

TASMANIAN YOUTH FORUM 2022

I AM ME

What young people have to say about
DIVERSITY, EQUITY and **INCLUSION** of all
young people in Tasmanian communities.



Report August 2022

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the palawa and pakana people as the traditional, original and continuing custodians of lutruwita (Tasmania) and the continuing connection that Tasmanian aboriginal people have to the land, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present.

Tasmanian Youth Forum 2022 Report

31 August 2022

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Insights from a Young Person: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Throughout this report, there are quotes and insights directly from young people involved with the Tasmanian Youth Forum. These are their thoughts, views and opinions on equity diversity and inclusion, and their hopes and visions for a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Tasmania.

"[I want to see a Tasmania based on]:

"Diversity: a Tasmania where we share a common identity as "Tasmanians" and enjoy our positive, collective and supportive culture - our shared way of thinking, being and doing. Yet everyone brings in their unique identity and lived experience, everyone contributes a part of themselves to build up and enrich our island community.

"Equity: where we understand about the differences and uniqueness of different individuals, yet embrace the differences and work towards the common interests that will benefit all. In doing that, we support each other in addressing the unique needs of different individuals. Basically, we give out the best we can to others and in return, we will receive the best supports we deserve.

"Inclusion: a Tasmania where we are all [supported] and accepted for being who we are. Where we all treat each other with empathy, compassion and respect. Where our actions speak louder than the words from any politician."

- He/him (22, South)
Survey Respondent

About the Tasmanian Youth Forum

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) is an initiative of the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT). YNOT is the peak body representing young people 12-25 years and the youth sector in Tasmania. TYF is YNOT's single large youth consultative event, bringing together young Tasmanians to discuss issues important and relevant to them, as well as solutions and ideas to improve outcomes for young people and their communities.

Acknowledgments

YNOT would like to thank young people who participated in the TYF consultation process. We also acknowledge and thank the educators, youth workers, and parents and guardians who supported young people to participate.

TYF 2022 was developed in consultation with a Youth Advisory Group, who informed the TYF topic, content and consultation methods used. Thank you to Amy (24, South), An (14, South), Angus (12, North-West), Ella (14, South), Frankie (21, South), Sabrina (21, South), and Stephen (21, North) for helping shape a successful program.

A special thanks to Skye (16, North), a young Aboriginal person for opening the forum with a Welcome to Country, to Tom (23, South) for graphic design of TYF promotional and marketing material, and developing the TYF report for young people, Abby-Rose (20, South) for producing the TYF demographic infographic, for and to Justyne (17, North) for photography.

We acknowledge and thank our emcee, Matt Newell for his welcoming and supportive facilitation and headspace Hobart and Launceston for creating our annual Chill Out zone for forum participants. We thank the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania and Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Young Leaders for delivering the icebreaker activity 'Privilege for Sale'. We also acknowledge Relationships Australia, Tasmania for hosting lunch-time activities and entertainment.

A very special thanks goes to Remus (24), who supported the YNOT team throughout the TYF consultation process – from early planning stages through to the forum data collation.

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TYF 2022 Sponsors



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Insights from a young person: An, 14

"I believe youth should be involved in the decisions and discussions that will shape their future. That's why I was interested in working with the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT). I can create a state-wide youth event for young Tasmanians where young people can feel safe and respect what everyone has to say, share and work together at the Tasmania Youth Forum.

"TYF provides opportunities for youth to give their perspectives, share ideas and speak their opinions which is an essential part of the development. The role of young people is to refresh and renew the status of society, for example, leadership, innovation, skills and advanced education, technology, and even politics.

"In 2022, Tasmania Youth Forum brings together young people across the state to discuss their points of view about critical issues impacting young people and breakthroughs for solutions and improving outcomes. The topic selected for this year is "I AM ME"- around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Thanks to the forum, I have learnt deeper about what the themes genuinely mean.

"Diversity is about what makes each unique; it includes our background, personality, life experience and beliefs, all of the things that make us who we are.

"Equity recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

"And inclusion refers to creating an environment where all people are truly welcomed, valued and respected, for who they are, regardless of differences. As a state, these themes, we interact with others so we can build bridges of trust, respect, and understanding of diverse perspectives.

"Furthermore, diversity, equity and inclusion contribute new ways of thinking, new knowledge, and different experiences and approaches to our communities. I had the best experience attending because I got to connect with other young people, understood different perspectives, and created strategies that might get into action.

"After the event, we presented issues that we were passionate about for governments to understand and then have possible acts. I'm sure other Tasmanians need YNOT and TYF to organise events that give me (as a young person) a chance to speak my voice, empower us and make me feel like I belong; I'm valued, and my contributions matter."

An, 14 (South)
Youth Advisory Group Member

Executive Summary

What is your vision for a diverse, equitable and inclusive Tasmania?

This is the question posed to young people participating in the Tasmanian Youth Forum consultation process throughout June 2022. Over three hundred (328) young Tasmanians told us what sort of Tasmania they want to see:

A Tasmania where diversity is the norm, not the exception.

A Tasmania where every young person:

- *Is accepted for who they are, wherever they are.*
- *Can feel safe everywhere.*
- *Has an equal voice.*
- *Has equal opportunities for a secure future.*

But young people told us that life is not yet living up to this vision for many young Tasmanians, a sentiment that is backed up by a range of recent research. At the national level, over a third (34.2%) of young Australians reported experiencing unfair treatment in 2021, with gender, mental health, cultural background and gender diversity reported as the most common grounds for discrimination.¹ Nearly one third (30%) of Australian teens have reported discrimination at school, with 42% of those reporting discrimination having experienced it in multiple forms.²

In Tasmania, young people have experienced worrying spikes in mental ill-health in recent years. Rates of high or very high psychological distress among young people aged 18-24 has risen three-fold since 2009 – to 33.8%.³ Unemployment also continues to disproportionately impact young people, consistently sitting at over double the Tasmanian average at 10.1% in August 2022.⁴

Asked for their thoughts and experiences around seven key areas of life as viewed through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion, young people say that they still face significant barriers to acceptance and equity. While positive change is already happening in Tasmania, young people believe there is much that can be done to keep up the momentum.

Personal identity: Young people still encounter prejudice, stereotypes and rejection across many dimensions of identity – their age, but also their cultural background, political or religious affiliation, gender expression, or sexual preference. What they want is to be accepted, as individuals and as members of diverse groups. They want equality of resources and treatment for individuals and groups in Tasmanian society. Young people want support from their teachers, community members and politicians to develop and flourish as individuals and communities.

Community: For many young people, a lack of community acceptance translates into a lack of physical safety. What they want is for Tasmanian communities to come together to include all young Tasmanians. They want to see communities embrace the full range of diversity represented in

¹ Mission Australia Youth Survey 2021, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

² <https://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/research-findings/snapshots/discrimination>

³ Primary Health Tasmania 2021 .Health in Tasmania: PHT Needs Assessment 2022-23 to 2024-25.

⁴ ABS 6202.0 Labour Force, Australia. Table 16. 12 month-average of Original data.

Tasmania. Young people need communities to create safe conditions – at school, on public transport, on the street – for all young people.

