young people are concerned about low income families who are unable to afford a range of fresh fruit and vegetables. In many regional and rural towns, young people feel the prices of fresh produce at local shops can be a barrier to some families being able to provide nutritious meals for their children. Additionally, in many small towns often the only affordable school canteen, dining out or takeaway options are commonly centred around fried foods such as pies, sausage rolls, fish and chips and burgers. Whilst young people enjoy these foods they reported if there were healthier options, they would opt for these.

Young people would like affordable access to gym's and other recreational facilities where they can exercise, particularly in the cooler months. In some towns there is no gym, and others have privately owned gyms that young people cannot afford to sign up for. There are similar barriers associated with engaging in sport such as the costs involved and their ability to get to sport via an under-serviced public transport network. Some young people miss out on after-school physical activities because their families can't afford it. They report the 'Ticket to Play' initiative is good, but believe not many families are aware of it and that it doesn't cover enough of the total costs involved. Young people reported that exercise needs to be fun but there are limited opportunities for affordable physical activity outside of competitive sport which does not interest a lot of young people. They would like to see more free activities made available to them; in some towns the skate park was the main option but it is not always considered a safe place for all young people to go.

"We need to have a better relationship with council – to express our voice and to collaborate with the community on making some of these things happen."

Young people cited underaged smoking, drinking and drug use as a barrier to maintaining good health and report that it's often peer pressure that leads to early engagement with alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drugs. They feel these substances are easy to access in most communities.

Access to health services was also frequently reported as a barrier to maintaining good physical health. There are limited bulk billing general practitioners available and access to sexual health specialists is challenging. Waitlists for special medical assessments or procedures can be long and are often conducted in Hobart, Launceston or Melbourne which creates additional barriers for some families.

Finally, young people felt much of the responsibility for young people's poor health behaviours stems from uninformed parents, parents without the financial means to provide, or family environments where it is not a priority to provide opportunities for healthy eating and exercise for children. They suggested that interventions need to be targeted towards parents.

What can we do to help child and young people be physically healthy?

School-based breakfast club - Some schools offer a 'Breakfast Club' which provides a free breakfast to students. Creating this opportunity allows the students whose families cannot provide breakfast to eat before they engage in learning. It also helps staff identify if there are students frequently attending who may need additional support. Most young people felt this was a great initiative and it should be replicated in all public schools.

Remove barriers to exercise – young people expressed a desire to make exercise accessible and fun for all, which meant creating free (or affordable) non-competitive group-based physical activity, facilitating affordable access to gyms and addressing sexism, racism and homophobia in sports. Young people who were aware of the '*Ticket to Play*' initiative say this should be extended and increased.

Drop-in youth centres – this idea came up as a solution to many of the wellbeing domains but in the context of physical health young people saw having a safe space which facilitates group-based activities, for example table tennis, basketball hoops, creative workshops, bushwalks, as a way to ensure young people were not stuck at home all the time. They also suggested the centre could host healthy cooking classes which would be educational and fun.

Affordable fresh food in isolated communities – young people have reported that access to fresh food is not affordable in some of Tasmania's rural and remote locations. Young people would like every Tasmanian to have equal access to fresh produce and have suggested subsidising fresh food, providing funding to material aid organisations who can provide free (or cheap) vegetable boxes, and handing out fresh fruit in schools.

Drug and alcohol education – young people would like to have education in schools about alcohol and other drugs but feel that the message should not be as simple as "don't do drugs". They described a harm minimisation approach where they can learn about the effects of drugs, the health risks associated with them, how to be safe using drugs and where to get help for addiction so that they can make informed choices.

Better access to sexual health information and family planning services – young people called for inclusive and comprehensive sexual health education in schools, including links to external organisations such as family planning. They also suggested having larger presentations from service providers to help improve service awareness and reduce stigma.

