



**YOUTH NETWORK OF TASMANIA
BUDGET PRIORITIES STATEMENT
2023-24**



ABOUT US

YNOT is the peak body for young people aged 12–25 years and the non-government youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT works to ensure policies affecting young people in Tasmania are relevant, equitable and effective, and that young people have a voice on issues that matter to them.

OUR VISION

A Tasmania where all young people are valued and can achieve anything.

OUR PURPOSE

To drive positive change with young people and the youth sector in Tasmania.

SHIFTING SANDS, HARD TIMES

The context in which young Tasmanians are living and growing has shifted significantly in recent years with a range of social, environmental and technological issues impacting their lives.

2022 has seen extraordinary new impacts on young Tasmanians, with increases to the cost of living caused by high fuel and rental prices, high inflation, rising interest rates, and rises in the cost of basics, all putting pressure on the ability of many to live a reasonable life.

Many young people, and the youth sector generally, are looking to YNOT to do more to ensure an independent voice to government informs thinking and action on a range of important public policy areas.

This YNOT Budget Priorities Statement offers two key ways Government can support young people, first by making an effective contribution to easing the cost-of-living pressures on young people through low-cost bus fares, and secondly, by adequately funding YNOT's capacity to bring its experienced and trusted advice to policy deliberations and effective solutions.

This submission also supports the community sector wide proposal for indexed funding.



ONE DOLLAR BUS FARES



*As someone from a lower income family,
I have often felt excluded from things just because
I can't afford to even GET there*

TYF participant 2021



The increased cost of living experienced throughout 2022 by many Tasmanians has seriously impacted young people aged under 25.


To mitigate the immediate impacts of this cost of living squeeze on their quality of life, and longer-term impacts on their health and wellbeing, in 2023, YNOT is seeking support from Government to subsidise bus fares for young Tasmanians under 25 years of age, with a 12-month pilot of \$1 bus fares.

For many young people, transport is a key cost that impacts, and undermines, their ability to get to work, education and training, to access essential services and to maintain the social connections that are so important to their overall health and wellbeing.

Broadly, young people fall into a group of Tasmanians who experience transport disadvantage because they are *"...not eligible to drive or who cannot afford a vehicle and who live outside the catchment of regular services, cannot afford existing taxi fares and are not formally eligible to use existing not-for-profit services."*ⁱ

As a result, many young people rely on buses. We know that young people make more of their journeys by bus, and use buses much more, than any other age group. According to the Productivity Commission about 34 percent of trips taken on public transport in Australia is by 15–35year-olds, which is the highest proportion of any age demographic.ⁱⁱ In Tasmania, 53 percent of students in Tasmania travel to school by bus, which is by far the dominant mode of transport to get them to and from education and training.ⁱⁱⁱ

The 2021 Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) Transport, convened by YNOT, identified transport costs as prohibitive, particularly in non-metropolitan areas where buses are operated exclusively by private providers.



TYF recommended the State Government make public transport more affordable for all young people to increase their mobility and participation in community life, given young people are more likely to have low incomes, be unemployed and have little disposable income. This is more important than ever with rising cost of living pressures.


ONE-DOLLAR FARES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE


YNOT's proposal is for a 12-month pilot of \$1 fares on Tasmanian bus transport operated by public and private providers (excluding intercity services) for all young people aged under 25 years.

One Dollar Fares for Young People delivers:

- The Tasmanian Government's budget priority focus area "*supporting Tasmanians with the rising cost of living*"
- **The Tasmanian Child Youth and Wellbeing Strategy**, *It Takes a Tasmanian Village* under the domain, *Having Material Basics*. Having material basics means that children and **young people have access to transport**, required local services, and materials to support participation in activities.^{iv}
- **Positive employment outcomes and social inclusion.** There is a strong positive association between transport and employment outcomes according to the 2021 Productivity Commission Research Paper, *Public Transport Pricing*. It found that **public transport promotes economic participation and social inclusion** where the use of alternative ways of travelling are unaffordable, impractical, or not possible, some of whom are the most vulnerable and isolated in the community.^v
- Access to post-secondary education and training, employment, essential services, recreation, and social networks is vital if young people are to contribute to the economic and social fabric of our communities.^{vi}

Savings to young people aged under 25 in the range of \$14 – \$25 per week, assuming travel twice a day, five days per week at Metro urban fares, as well as savings to families struggling with the increased costs of raising dependent children who fall outside current policy settings for free or subsidised student bus travel.





Young people have reported that the introduction of free bus travel in Tasmania in April 2022 due to high fuel prices, and the continuing provision of free Tiger Bus services in Launceston, have allowed them to enjoy greater mobility.^{vii} Lowering fares will significantly improve the ability of the under 25s to access vital services and activities and increase their contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of Tasmanian communities.

YNOT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reduce pressures on young people due to the increased cost of living by providing a subsidy that reduces bus fares for those under 25 to \$1.
 - *Timeframe: a 12-month pilot period with the option to extend depending on economic and social benefits.*
 - *Implemented by showing proof of age to bus drivers for cash fares, and Green Card system.*
2. Review the Transport Access Strategy (2016) and co-design a new strategy with young people that emphasises their unique needs and makes suitable recommendations.

INCREASED FUNDING FOR YNOT




*...The work you do is fantastic, however,
you have very little resources so are spread thinly...*

YNOT member



YNOT operates on limited resources and is finding it increasingly challenging to fulfil its obligations to government and stakeholders. Under current funding arrangements, YNOT is struggling to meet community expectations to undertake work that is considered to be core functions of a Youth Peak Body.