Health and wellbeing: Even when mental health services are available, they do not always meet young people's needs, particularly where young people are struggling with issues around marginalised identities. Young people want the Tasmanian mental health support system to be available to all young people in the state at times when they need support. They need it to be inclusive of the state's diverse young people, inside and outside schools. Crucially, mental health support must be accessible for young people who live outside Tasmania's larger towns or for those who lack appropriate and accessible transport.

Education: Many schools still do not provide a supportive environment, or relevant learnings, for all marginalised identities. Young people want Tasmanian schools to provide a learning environment that is personalised to the needs of individual students. Many need it to be practical, teaching life skills as well as academic ones. Schools must be progressive in their approach to diversity, equity and inclusion, actively promoting a tolerant and diverse Tasmanian society.

Sport: For young people, participation in sport can be a complex arena for the negotiation of identities, with the potential for stigma, discrimination and exclusion which particularly affects young people living with disability. What they want is for sport in Tasmania to be inclusive of young people of all backgrounds, gender identifications and levels of ability. They want sporting options to be broad ranging, encompassing non-traditional and non-competitive offerings. Affordable sporting options are needed for young people on low incomes to participate in their communities, as well as to support their own health and wellbeing.

Work and employment: Young Tasmanians can struggle to find a foothold in a job market for which they do not always feel well or equally prepared and can feel spoken down to and undervalued by their employers, co-workers and customers. What they want is to have the opportunity to enter the workforce without exploitation. Once in the workforce, they want equity in the workplace for younger people as well as for the types of positions, in particular casual positions, that young people are more likely to fill. Young people hope that their employers and colleagues will extend recognition to the new skills and new thinking that young people bring to workplaces.

Transport: Public transport, in addition to often being unreliable, is not always a safe space for young people with marginalised identities – including young people from the LGBTIQ+ community, young women, those from migrant and refugee communities, or young people living with disability. Young people want transport in Tasmania to be available where and when it's needed, with expanded bus routes and timetables. They need it to be affordable, particularly in the case of non-Metro bus routes. Many see transport as a key area for sustainability, with a need for decreased emphasis on private cars – particularly in metropolitan areas.

Across these areas, young people believe Tasmania's political system and government hold many of the keys to change. Unfortunately, many young people feel frustrated in relation to our current political climate, where they do not always see themselves as represented or heard. What young people want is better representation in political systems. They want more meaningful engagement with the political system and the development of government policies and programs. Importantly, young people want to see intergenerational equity considered and incorporated into government decision-making.

Recommendations

1. Increase the safety of young people using public transport.

Increase the personal safety of marginalised young people using public transport particularly for LGBTIQ+, multicultural women and people living with disability. Invest in improved infrastructure and promote safe behaviours on public transport and in public transit waiting areas. Initiatives should align with the 'Being loved, safe and valued' domain of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2021*.

2. Provide young people with more opportunities for political engagement.

Explore opportunities to strengthen young people's understanding of the political system and how they can contribute to decision making on matters important to them across all levels of government. Young people are frustrated with the current political system and do not see themselves – their issues and future needs – reflected in politics.

3. Strengthen opportunities for young people to learn more about diversity, inclusion and equity in Tasmania's educational system.

Prioritise opportunities for learners to celebrate their differences and learn more about diverse cultures in educational settings to support a positive sense of culture and belonging in school communities. Initiatives should align with the *DoE Student Wellbeing Strategy 2022* 'Having a sense of culture and identity'.

Invest in professional learning to support schools to provide more education around inclusion, disability, gender and sexuality, and cultural differences and challenges stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes.

4. Ensure the views of young people from diverse background are included in Tasmanian mental health reform initiatives.

Meaningfully engage with young Tasmanians from multicultural communities in the development of mental health early intervention and supports and preventative measures to address gaps in service provision. Include actions relevant to multicultural youth in Rethink 2020 implementation plan, Reform Direction 7: 'responding to the needs of specific population groups'.

5. Invest in safe spaces for young people

Explore opportunities for diverse and marginalised young people to meet in safe, accessible spaces in the community. Young people want to see the introduction of holistic youth-drop in hubs, such as 'one stop service centre' model proposed in the *Youth Justice Reform Discussion Paper 2022*, to support wellbeing and to connect to other likeminded young people.

Introduction

Discrimination on the basis of self-identity can occur at any age. Many young people feel discriminated against or talked down to on simply the basis of their age. But harsher, more damaging sentiments and stereotypes are also familiar to many young people who identify with groups that are marginalised due to cultural background, gender or sexual identity, health or disability. Indeed, Mission Australia's 2021 survey of young Australians aged 15-19 years found that equity and discrimination was the third most important issue for young people in Australia and four out of ten young people had experienced unfair treatment because of their identity.⁵

Young people can experience discrimination, unfair treatment and exclusion on the basis of self-identity in every life context – at school, at work, at healthcare and other services, in recreational activities, or in the community. Coming at a moment when young people are often struggling to establish a sense of individual identity, such negative treatment can affect young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing; with impacts that can last a lifetime. By contrast, acceptance and inclusion can help young people thrive and reach their full potential in all areas of life.⁶

In recent years, the Tasmanian Government has acknowledged "equity, diversity and inclusion" as key components of "*Having a positive sense of culture and self-identity*", one of the six strategic domains of the recently developed whole-of-government Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (2021).⁷ The need for diversity, equity and inclusion, has been acknowledged by Tasmanian Government in a range of government reviews, plans and strategies, including:

- Closing the Gap Tasmanian Implementation Plan 2021-2023.
- LGBTQI+ Whole-Of Government Framework.
- Tasmania's Multicultural Policy and Action Plan.
- Improving Aboriginal Cultural Respect Across Tasmania's Health System Action Plan 2020-26.
- Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2018-21, Women on Boards Strategy 2015-2020.

This year's Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) has given young Tasmanians the opportunity to speak up about what they need to feel safe expressing who they are and what they want for the future of diversity, equity and inclusion in Tasmania. The 2022 TYF topic was chosen in consultation with young people throughout 2021/22, and is no surprise given the increased emergence of this theme throughout YNOT's consultations in recent years.⁸

Some of the solutions proposed by young people in this report are simple, while others are more complex and require a considered response from individuals in our communities as well as decision-makers. This report reinforces that while issues still exist, young people are feeling hopeful that as a society, Tasmania is heading in the right direction. Importantly, young people want to see themselves represented and included in the discussions, and considered during decision-making processes that foster a more diverse and accepting future for Tasmania.

⁵ Mission Australia Youth Survey 2021. <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

⁶ Jahin Tanvir 2022. Discrimination and the effects on young people's wellbeing. WH&Y Australia <https://www.why.org.au/news/Discrimination-and-the-effects-on-young-peoples-wellbeing>

⁷ Tasmanian Government 2021. Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. *It Takes a Tasmanian Village*.

⁸ See TYF 2020: Building a Better Tasmania for Young People; TYF 2021: A Report on Young People's Ideas and Solutions for Transport in Tasmania; YNOT 2021 Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Consultation Report.

Process

TYF 2022 consultation occurred throughout June 2022, consisting of a forum and an online survey. Young Tasmanians played an integral role in planning and developing the program for TYF 2022. The TYF Youth Advisory Group, comprised of seven young people from across the State, chose the topics for discussion and co-designed the forum delivery and survey. Their input was key to creating a safe and welcoming space for young people to participate. Basic demographic data was collected from participants including age, gender, personal identifiers and region. However, responses were optional, and some individuals chose not to disclose.