Being healthy – mental health

What does being mentally healthy mean to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what being mentally healthy meant to them. The most common responses are summarised below:

- Being happy most of the time
- Having positive self-esteem
- Feeling comfortable in your body
- Being proud of your differences
- Not feeling stressed
- Feeling safe
- Feeling like you are listened to
- Having confidence
- Having stable emotions
- Having a positive mindset
- Being able to cope with life challenges
- Having a clear mind to learn

What gets in the way of children and young people being mentally healthy in Tasmania?

Young people highlighted a range of adverse childhood experiences associated with ‘abusive’ or ‘unstable’ families as having a big impact on young people’s mental health including the impact of dysfunctional family relationships, trauma, parental substance use, family violence and housing instability. They also described ‘high stress’ situations such as large school workloads, pressure from school around exams (and grades), navigating peer relationships, and managing parental expectations as impacting on their mental health.

The most common issue identified by young people that negatively impacted their mental health was bullying. Young people report bullying occurring in schools, outside of schools in the community and online. They spoke of bullying as if it was inevitable part of life however recognised it has severe and lasting impacts on the mental health of many young people. In most locations young people felt that schools were not doing enough to address bullying however they struggled to articulate alternative approaches to addressing the issue.

“Victims of bullies want to see outcomes and receive better mental health support.”

Finally, young people cited a range of barriers to accessing timely mental health support including long wait lists to get into a mental health service, infrequent mental health professionals visiting their community, not knowing what support is available, limited confidential spaces to receive support, absence of public transport to get to appointments and fees associated with some mental health supports such as general practitioners or psychologist gap fees.

“It’s hard to get help if there is a long waiting list, we don’t want to wait on the phone for long periods of time to get help.”

What can we do to help children and young people be mentally healthy?

Bullying education and training – young people feel that more education and training on the topic of bullying should be conducted in schools. They suggested education on the impacts of bullying, how to manage online bullying, how to ‘not care about bullying’ (being resilient), and how to intervene if you observe bullying.

Improve school cultures around mental health – young people would like to see conversations about mental health normalised in schools, they suggested conducting more awareness raising and stigma-reducing activities but also finding ways to encourage peer support in schools. It was suggested that all teachers have mandatory mental health training to equip them with skills to identify and support students in need and that schools should help young people understand what mental health supports are in their local community.

Provide more bulk-billing GP’s and other subsidised psychology services – some young people find it hard to access bulk-billing general practitioners and struggle to afford the gap fees associated with psychology appointments. Young people feel it should be free to access psychological therapy, even though young people are taking advantage of the Better Access scheme the gap fees can range from \$70 - \$120 which for many young people is not feasible.

Youth drop-in centres – Young people would like a local youth drop-in centre which creates an inclusive safe space for young people to ‘hang out’ but also to access support from staff who manage the facility. The drop-in centre would include confidential rooms to access mental health support from outreach health workers.

Increase awareness of local support services – young people reported that it is hard to know what mental health supports are available to them, they would like an easy way to find out about local supports such as a central website, and having information shared in schools or visible in the community.

Learning

What does learning mean to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what learning meant to them. The most common responses are summarised below:

- Finding ways to make learning fun and enjoyable
- Having access to all of the resources I need to study and work
- Having a quality education that will help me get the job I want
- Inspiring us to think in new ways

What gets in the way of children and young people being able to learn in Tasmania?

Many of the young people were currently studying at school or engaged in other training. The majority of the students were happily engaged with their learning but commented that they felt their school curriculum could be updated. They reported that they didn't feel fully prepared for life after years 11 and 12 and that they needed some more targeted help exploring their options and planning for their future.

Young people said that the school environment is essential for their learning. They spoke about how they enjoyed classes most with happy and dedicated teachers, positive and supportive friendships, and a varied delivery system. Young people said that they felt they learned more from teachers who took the time to prepare and deliver classes that catered to different learning styles, used groupwork and hands-on activities. Minecraft Education Edition was regarded very highly by many students as it made them feel happy and positively engaged in their learning.