We need additional funding to respond to increased demands for our expertise and services following significant government reform aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania. Stretching resources too thinly does not achieve the outcomes that government and our sector needs.





CURRENT FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

YNOT's recurrent funding is just \$112,493 per annum and despite being indexed since 2019, has steadily eroded in value since 2010.

Our funding supports operating costs and 1.0 FTE which includes the CEO and Finance Officer salaries. Together we deliver:

- Sector leadership
- Stakeholder engagement
- Media commitments
- Member relations
- Financial management
- Support to the volunteer Board, and
- Participation on a multitude of government and non-government round tables, forums, committees, consultations, submissions and working groups across all Tasmanian State Government Departments.


The COVID 19 crisis has placed further pressure on YNOT as young people, and the sector that supports them, continue to be impacted by the pandemic.


The reality is that insufficient peak body funding, and an increased demand for our expertise, has significantly compromised YNOT's ability to meet two of the five outcomes of the core peak body funding grant: *to support policy development and provide advice and proactively engage with the sector and population priority groups.*

Indeed, YNOT's ability to deliver its core peak body functions to date has only been possible through deficit funding and the efforts of the separately, project-funded position (0.6FTE) whose primary focus is delivery of the Tasmanian Youth Forum, Youth Leadership Summit and facilitating consultation and engagement opportunities for young people.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TASMANIAN CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING STRATEGY

The release of the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy *It takes a Tasmanian Village* in 2021 has seen a significant increase in demand from government departments, and the private and community sectors, to support youth participation and provide advice on youth policy and initiatives. This has further stretched YNOT's limited resources.





Regrettably, YNOT has been forced to decline numerous requests from stakeholders in 2021/22 due to these resource constraints. This includes, but is not limited to requests, from the:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet's Literacy Advisory Panel.
- Department of Education (DoE) Trade Training Centre Management Committee.
- DoE Career Education - Years 9-12 Learning.
- Department of Health Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-27.
- Health Consumers Tasmania. Youth participation initiatives.
- Palliative Care Tasmania's Youth Resilience Program Advisory Group; and
- Clubs Tasmania. Youth participation initiatives.

This inability to contribute to these vital conversations hinders efforts to support identified actions in the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.



Thank you for all of your work, the projects we have worked on, and the amazing advocacy you have been doing for the youth of Tasmania; they are in such a better position because of the work you have done


- YNOT member



NEW POLICY INITIATIVES

YNOT anticipates that there will be further pressure placed on our organisation with the introduction of the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework* for Tasmania. The Framework will legislate Child Safe Standards and a Reportable Conduct Scheme that will be applicable to YNOT members and the Tasmanian youth sector.

YNOT will have a key role in assisting the Tasmanian Government to inform and raise awareness of the Framework across the youth sector and contribute to sector preparedness for implementation. Key aspects of the Framework will also need to be communicated broadly to young Tasmanians.



YOUR INVESTMENT



YNOT do a fantastic job. I rely on their expertise for a large part of my work especially in policy and governance

- YNOT member



Investment in YNOT will increase our capacity to respond to the needs of key stakeholders, improve our ability to meet our peak body funding obligations, and support implementation of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and new policy initiatives as they arise.

YNOT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provision of sufficient Peak Body Funding to meet our current Peak Body obligations

- *Alleviate current operating deficit*

2. Increase YNOT's capacity to meet increased demand for our expertise, and respond to the current and future needs of young people and key stakeholders.

- *Invest in a Communications Officer (0.6FTE = \$77,003*)^{viii} and Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Officer (1.0 FTE = \$117,744*)*

Total investment \$286,000 per annum.

SECTOR-WIDE INDEXATION

YNOT's sustainability, and that of our members, is increasingly in jeopardy as the gap between operational costs and funding continues to widen. This is largely attributed to inflation and inadequate indexation applied to funding agreements.

YNOT has partnered with TasCOSS and other peak bodies to commission work to inform the appropriate level of indexation for community service organisations (CSOs). The work will look at the actual costs incurred by CSOs – costs not properly captured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the Wage Price Index (WPI) – to determine a cost index specific for CSOs. The index will provide a formula for determining the appropriate indexation level for funding agreements in the future.

YNOT calls on the Tasmanian Government to endorse and apply the formula to all contracts with community service organisations upon completion of this work.

SUMMARY OF YNOT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reduce pressures on young people due to the increased cost of living by providing a subsidy that reduces bus fares for under 25s to \$1.
2. Review the Transport Access Strategy (2016) and co-design a new strategy with young people that emphasises their unique needs and makes suitable recommendations.
3. Provision of sufficient Peak Body Funding to meet our current Peak Body obligations.
4. Increase YNOT's capacity to meet increased demand for our expertise, and respond to the current and future needs of young people and key stakeholders.
5. Endorse and apply the formula for indexation to all community services upon completion of the work.

REFERENCES

ⁱ 'Transport in the Community Project Final Report', Tasmanian Council of Social Services 2014, as cited in Tasmanian Government 2016, Transport Access Strategy, p.4.

ⁱⁱ Productivity Commission, Public Transport Pricing, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/public-transport/public-transport.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tasmanian Government 2016, Transport Access Strategy

^{iv} Tasmanian Government 2021, It takes a Tasmania village – Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, p14.

^v Productivity Commission 2022, Public Transport Pricing, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/public-transport/public-transport.pdf>

^{vi} Op cit. TasCOSS

^{vii} Youth Network of Tasmania 2021, Tasmanian Youth Forum 2021: A report on Young People's Ideas and Solutions for Transport in Tasmania. <https://www.ynot.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/TYF%202021%20Transport%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

^{viii} Based on SCHADS Level 6 including indexation