The forum

The forum was held in Launceston on 3 June 2022, bringing together 156 young people from across the State. The co-designed forum was facilitated by emcee Matt Newell, Tasmanian media personality. The forum was officially launched by the Minister for Education, Children and Youth the Hon. Roger Jaensch MP, with Welcome to Country provided by a young Aboriginal woman, Skye (16, North).

Table discussions were supported by adult volunteers, educators, social workers and youth workers. Activities were designed to facilitate the following discussions:

- Understanding diversity, equity and inclusion from the perspective of young people.
- Challenging stereotypes and unconscious bias.
- Understanding what young people need to feel safe and to have a positive sense of culture and self-identity.
- Identifying the systems and challenges that create disadvantage, discrimination or inequity for young people across different environments.
- Creating solutions that will improve outcomes for young people and Tasmanian communities.

The forum included an additional warm-up activity 'Privilege for Sale', delivered by the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania and Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Young Leaders.

Politicians and dignitaries were invited to the final solutions session to hear presentations from young people. The final presentation session was attended by the Hon Michael Ferguson MP, Hon Nick Duigan MLC, Hon Sarah Lovell MLC, Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC, Lara Alexander MP and Jack Davenport, Convenor of the Tasmanian Greens.

The survey

The online survey was designed to complement the forum, allowing young people who were unable to attend the statewide event to have their views heard on the topic. The online survey was open throughout the month of June 2022. In total, 172 young people completed the online survey.

What young people were asked

The forum program and survey content were co-designed by YNOT and the TYF Youth Advisory Group. The Advisory Group identified seven topics for discussion through the thematic lens of diversity, equity and inclusion. These were:

- Personal identity
- Community
- Health and wellbeing
- Education and training
- Sport
- Work and employment
- Transport.

Results from the consultations were analysed to identify key issues and to capture what is working, what needs to change, and what could be created. Young people identified a wide range of ideas on how Tasmania can move quickly and comprehensively towards greater diversity, equity and inclusion, with over 1200 comments recorded throughout the entire consultation.

The high level of interest from young Tasmanians in the consultation process clearly demonstrated the value they place on having their voices heard. As young people acknowledge, explore, and embrace diversity in more and more aspects of personal identity, they have also identified their hopes and visions to create a more accepting, safer and equitable Tasmania.



TYF PARTICIPANTS

328

YOUNG PEOPLE
CONSULTED IN TOTAL

156 ATTENDED THE FORUM

172 COMPLETED THE ONLINE SURVEY

PRONOUNS

48%

SHE, HER, THEY

20%

HE, HIM, THEY

3%

THEY, THEM

28%

OTHER, DID NOT DISCLOSE

AGES

MEDIAN AGE WAS

16
YEARS

74% AGED 12 - 17

26% AGED 18 - 25

DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

5%

YOUNG MIGRANT
OR REFUGEE

12%

YOUNG
ABORIGINAL

5%

CULTURALLY
OR
LINGUISTICALLY

13%

LIVING WITH
A DISABILITY

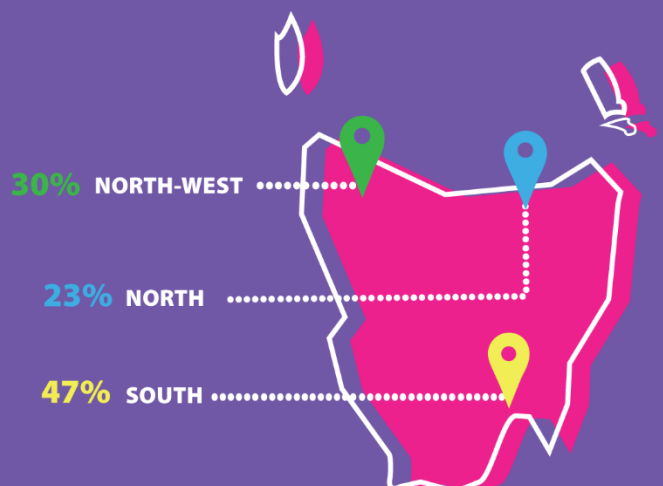
5%

YOUNG CARER
OR PARENT

26%

LGBTQIA+

REGION



What young people said

Hopes and visions for diversity, equity and inclusion in Tasmania

Young people were asked to share their hopes and visions for future diversity, equity and inclusion in Tasmania. In summary, young Tasmanians hope for:

A Tasmania where diversity the norm, not the exception.

Diversity is increasingly a fact of life in Tasmania – a change that young people see as positive. Young people look forward to the day when diversity is accepted as “the normal.”

“I do hope that Tasmania becomes a more diverse area in terms of people from different cultures, backgrounds, families, religions and then we can all learn off each other.” (14, North-West)

“My hope for diversity, equality, and inclusion is that it becomes a given in culture. That we shouldn't have to fight so hard for it, especially for young people. That to not have it in culture feels wrong.” (25, North)

“I hope that everyone would be seen as normal, whether they have a disability, or a LGBT, or whatever their skin colour is... While it may be important to their identity, I still hope they may be able to be more accepted as normal people rather than...a minority.” (North, 19)

A Tasmania where every young person is accepted for who they are, wherever they are.

Young people want to see a Tasmania that extends inclusion, acceptance, and equality to all - all cultures, personal identities, and levels of ability. Inclusion, acceptance and equality must become the norm in all environments - at school, at work, in sport, and in the community.

“I want Tasmania to be a place where people are seen as people first and foremost. I want a Tasmania where the qualities of a person aren't assumed and are instead discovered through conversation and interaction.” (22, South)

“Just that everyone accepts each other, no bullying, no exclusion, no talking smack behind someone's back just because they were born somewhere else or their family had different beliefs.” (14, North-West)

“That we can all be viewed as equals, treated the same no matter sex, identification, race, appearance, language.” (15, North-West)

A Tasmania where every young person can feel safe everywhere.

Young Tasmanians want to feel safe. But many young people, particularly those from diverse communities, are not always safe in their schools and communities or on public transport.

*"I hope that all people can feel safe and included, no matter their cultural/linguistic background, their religion, their gender, their sexuality, or their expression."
(18, North)*

"My hope for the future is that everyone can have a voice, feel safe and know that they can be included no matter the gender, sexuality, identity or race." (16, North)

"That everyone is accepted for who they are and can be safe, physically, mentally, emotionally." (17, North-West)

A Tasmania where every young person has an equal voice.

Every young Tasmanian has an equal right to be heard. While young Tasmanians may not always be able to agree, everyone should be able to listen to each other respectfully.

"For inclusion, everyone has a right to use their voice to speak up. It's a lot of work to create an open and inclusive environment that everyone feels welcome and comfortable in." (17, North-West)

"Everyone views the world differently and will bring different perspectives to the table." (25, South)

"I hope that people from all groups can be understanding and respectful - regardless of differences. [It] is healthy to interact with others of different opinions and point of views." (25, North-West)

A Tasmania where every young person has equal opportunities for a secure future.

Young people express frustration at social and economic inequalities in Tasmania, both the inequalities between different social groups and intergenerational inequalities. Every person should have an equal chance for a good life, regardless of their background or personal privileges.