"Good schools have quality teachers who are good with kids and have our best interests at heart."

Mental ill-health and bullying were identified statewide as major issues for young people engaging with education, training and employment. One young person said that they had been waiting for over 12 months for a specialist to diagnose them with ADHD and autism, which were impacting their ability to learn. Young people also reported high rates of bullying at schools and that the current methods to combat this were tokenistic and insufficient.

"We talk about calling out bullies and making pledges not to bully, but it doesn't matter. Everyone forgets about it the next day anyway."

"I don't care about my education. I just want to leave [town] and get out of Tasmania." This young person felt that they had been let-down by their school and family and didn't have the mental health or learning support that they needed to reengage. This person saw no personal future in Tasmania.

Many young people spoke about high youth unemployment because there were not enough jobs in their local area, employers expected them to volunteer to gain experience, or there were few opportunities after school hours. Three young people were concerned that their unemployment would prevent them from moving to Launceston to continue their education.

Young people from King Island, Flinders Island, St Helens, St Mary's, Smithton and Queenstown spoke about the challenges that they experienced with studying years 11 and 12. They welcomed the extension of their schools to college years but said that they did not cater to the needs of everyone. They said that their local schools were unable to provide the academic options and career pathways available at the larger Colleges. Young people reported that if they wanted to study tertiary education they would move to Hobart, Burnie, Devonport or Launceston to complete years 11 and 12.

Young people in King Island and Flinders Island said that most students prepare to leave for mainland Tasmania after year 10. They also reported that many do not plan to return to the islands due to a lack of activities, few employment or career options, and limited and expensive housing. Many of the young people said that they were excited to leave their hometown but wanted help to stay connected to their families and friends. Young people identified transport, low income and high living expenses as major stressors when moving away to study.

What can we do to help children and young people learn?

Employability skills at school - Young people want to have more employability skills and work readiness training at school. They said that while they knew what a CV was, they did not know how to prepare them, create cover letters or address selection criteria.

A greater focus on life skills - Young people acknowledged the importance of schooling, particularly for literacy and numeracy skills, but felt that they were not fully prepared to be independent. Some said that this responsibility should fall on parents, while others thought that this should be supported through school or community activities. Some young people suggested adding a 'life preparation' course that teaches young people soft skills like basic cooking, money management, doing taxes and cleaning to help prepare them for when they leave home.

Encourage businesses to employ young people - Young people said that casual employment while at school is important to them to learn independence, begin budgeting and develop their employability skills in the work environment: including time management, organisation, teamwork and communication.

Career planning should start earlier - Young people want to start exploring their career planning earlier in high school so that they have time to prepare their learning and training pathways.

Free transport for students up to 25 years - young people said that the cost of transport (flights or bus) are too high, particularly if they have to move to a different town to continue their education. Young people want subsidised transport to allow them to visit their hometowns when they are studying so that they can feel connected to their families and communities.

Offer school-based apprenticeships and traineeships- Young people want to undertake school-based apprenticeships as part of years 11 and 12 in regional areas. Young people reported significant difficulties finding apprenticeships as very few are offered and often young people have to have a personal connection with an employer first - such as a parent's friend. Young people think it would be good to have school-based apprenticeships and traineeships during years 11 and 12 as it will likely lead to better employment opportunities in their local area.

Mental health support to victims and perpetrators of bullying - Young people think that more needs to be done to stop bullying, but at the very least there should be mental health support or counselling offered to both the victim and perpetrator. Young people thought that support should be offered to the perpetrator to identify if they have mental ill-health or issues at home that require intervention.

Participating

What does participating mean to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what participating meant to them. The most common responses are summarised below:

- Attending events and activities in their communities
- Being involved in sports and clubs
- Having a platform where you can express yourself and be heard
- Being a good citizen: picking up litter, being respectful to others and respecting public property
- Volunteering your time to help out community groups and fundraisers
- Being actively engaged with education, training or employment
- Having equal access to resources and opportunities, regardless of your background

What gets in the way of children and young people being able to participate in their community in Tasmania?

Young people living in rural areas spoke about how their town can be boring after school and during school holidays. Most of the participants said that there weren't enough community events, activities or youth-friendly spaces for them to access. Young people don't generally access their local neighbourhood houses or State Libraries because there aren't any appropriate activities or resources, or the spaces were designed for small children or older people.

"They should ask us to help them design the computer libraries. Then we might use them."

On Flinders Island and King Island, young people spoke about how little entertainment there was for children and young people. Similar responses were made by young people on the West Coast.

"There is nothing to do on the weekends except go to the skate park, a friend's house or the beach, and most of the time you can't even do that because you can't get there."

Students felt they have many opportunities to play sports, but that these were often limited to short seasons and did not provide whole-year activities. Some young people wanted to participate in more local sports but said that their families could not afford the cost of uniforms or equipment. Many young people had not heard of the *Ticket to Play* program. Young people also reported that some parents will not allow them to join activities, sports or hang out with their friends if they aren't being supervised by trusted adults.

Young people said that they wanted to have a greater role and say in their communities and on issues impacting their lives. Young people want to be a part of local, state and federal decision-making processes. However, many had previous experiences that they felt were tokenistic or an afterthought. Most participants also said that they feel their voices are not being heard because they do not hear about the outcomes of their involvement.

Transport is a major barrier to participation. Young people said that it can be challenging to gain a driver's licence if they do not have a parent or friend who can help them. They knew of free learner driver training but reported mixed success with accessing the service as some programs were oversubscribed. Young people also spoke about their challenges with public transport, including the cost for young people 18-25 years, poorly timed routines and often limited services. Young people travelling from rural areas often have to prepare an overnight journey to Devonport, Hobart or

Launceston as the bus times are not suitable. This is particularly difficult for young people who are wanting to access mental health, sexual or reproductive health services without their parents.

There is no public transport on Flinders Island and King Island. Young people are fully reliant on the school bus, private vehicles and bicycles, scooters and skateboards. Some young people thought that a later school bus option would allow them to participate more so that they could stay and play sports at their school or socialise with their friends in town.

What can we do to help children and young people participate in their community?

Invest in youth hubs/drop-in centres - Young people want to have spaces that are safe and free from alcohol and other drugs that they can access after school or on weekends. Young people think this could benefit the communities in many ways, like keeping young people safe and off the streets, connecting them with youth workers who can help them find out about services and programs, and offering a space for organised activities and events for young people. Importantly, young people want to help co-design the space and how it would run to encourage more young people to use it.

Increase participation mechanisms for young people at the local, state and federal government levels - Young people spoke about the importance of having formal participation mechanisms such as youth advisory groups to help young people be more politically involved and to have a greater say in their communities. They want to see more opportunities to provide feedback in a youth-friendly way and to be advised of the outcomes so that they know that they were heard and valued.

Free public transport for young people up to 25 years - Young people want to be involved and engaged with community activities and events, but often cannot afford the cost of public transport.

Improve public transport networks - to put it simply, young people can't get where they need to go in their local areas. Young people who do not have access to a personal vehicle miss out on the opportunity to participate fully in their communities. Unfortunately, this feedback came after the implementations of State Government's new public transport network which many young people state has made community access worse.

Better communication - young people often do not know about opportunities and programs that they can attend or benefit from, such as the *'Ticket to Play'*. They suggested a central resource like a website and advertising on platforms that they use (not just TV or Facebook).

Positive sense of culture and identity

What does having a positive sense of culture & identity mean to young Tasmanians?

Young people were asked to describe in their own words what having a positive sense of culture and identity meant to them. The most common responses are summarised below:

- Knowing your background and history
- Being proud of who you are
- Accepting and loving yourself
- Being loved by your family and friends
- Connecting to your culture, learning about your culture, and meeting people from your culture
- Expressing your culture, identity, values, or beliefs without being judged
- Feeling welcomed and like you belong in your community
- Never having your culture or identity prevent you from opportunities

“All people should be included regardless of their background and be accepted for who they are.”