"My hope is that every person gets a better chance, not just those who are rich and privileged. My hope is for housing and welfare equity, healthcare accessibility and rights for all disadvantaged groups." (22, South)

"That youth can be given the same opportunities as one another no matter where they come from (such as rural areas) or how they identify." (17, North-West)



Personal identity: I am ME

"I am ME" the subject of personal identity and its relationship to diversity, inclusion and equity is one that sparks nuanced and passionate responses from young people. Young people want to be seen and understood as individuals by people around them; at the same time, they want to be able to situate themselves within group identities that are themselves appreciated and embraced by Tasmanian society as a whole. "ME" therefore must capture these broader categories of identity, while still keeping the focus on the individual. Most importantly, young people want to be appreciated and embraced at all levels, and to see that same acceptance extended to others.

However, many young people feel that this ideal of acceptance and inclusion is still far from being universally pursued. Across all the social spectra on which young people can find themselves – political, religious, gender expression, sexual preference, length of residence in Tasmania -they can still encounter prejudice, stereotypes and rejection.

"I see myself as me, and this does not align with the gender associated with the sex I was assigned. Having discovered this divergence, I've become aware of how notions of prescribed identity can have significant negative impacts on people's lives, even if they mostly identify with them." (22, South)

"I have experienced difficulty because of my faith, and people try to exclude and put down my thoughts and opinions because it's not the same as theirs. I am respectful of others - I wish they could be the same of me. I have lots of friends who don't feel that they can be themselves because others are so judgemental, and sometimes aggressive, towards them." (25, South)

What's working

Many young people feel that diversity awareness is increasingly growing, even if awareness does not always lead automatically to acceptance. Signs of positive change include growing trends towards asking people their pronouns instead of assuming their gender identification; increasing provision of gender-neutral bathrooms and options for uniforms; support programs for marginalised groups inside and outside schools; and festivals and community groups promoting greater understanding and acceptance.

"Organisations like Working It Out and Speak Up, Stay ChatTY have organised many workshops and the like in schools, and I feel that this helps to inform students and teachers, making it easier for discrimination to be noticed and stopped." (South, 17)

"Keep supporting young people to feel positive about themselves." (24, North)

What needs to change

For Tasmania to continue embracing diversity and moving towards acceptance, young people believe we need to:

- Expand the range of information and education provided to young people around issues including racism, ableism, Aboriginal dispossession, gender identification and sexual orientation.
- Increase flexibility around cultural practices, for example by expanding permissions to leave/alter schedules for religious events.
- Bolster training for teachers, sports coaches, health/mental health services, and youth organisations around combatting discrimination and supporting marginalised young people.
- Unite to counter moves that threaten advancements in social justice.
- Provide the space and support for young people to express themselves and value what they have to say, as individuals and collectively.

*“Education on sexual identity in schools... [among other things,] make it mandatory for schools to teach... that asexual and aromantic people exist and that we’re not broken.”
(14, South)*

“[Neurodiverse people] aren't stupid, we are human beings and deserve to be listened to, not have people speak for us.” (unattributed)

How this could happen

These steps will be easier to achieve if more spaces and networks are created for young people to explore their individual identities and learn about diverse identities and perspectives. These can include:

- Safe, judgment-free spaces for diverse groups as well as for learning about different perspectives.
- On-line support networks for young people to explore their individual identities.
- New venues and modes for people to share stories of their personal journeys.

Practical supports needed for these spaces and networks include more AUSLAN interpreters and translators for people for whom English is not a first language.

“I have found that a major problem is that schools can choose which discrimination to shine a light on, and which to pseudo-ignore. For example, my school...has had plenty of people speak about mental health issues, but not once have they ever bothered to try and stop LGBTQIA+- related discrimination. I would like to see schools forced to discuss discrimination types that they have previously been able to ignore. If some sort of requirement was placed on the Tasmanian curriculum that schools have to address all types of discrimination, and teach about them, instead of just the chosen few, this would massively help weed out discrimination in our education system.” (17, South)

Community: Identity and belonging

Personal identity is not something that exists or evolves in isolation for young people. Community – the specific contexts in which young people live, study, play, pray, and love – is the context for exploration of personal identity and the potential for connection with others, across as well as within groups with shared identifications. Young people feel that connection is the key to belonging in all the diverse but overlapping contexts of young people's lives.

But many young people –including but not limited to those from marginalised groups - do not feel accepted within their broader communities, particularly outside of Hobart. Notably, a number of young people feel that discrimination is accompanied by a lack of physical safety.

“Being a part of a community can make us feel as though we are a part of something greater than ourselves. It can give us opportunities to connect with people, to reach for our goals, and makes us feel safe and secure.” (17, North-West)

“There isn't much for young people to do in places outside Hobart. Older people can be very judgemental and accuse you of crimes just for walking on the streets.” (24, South)

“Being queer and neurodivergent can make it incredibly difficult to be accepted and supported in the broader community.” (22, North)

What's working

Tasmania is already moving towards a greater acceptance and inclusion of diversity in the broader community. In particular, young people are happy that Tasmania has:

- Events that bring diverse people together, that spread awareness of diverse life experience, and where diverse cultures are celebrated and shared (IDAHOBIT Day, Moonah Taste of the World, NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, Mental Health Week).
- Safe, open youth drop-in centres and spaces that encourage positivity, both in support of particular groups (LGBTIQIA+ support groups at schools, Working It Out's Outspace) and for particular geographic communities (the SevenUp Youth Centre in Wynyard for e.g.).

“SevenUp is good because it gives people somewhere to hang out and relax after school... We need a place like SevenUp where students can go more often, like on weekends.” (14, North-West)

What needs to change

Nevertheless, there is a general agreement that for young people to feel fully included and accepted, a broad-scale change in attitudes towards young people as a whole, as well as different identities, is needed. To achieve these changes, young people believe the Tasmanian community needs to:

- Promote a better understanding of the individual's right to establish and assert their own identity.
- Provide more education around inclusion, disability, gender and sexuality, and cultural difference, and challenge stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes.
- Change language, practices, and infrastructure that reinforce binaries around gender and sexuality, for example by bringing in unisex bathrooms and uniforms, avoiding gendered figures in signs, and limiting gender designation on government identifications.
- Provide more tangible symbols of inclusion and celebration not only in schools but also at the level of local government, community group, businesses – for example, display of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait, and LGBTQIA+ flags, multilingual and AUSLAN resources and translators, public art, unisex uniforms, and pronoun badges.
- Encourage Tasmanians to break down barriers by reaching across them, for example, by learning about other cultures or languages, or by adopting new social modes that conform with the religious or cultural requirements of new Tasmanians such as with alcohol-free social and recreational events.

Meanwhile, young people say these moves towards social change must be accompanied by basic steps to ensure that young Tasmanians feel safe in every aspect of life, from social groupings to the broader community. Young people believe that these changes will need to occur at the local level, as well as in the broader Tasmanian community.

"I think something we need to change is that people within the community should be more aware and educated about how we should not judge others within our community at first glance." (16, North)

"There has to be an enormous focus on creating a sense of safety and security in community settings so that individuals can be comfortable exploring their identity and don't feel a need to hide who they are." (22, North)

How this could happen

Young people feel that changes in attitudes will be best achieved through the creation of new types of opportunities for people to come together across divides. At the same time young people, particularly from marginalised groups, need more opportunities for safe congregation. Young people seek connections with like-minded people to discuss issues around identity and mental health, both with peers and with professionals – for example, social media groups that support people being bullied. Young people particularly hope for the creation of:

- More safe spaces for young people to connect and engage in activities, including spaces that bring together young people from different backgrounds, cultures, levels of ability, gender and sexual identities to encourage exchanges of views. Suggestions included board and role-play game nights, art classes, community gardens and kitchens, and self-care workshops, all organised to be accessible to individuals of varying levels of ability and interests.
- Services, spaces and support programs specifically for young people facing marginalisation, including LGBTQIA+ young people or young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- Youth groups for the full 12-25 age range to encourage cross-age-group perspectives, but also more programs specifically designed for young people aged 18-25 years.
- Local ways for people to access resources around mental health, inclusion and bullying in their communities, such as through holistic youth drop-in hubs that support wellbeing.
- Events for young people to express, celebrate and even experiment with difference. For example, a Pride market offering makeovers for people to experiment with different self-presentation.
- Community champions programs supporting young people with diverse lifeways.

Finally, young people stress that transport is necessary to ensure that young people can access these opportunities.

*“[We need] affordable and accessible transport to and from community events that has an emphasis on being safe and secure for individuals from all backgrounds.”
(22, North)*

“We need more youth facilities and events: youth markets, youth groups, book clubs, D&D sessions. Stuff for young people to do, and ways to access it.” (24, South)

“Engage with local businesses and see if they have any interest in running youth-friendly events. Utilise community centres or businesses to host regular gatherings in central communities that cater to the 12-18 demographic...Provide safe transport options for individuals to sign up for so that [they] can guarantee travel to and from these events.” (22, North)

Insights from a young person: Sabrina, 21

"This topic ['I am Me'] was important to me because I wanted to create the main message, that I am different in my own way. It makes me think about how I got the creative thinking to, input into everyday life. The topic "I AM ME" helps me create a sense of belonging with the community.

Being involved in the focus group helped me to learn about the different youth's ideas, about youth from different areas within Tassie. I also grew my communication skills and confidence for public speaking. It gave me new ways, and new ideas to bring to my task force group.

I enjoyed the TYF because we need to be heard as group and not as individuals to create a clear message/idea for the future generations of youth. Having the youth forums, gets all high school students, youth groups & all youths to start to grow connections & friendships for youth from North to the South of Tasmania.

"It is very important that we start to talk about certain topics now, rather than later. Because if today's youth don't start bringing up topics that are related to them, then we don't start having discussions started for the future generations of youth within Tasmania. We also need to start having these discussions for the future youth to shape the future of Tasmania. YNOT helps by creating these forums for youth to develop and grow on our ideas; and how we can create the new ideas for the future of the Tassie youth."

Sabrina, 21 (South)
Youth Advisory Group Member

Health and Wellbeing: It's all about mental health

In line with many recent Tasmanian social surveys, questions of health and wellbeing, and particularly mental health are high on young people's list of priorities. Young people believe that mental health is strongly linked to issues of diversity and inclusion on many levels. On the positive side, young people's mental health greatly benefits from social acceptance as unique individuals and celebration of diversity in the community. On the flipside, discrimination and stigma have significant impacts on mental health, with mental ill-health itself leading to further discrimination. Discrimination in the healthcare setting can prevent young people from accessing appropriate mental healthcare as well as exacerbating their existing mental ill-health.

Unfortunately, many young people feel that current mental health services are often difficult to access, with long waiting periods the norm in many parts of the state. Even when current services are available, they do not always meet young people's needs, particularly where young people are struggling with issues around marginalised identities.

*"I have been through CAMHS, headspace...none of them have provided the right help."
(16, North)*

"School counselling - personally, and after discussing with some others, we've all had pretty bad experiences with school counsellors. Not feeling like it's professional or confidential, and the advice given not efficient." (16, North)

What's working

Young people want existing mental health support programs to be maintained, including face-to-face supports, such as headspace; school-based social workers, psychologists and nurses; and local mental health services, and online services such as Head to Health. Young people also appreciate existing auxiliary programs that support mental health, such as sports programs to help build good overall health, life skills programs that increase personal resilience and independence, and sex education and respectful relationships programs to help young people build safe relationships. For these supports to remain effective, they should be affordable and accessible to young people.

"[We need to keep] access to school psychologists, programs that give young people access to services without parental intervention or the need for parent permission as this can be a massive obstacle in people receiving the help they need." (17, South)

What needs to change

Young people say wide-ranging changes are needed for all young Tasmanians to receive the mental health supports that they need. At the most basic level, young people and community need a better understanding of mental health issues facing all young Tasmanians. They also need better promotion of existing services as well as education and awareness-raising around mental health. For mental health services to effectively support young Tasmanians, they must be:

- Available: young people need to be able to access a service when they need it, for as long as they need it.
- Accessible: young people need to be able to reach a service, whether in person or online, and to afford it.
- Inclusive: support services must be welcoming to and attuned to the needs of young people of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, gender identification, sexual orientation, and levels of ability.

“More facilities, cheaper (or free) mental healthcare - many people need therapy or similar services and having only a few around makes waitlists long and the services hard to access. There are more but they are either far away so hard to get to or expensive which young people cannot afford.” (17, South)

“For us all to be accepting of each other despite background, sexuality, disability, or mental health problems. Also, to erase the stigma of mental health problems and for us all to support each other.” (18, South)

How this could happen

Not only do young people need to build the confidence to reach out for mental health support, services must also be able to meet their diverse needs. Young people believe this can be achieved by reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, and ensuring that services are responsive to the needs by being available, accessible and inclusive.

For education and awareness-raising: young people suggest a whole-of-community approach, including a focus on mental health first-aid, is the best way to bring greater awareness to young people and the adults around them.

To make services better available: young people call for all available measures to shorten waiting times for existing services, including increased funding and staffing, as well as the creation of new services and better promotion of existing services.

To make services more accessible: young people note that school-based services are particularly easy to access and called for more mental health programs and support persons in schools, including new forms of support such as chill-out spaces, mental health workshops, teachers trained in mental health first aid, and regular mental health check-ins for every student. They also say that community-based services can provide local help outside the school environment. Meanwhile, easy-to-access, user-friendly online services are helpful for after-hours support and for students who are worried about confidentiality of local services.

To make services more inclusive: young people suggest initiatives to break down stigmas surrounding gender, sexual and cultural diversity, mental ill-health, disability and neurodiversity to build the capacity of services to respond to the needs of diverse young people. To cater to the widest range of young people, they also hope for a more diverse range of mental health support offerings and therapies such as art therapy. However, they also identify the importance of indirect mental health support such as having healthy food available to them such as through school canteens, school gardens and community gardens, and indoor and outdoor exercise facilities inclusive for all abilities.

It will also be important to build confidence in mental health supports across the full range of Tasmanian young people through the creation of:

- More programs to deliver culturally appropriate mental health support for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, including more bicultural workers.
- More culturally appropriate and historically sensitive mental health support for Tasmania's Aboriginal community.
- Making the health system more responsive to individual identities, for example through the inclusion of preferred names and pronouns in health records.

Beyond direct and indirect mental health supports, young people also need help navigating the social drivers of mental ill-health, including insecure housing, cuts to NDIS supports, lack of access to healthy food, the high cost of living and issues of access and cost for menstrual products, contraception, abortion, gender affirmation procedures and prosthetics – as well as discrimination.