What gets in the way of children and young people having a positive sense of culture and identity in Tasmania?

Young people report misinformation and negative stereotypes relating to culture, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation is common among their communities which they feel stems from a lack of education. They feel there is not enough information available about culture and identity in schools and believe this contributes to misunderstandings which lead young people to feel confused or ashamed about their difference.

“There is a real fear of prejudice and assaults in small communities, so many people have experienced of slurs and abuse in schools.”

Further compounding the feeling of isolation, Tasmanian young people report that bullying that is overtly racist, homophobic, transphobic or sexist is not uncommon. They frequently observe offensive language being used that reinforces those negative stereotypes. They feel this leads to discriminatory beliefs being normalised that shouldn't be. When young people are made to feel ashamed of their difference, they hide their culture and identity or doubt their beliefs, and this leads to mental health difficulties.

“We feel pressure from peers and families to conform to a certain way.”

In many Tasmanian communities' young people report a perceived lack of exposure to various cultures or identities. They feel not being able to talk to people who identify similar to them about their culture or identity leads to identity confusion or feelings of isolation. Young people feel it is important to have opportunities to connect with other people to learn and be proud of who they are. This would counteract bullying and peer pressure to conform to act and feel a certain way. They also acknowledge that the limited awareness of different cultures or identities in small communities is something that adults in the community should be taking leadership on. Young people feel communities should be celebrating difference and creating inclusive communities that make people feel comfortable to step forward and openly identify.

What can we do to help children and young people have a positive sense of culture and identity?

Better education - Young Tasmanians feel that education is the key to making difference normalised and celebrated. They feel that schools should take the lead in talking openly about people's cultures and identities in a positive manner to young children, and utilise resources to aid their understanding such as diverse story books, movies, toys and learning topics).

Cultural education – Young people believe all schools should include contemporary educational opportunities to learn about other cultures which will help them to value multiculturalism. This would include learning a correct and unbiased history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. Whilst learning of the past with a critical thinking lens is important, young people also feel that education should have a positive aspect which inspires a sense of pride in Tasmania's first nations peoples and in Tasmania's multicultural society.

Religious education – Young people would like comprehensive religious studies at schools to better understand and learn to respect other religious beliefs and practices. They report in Tasmania many young people only have an understanding of religions based in Christianity but would like to better understand the full range of commonly practiced religions. This should be conducted in a way that dispels negative stereotypes and which does not purport one religion to be better than any other.

LGBTQIA+ education – Young people want better LGBTQIA+ education and training at schools. They believe there should be workshops to reduce stigma and for peers to know how to better support their friends, this would include information such as gender pronouns and appropriate language. They would like to see a more inclusive sex education for LGBTQIA+ identifying people which normalises different attractions and sexual practices.

Community education, leadership and celebrations – young people believe there is much that could be done at a whole-of-community level to reduce stigma and shift the focus from stigmatising to celebrating difference. They would like to see educational workshops offered to the whole community to reduce stigma, they would like to see leadership from prominent members of the community who are able to visibly role-model acceptance, respect and support of different cultures and identities, and they would like to see more community celebrations such as NAIDOC and LGBTQIA+ Pride so that the whole community can learn about and appreciate difference.

Safe identity-based social groups and support services- young people feel it's important to have support services which are identity specific – such as Aboriginal services or LGBTQIA+ services. Similarly, they would like to see social groups or clubs in schools and communities that are identity-specific, where young people can feel safe, receive natural support from their peers but also have opportunity to meet mentors from their identity group.

Having inclusive policies and facilities – young people believe local councils and schools should review their policies and facilities to be inclusive of all young people, they used the examples of school curriculums, equal opportunity in the workplace, non-binary toilets and school uniform policies.

[Report End]