"Reach out to young people in Tas. I can tell you so many people I know need someone to talk to, but they don't know where to go." (17, North)

"We need to create something to educate people more on mental health, disabilities, conditions, etc. So that people can understand others better without judging them." (16, North)

"As someone with mental health issues (anxiety and depression) I believe we need to make mental health support and programs more accessible in small towns not just the big cities." (21, North)

Education and training: A place to learn about yourself

Educational environments are key sites in the development of personal identities as well as the negotiation of community norms around diversity, equity and inclusion. They are the environments in which young people begin to get a sense of their individual interests and future pathways, but also sites where personal identities are explored and negotiated. More broadly, the education system is an important environment for young people to learn about diverse communities and to foster building an accepting and tolerant society. But young people feel that many schools still do not provide a supportive environment, or relevant learnings, for all marginalised identities.

*"[Teach us] the honest truth about Aboriginal genocide. If we learn about the Nazi genocide, we should learn about own national, centuries-long mistakes."
(unattributed)*

"Sex education completely ignores gay sex as a topic, despite some schools still talking about other sexualities and gender identities. It is wrong to push this group to the side and not [tell] them how to stay safe." (19, South)

What's working

Many aspects of Tasmania's educational system already accommodate a degree of personalised education and student diversity. Young people appreciate efforts by Tasmanian schools to provide:

- Diverse educational offerings and learning options to accommodate the interests and lives of young Tasmanians, including vocational training, online learning (particularly helpful for people in rural areas), work placement programs, and practical skills training (the Life Lab program, the Drysdale Institute).
- Measures to make education more affordable, such as the Student Assistance Scheme (STAS).
- Safe spaces in schools for young people who need some time out.

"[Keep] Having flexibility so teachers can alter the lessons to suit each student and cater for their individual learning needs." (17, South)

*"Safe spaces - places where kids can go and navigate school in different ways."
(22, North-West)*

What needs to change

To help young people reach their full educational potential, and for schools to reach their potential of fostering an accepting and tolerant society, young people say that Tasmania's education system should:

- Provide teachers with better training around student diversity, emotional support skills, and different learning styles to help them be more supportive of all young Tasmanians.
- Expand the history and social sciences curriculum to better cover the histories and experiences of Tasmania's Aboriginal people, LGBTQIA+ community, migrant and refugee communities, and people living with disability or neurodivergence.
- Expand language offerings, including AUSLAN, to support a society genuinely accepting of cultural disability and diversity.
- Support young people in developing their personal identities by expanding opportunities for self-expression and respecting their preferred sexualities, gender expression and pronouns.
- Extend opportunities to learn about diversity to parents and school communities.
- Begin pathways support earlier to help young people turn their individual interests into personalised learning trajectories.
- Provide more options for different learning styles and more support for neurodivergent students.

Meanwhile, many young people argue that sex and sexual health education should start earlier, at least at the start of high school, and include information for young people of diverse gender identifications and sexualities, as well as young people living with differing abilities. Worryingly, a number of young people feel that informed consent is still poorly understood or disregarded by many of their peers, and call for greater emphasis on the subject in sex education for all genders and sexualities.

"It is sad that the education system I depend on failed me in such a way and it disappointing that I had to learn off of 10 minute videos on the internet on how to have safe lesbian sex." (14, South)

"Sexual assault support should be early in school. [Sexual assault] starts when we're young, and waiting until the final years of school is too late." (unattributed)

*"[Regarding consent] We should inform and teach men/women and boys/girls in school that it is never ok to touch each other if they don't consent to it."
(16, East Coast)*

How this could happen

Beyond these changes, both the Tasmanian education system and students will benefit from better inclusion of young people's input into curriculum development and how schools are run. Young people suggest that schools create:

- More mechanisms for young people, particularly students in lower years, to have a greater say in the running of their schools, including student reviews of teacher performance.
- More mechanisms for students to provide input on their school's curriculum, including course offerings and course material.

Additionally, to help all young people transition to adulthood on an equal basis, young people suggest that schools create a range of practical subjects to help young Tasmanians navigate home daily living and social life. They say that many young Tasmanians would particularly appreciate learning basic life skills: financial management, how to prepare taxes, cooking, washing, independent living, first aid and mental health first aid. Many would also benefit from learning emotional regulation skills and building personal resilience.

"Mandatory practical skills – cooking, applying for a job, first aid, self-defence, how to do laundry." (unattributed)

"[Create] space in the curriculum for emotional lessons to be taught (not just teachers having to find room for it)." (17, South)

"More student involvement in curriculum development and the ways in which schools are run." (unattributed)



Sport: It's not all about winning

Sport is an area of life with wide-ranging potential benefits, but also potential problematic impacts, for young Tasmanians. Young people feel participation in sport can support physical and mental health, build social and community connections, and provide an affirming environment for diverse identities. However, young people note that participation in sport can also be a complex arena for negotiating identities, with the potential for stigma, discrimination and exclusion. For participation in sport to contribute to diversity, equity and inclusion in Tasmania, young people say that it has to be someplace where all young people are supported to find and participate in the activities that match their preferences and abilities, as well as to accept others into these activities.

"[Sport is about] having a place for young people to bond with others in a healthy stable environment that encourages mental and physical wellbeing." (15, North-West)

"I think that sport clubs need to be more inclusive of people no matter their background or family, their gender or identity." (15, North-West)

What's working

Many young people feel that participation in sport is a key element of wellbeing and is becoming easier thanks to a broader range of non-traditional, and often non-competitive options available to them such as mountain biking and bushwalking. The gradual adoption of unisex uniforms and unisex sporting programs that are welcoming to transgender/non-binary athletes, initiatives to combat discrimination and promote inclusion, and programs to make participation more affordable such as Ticket to Play, are also highly valued by young people.

"[Sport] has been a part of my life throughout my years as a young person, and has been wonderful for my mental and physical health." (23, South)

What needs to change

While these existing initiatives are steps in the right direction, young people say that much more still can be done to ensure that all young Tasmanians not only can find, but also are welcomed in their preferred sporting activities. This will require both dismantling barriers and creating opportunities.

"Less active young people think that sport is not for them. Creating a welcoming environment in sport where people of all abilities can have a go would help change this. Ease of access to less typical sports for those that are less active could make a huge difference as well." (23, South)

How this could happen

To overcome diversity-related barriers to participation in sport, young people call on educators, parents, sporting role models, decision-makers and young people themselves to:

- Bring in more female physical education teachers and coaches, for male, female and unisex teams to encourage young women's participation and combat dismissive attitudes towards female sports participation.
- Move towards universal unisex uniforms and bathrooms.
- Challenge aggressive and hyper-competitive attitudes towards sporting performance, both within sports clubs and among spectators.
- Promote inclusion and acceptance of transgender/non-binary and disabled athletes.
- Make participation in sports more affordable and/or accessible to those on low incomes.
- Institute more background checks for coaches to prevent sexual abuse and bullying.

Dismantling barriers will be only the first step to full inclusion in sports for all young Tasmanians. To create opportunities for young Tasmanians to fully benefit from sporting participation, young people hope for:

- More sporting options for people who are not attracted by or struggle with current offerings, including more non-traditional and non-competitive sports.
- More unisex teams to dismantle gender divides.
- Better pathways into sporting participation for people from different cultural backgrounds, including migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- More sporting facilities in rural areas as well as transport options to access sports in other areas.
- Better funding for participation in sport for people living with disability.
- More recreation areas with fitness equipment.

Ultimately, the prospects for inclusive sport for young people will also depend on changing attitudes and practices at the level of professional sport, calling for equal pay and coverage for all professional athletes and sports, regardless of gender or ability. Young people also believe that sport can play an integral part in adulthood and that participation in recreational sports should not be limited to younger generations.

"More atypical sports being included as options for young people and/or shared and celebrated so that young people can find a sport for them." (23, South)

"Physical education in school has to have more options for people who struggle with the current curriculum." (13, South)-

"Educate people who work with youth in sport on inclusion and discrimination and how to prevent it." (15, North-West)

Work and employment: Getting a foot in the door

Work and employment are cornerstones of life for anyone transitioning through young adulthood. Young people believe that work not only is a vital pillar to financial security and independence, but also has positive social outcomes and connects them to their community and Tasmanian society.

However, employment is also an area of life around which many young people feel anxiety and a sense of inequity - both intergenerational and between more and less privileged individuals and groups. Young Tasmanians can struggle to break into the job market, even in entry-level jobs, for which they do not always feel well or equally prepared. They can be spoken down to and feel undervalued by their employers, co-workers and customers. Many young people worry that employers can take advantage of them because they are less likely to understand their rights as an employee or know how to seek help if they feel discriminated against.

"The employment of young people...allows them to be involved in their community and really get a feel of the world outside of school and home." (16, North-West)

"Young people, especially teenagers, are treated badly by older workers and especially customers...I myself have been working in the same business for three years now and still get treated badly by someone who has only [just] begun." (16, North-West)

What's working

Young people generally agree on the helpful nature of many key initiatives designed to help young people enter and thrive in the workforce. Some also acknowledge the support received from older worker and employers, as well as structural supports. These include:

- Traineeships, including traineeships for marginalised groups.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Entry-level jobs that offer an opportunity for advancement.
- Skills training programs.
- Transport services connecting young people to work and training, such as Area Connect.

"I think the jobs that require little work experience should always be available to people who have not had a job prior to that." (13, South)

"[Keep] caring older people who are willing to support the younger people in the job." (17, North)

What needs to change

Young people nevertheless are generally united in the sentiment that things must change across a wide range of areas for them to have equal opportunities to join and thrive in the world of employment. Some feel that they are not given an equal chance when seeking employment, compared to older Tasmanians and those with more work experience. Others fear that they will never have the chance to transition out of casual employment. And some feel that young Tasmanians from marginalised communities – particularly young people living with disability – face additional barriers to employment that can feel insurmountable.

"[We need to change] the ridiculous experience requirements that many organisations have for their entry level roles - I've seen 5 years of experience required for a certain IT software that has only been out in the market for 3 years, for example." (24, South)

"Pretty much everyone finds working casually stressful. If you're unwell, you can't take a paid sick day. If you become pregnant, you can't receive paid maternity leave. You also don't get many benefits, or paid holidays, even though many companies give people casual employment on a full-time roster." (18, South)



How this could happen

Many young people hope for wide-ranging initiatives designed to make it easier for young people to find a rewarding career at which they can succeed.

To move towards a more diverse workforce, young people call for employers and training organisations to:

- Create more employment opportunities for young people living with disability.
- Seek out diversity training and celebrate diversity in the workplace.
- Create a more diverse range of training options, presented by a more diverse range of trainers.
- Actively support and recognise the contribution of younger workers in the workplace.
- Work to improve communication between older and younger workers.

To give young people an equal shot at entering the workforce and at achieving economic security through work, young people hope that Tasmanian employers will:

- Remove arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to hiring young people, such as requiring a driver's license for a job that doesn't involve driving.
- Drop unreasonable requirements for 'experience'.
- Grant younger job applicants interviews to give them face-to-face experience as well as a fair chance to sell their skills.
- Adopt more options that permit young people to get paid for work experience, such as apprenticeships, over unpaid options such as volunteering and unpaid placements.
- Create more positions specifically aimed at young people who are approaching the adult pay rate age.
- Implement targeted wage rises for younger workers in recognition of education debts and rising housing costs.
- Offer all workers permanent rather than casual working arrangements.

In preparation for entry into the workplace, young people hope for the creation of collaborative initiatives bringing together educational and training institutions, employers and young jobseekers themselves to help all sides find good employment matches. They also want to see more opportunities for workplace visits and for non-exploitative volunteer work experience. Finally, young people would like more support for young Tasmanian entrepreneurs who want to start their own business.

"Most jobs do a great job of hiring young people but when you reach the age of 18+ it gets tougher." (21, South)

"More places to talk to people about what you need to seek employment or places where you can find a job suited for you." (17, North-West)

Transport: On the move into the future

Transport emerges as a key theme in every discussion with young people in Tasmania. As young Tasmanians consistently point out, *"if you can't get somewhere"*, such as to a service, a job, a sports club, an educational opportunity, *"it almost might as well not be there"*. Even for young people who have a license, the rising costs of both fuel and vehicles can make driving their own car unaffordable, unsafe, or both.

With ongoing challenges around accessing affordable and reliable transport in Tasmania, it is not surprising that better public transport is at the top of young people's minds. Young people believe genuine access to public transport to be intimately linked to identities. For many young people – particularly women, LGBTIQ+, and multicultural young people – public transport is not always a safe space. For young people living with disability, even physical access to public or private transport can pose more challenges than current disability standards address. And for young workers and students dependent on public transport, service faults all too frequently are interpreted by others as personal faults.

"I catch a bus every day and the amount of times the bus has been late so I'm unable to get to an appointment, class or even work is not good. This makes you seem unreliable in a work force because you are late all the time." (16, North-West)

"Young people often [can only afford] the cheapest and nastiest cars... while being the most inexperienced [drivers]. So if there is an accident, [their] chances of dying are much bigger compared to the middle class people who can afford a reasonably safe car." (24, South)

What's working

Young people note that public transport is improving in many parts of Tasmania. Many are also enthusiastic about the introduction of ferries on the Derwent, the growing availability of e-scooters, and the gradual improvement of walking and cycling infrastructure. This momentum, many suggest, is as important to keep up as these services and facilities themselves.

"We need to keep our bus services and other transport such as ferries. We need to keep pedestrian- only spaces, and dedicated cycling lanes." (22, South)

"The introduction of electronic scooters, ferry and other methods of transport [is] appreciated, even if there [is] still a lot of work to do." (24, South)

What needs to change

Despite improvements, young people feel that Tasmanian public transport still needs to be made:

- More affordable for young people on low incomes, for whom even concession fares can add up (particularly on non-Metro services).
- More extensive in terms of both timetables and routes, particularly in rural areas.
- Easier to use – for example, through the introduction of QR codes for timetables.
- More reliable and easier to track, so that young people can display reliability and punctuality for their commitments and to their employers.
- More accessible for people with disability, through the introduction of more disability seats on buses, uniform provision of wheelchair-accessible buses and universal design bus shelters, better information, and more attention to the needs of people living with disabilities.
- Safer and more comfortable, for instance through the introduction of bus security guards, security cameras in bus shelters, a 24/7 hotline for people experiencing unsafety on or waiting for public transport, bus seatbelts, cleaner buses, and more considerate drivers.
- More sustainable, by switching to electric buses and other renewable-energy-powered options.

In the area of private transport, young people view carpooling as a great way both to share costs - an economic necessity for young people on low incomes when fuel prices are high - and to reduce the environmental impact of driving individual cars. However, the new graduated drivers licencing system restricts young P plater's ability to carpool or take on designated driver responsibilities, which can be a significant barrier for those living in areas without reliable or available public transport options.

"I would like to see investment put into connecting regional hubs to each other and the larger cities so that youth can access community events and network with a more diverse population than in the often-isolated towns." (22, North)

"Change the ruling around passengers for those on Ps - a bit more flexibility to have passengers during day times perhaps? To encourage carpooling for school and social events... But maybe not night-time where there can be increased risk factors."

(17, South)

How this could happen

Young people believe that public transport can be a venue for the promotion of social change, as well as a better environment. But the future role of the private car in the lives of young Tasmanians is a divisive subject. Some young people hope for the creation of measures that would make private vehicle ownership and use less expensive for young Tasmanians; such as petrol subsidies for young people or a scheme that would give young Tasmanians better access to better cars.

Other young people instead have a vision where private cars are not needed, for a genuine systemic shift away from private fossil-fuelled vehicles towards a renewable and sustainable transport environment. Key to this new environment will be:

- Development of a public transport culture through provision of free and attractive services and promotional campaigns.
- Changes in land use planning and urban design to reduce both the incentive and the need to use the private car.
- Promotion of low-emissions alternatives to the car such as bicycles, e-scooters, and walking through safer cycling and pedestrian facilities as well as increased affordability.
- Where a private vehicle is absolutely necessary, promotion of electric cars.

“Art works on bus mall shelters as well as stories around certain themes (i.e., multicultural bus shelter theme has stories from multicultural citizens, similar concepts for LGBTQIA+, or people with disabilities).” (unattributed)

*“We need to change the way in which we design our towns and cities around cars. We need to reduce the amount of space dedicated to cars and reclaim it for pedestrians and buses. We need to make public transport more accessible, safe and reliable. More buses in rural areas and free public transport will be important. I don't want to remove cars completely, but they shouldn't need to be a staple of most people's commute.”
(22, South)*

Politics: the future of young people

While the overall forum topic and underlying domains did not specifically touch on politics, it was a consistent theme that was consistently raised throughout the forum. It is an area that they are interested in, one they feel that they are left out of, and one that they want to be more informed of through impartial means.

Young people know the importance of politics. They know that participation in the political arena is a key avenue to asserting and defending people's right to diversity as well as to community participation and inclusion. They recognise the power of government and political systems to drive inclusion and equity through policies, programs and leadership. And they know that at the most basic level, political systems recognise and promote diversity simply through more diverse representation.

Unfortunately, many young people feel frustrated in relation to our current political climate. They do not always see enough young people in politics to believe that our political system is reflecting their future needs. Young people do not encounter enough politicians reaching out to hear and incorporate their thoughts and suggestions. They are also not confident that the concerns of diverse groups or that the principle of intergenerational justice are adequately incorporated into decision-making.

Young people appreciate the avenues and opportunities that Tasmania already has for young people to express their views and engage with decision-makers. Specifically, young people praise youth voice opportunities including YNOT initiatives of the Tasmanian Youth Forum and Panel with the Pollies (2019), as well as those offered through state and local government youth advisory groups.

But more youth engagement opportunities are needed to ensure that the diverse viewpoints of all young Tasmanians are incorporated into government policies and programs with the political system. To achieve this, young people want to see the Tasmanian government and community create:

- More educational material and programs about how the Tasmanian and Australian political systems work and how young people can participate before as well as after they are eligible to vote.
- More opportunities for political engagement for young people, for example by creating youth participatory mechanisms such as a Youth Voice to Government or dedicated youth seats in local or state governments.
- Better youth consultation processes for key public services – public transport, for instance.
- Opportunities for young people of all ages to learn and exercise leadership, including youth leadership programs and peer-led programs.

*"Youth matter – young voices can create change and make society more progressive."
(unattributed)*

"Events that give me (as a young person) a chance to speak my voice, empower us and make me feel like I belong, I'm valued, and my contributions matter." (unattributed)

Conclusion

Young people acknowledge that there has been considerable progression regarding diversity, equity and inclusion in Tasmania, but more clearly needs to be done. Unfortunately, many feel that we still have a way to go before all people, regardless of age, background or culture, can feel safe, valued and accepted in our communities.

This report has highlighted how young people view their lives and the world around them through the lenses of diversity, equity and inclusion – and the importance they place on having these issues addressed. Many young people feel unprepared and are seeking education and support to help navigate these topics, particularly as they intersect with various aspects of their lives such as education, employment, health and wellbeing and transport.

Young people need and want to feel safe in Tasmania. They are seeking out safe and inclusive spaces to connect with diverse young people, find support in their communities and allies, and to access appropriate services that they need – when they need them. Young people have a vision for a more tolerant, diverse and accepting society in Tasmania, and see individual expression, diverse representation and recognition of vulnerable and marginalised communities as ways to achieve this.

Lastly, young people need to see themselves reflected and included in decision-making processes with community and all levels of government. Young people want meaningful opportunities to inform legislation, policy, projects and initiatives that impact them, but don't always feel that their opinions are heard or valued. The recognition of '*a positive sense of culture and identity*' in the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (2021) is an important first-step, and young people are eager to have their voices heard regarding diversity, equity and inclusion in Tasmania.

Insights from a young person: *The Freight Train*, Archie, 16

We all see the graph,
 & we all say that
Something must be done.

But when I turn to men in their big suits;
 They always turn the other way,
making hollow claims, like:
 We strive to be net 0 by the year 2050.

But it's too little,
 Too late.
The freight train doesn't stop for one person.

When I see the devastation in my backyard,
 & listen to the men in their high chairs,
I hear
 This is a once in a lifetime event.

Is a lifetime every 5 years now?
Does nobody see what I see?
The freight train doesn't stop for one person.

No-one seems to notice that the world is at stake,
 Everything is a power trip,
The focus is always
 The economy,
 Unemployment,
 The upward line on the share market,
 Getting re-elected

They don't realise that if the world turns into a fiery hell-hole;
No-one *cares* how your healthcare was,
Or your debt,
Or whether you won the war.

All they care about
Is that you failed to save our race.
The freight train doesn't stop for one person.

Every time I watch the news
& see images of
Bushfires in Batemans Bay,
Floods in Lismore,
Coral bleaching on the Reef,
& they announce another useless *Disaster Package*
Claiming to *support the affected communities*.

But it's no use,
They're just giving money out, saying:
Rebuild your house, it'll all be ok
Then it all gets decimated in next year's fires
The freight train doesn't stop for one person.

But hopelessness doesn't help anyone;
Curling into a ball only helps those who don't care.

We must show that we *all* care
For the freight train will stop for everyone.

Archie, 16 (South)
Tasmanian Youth Forum 2022
Participant



**Tasmanian Youth Forum 2022
'I am ME' Report**

Youth Network of Tasmania

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