Becoming an adult: the experience of young Tasmanians today

A Discussion Paper to guide action *- for young people (plain text)*

# What’s it about?

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) invites you to share your thoughts, ideas and suggestions about how young Tasmanians 18-25 years can be better supported as they transition to adulthood and independence.

This work builds on what we learnt through academic research and heard from young people and those working with young people in government and community services.

Your feedback will help us to develop a whole-of-government Action Plan for young people that will work alongside the Tasmanian Government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. You are also welcome to read and respond to the full discussion paper designed for government and community services; which you can find at [www.ynot.org.au](http://www.ynot.org.au).

You do not need to answer every question, only those you wish to respond to.

Questions? Contact YNOT at jo@ynot.org.au or 0488 235 511.

# What we learnt about the pathway to adulthood…

The pathway to adulthood looks different for each young person, influenced by their personal interests, aspirations, resources and support networks.

While turning 18 can be an exciting time in a young person’s life, many told us that they don’t feel prepared for the responsibilities and expectations that come with adult-life.

Our research found that ‘adulthood’ doesn’t happen overnight - it’s gradually achieved as they start to navigate adult life and set up the stable structures needed to be independent. ‘Adulthood’ takes practice and a fair amount of trial and error to get it right, and having the right supports at the right time can make a big difference.

Young people told us they are an adult when they…

* turn 18 and legally become an ‘adult’.
* mature, both socially and emotionally, and are responsible and accountable.
* have the resources, knowledge and skills to live independently.
* have the confidence and ability to make informed decisions.
* have enough money to get by and can afford the essentials like housing, food, healthcare and transport.
* have finished school and entered the workforce.
* don’t have to depend on their parents or family for ongoing support.

Our research and consultations with young people revealed common areas young people navigate during their transition to adulthood…

## Moving out of home and living daily life independently

Young people told us about the importance of having a space to call ‘home’, the challenges they experienced in the private housing market, and the life skills they needed to take care of themselves day to day. Young people want support to help them navigate the legal and practical complexities of the private housing/rental market, address discrimination towards young renters so that they can more readily access private housing, and programs to acquire basic life skills including cooking, cleaning, home maintenance and budgeting.

**Question 1:** What would help young adults to transition out of the family home into independent living?

## Moving into financial independence

Young people shared their experiences navigating income support options and cost of living pressures, financial literacy and achieving financial stability. Young people want greater consideration from employers, businesses, government and community regarding the financial constraints they experience.

**Question 2.** What would help young adults to become financially independent and manage their finances well?

## Moving from school into the workforce

This included challenges that young people faced while still in education or training, applying for jobs, succeeding in the workplace, and making enough money to get by. Young people want more programs to connect young people with employers in their area, and to broaden their horizons to the wider world of employment opportunity in Tasmania and nationally. Importantly, young people want more help in learning how to write a resume or cover letter, obtain useful credentials, apply for a tax file number or open a superannuation account.

**Question 3.** How can young adults be better prepared to move from school to work?

**Question 4**. How can workplaces better support young employees?

## Moving about and within their communities

Involves having private and public transport options that allow young people to access school, work, services, and social and recreational activities. Young people called for more frequent, reliable and extensive bus services, more free driving lessons and driver mentor programs.

**Question 5.** What could be done to improve transportation options for young adults?

# Challenges with the adult service system

## Moving into and accessing the adult service system

Young people shared the challenges they experience with the sudden change from adolescent and youth services to the adult service system – particularly in health and social services. There is an expectation that young people understand how the service system works, know what supports are available to them, and that they have the resources and ability to access support. Young people want greater support during the process of transitioning from child, adolescent and family services to adult services, as well as navigating the adult service system itself.

**Question 6.** What would make the transition easier from services designed for children and young people to those designed for adults?

## Designing services *for* young adults

While services may be available for young adults, their design often means they are not as accessible as they need to be. Services can be costly and have limited opening hours, and may not fully understand the challenges or opportunities facing young adults at this time of life. There are also barriers to getting to appointments at all, particularly in rural areas, driven by limited transport options, long wait-lists and confusing referral processes.

Young adults need a service system that supports their overall health and wellbeing, one that is local, connected, understands their challenges and doesn’t assume their ability – services that meet young adults ‘where they’re at’ as they journey to adulthood.

**Question 7.** How can services be better designed for the needs of young adults?

## Navigating (finding) services

It can be difficult for young adults to know what services are available and which one best suits their needs. Navigating the transition from the youth into the adult service system is often daunting – entering the adult service system places responsibility squarely onto the individual who, in many cases, is not yet be ready for it. This period of transition also brings many young people face-to-face with government bureaucracy for the first time, an often confusing and frustrating experience.

Young adults need to know where to go and what to do in this confusion. They need a better appreciation of the service ‘system’ so they can increase their ability to solve problems, gather the resources, and take responsibility for the issues before them.

**Question 8.** What could help young adults to better navigate the adult service system?

## Communication

Young adults are more connected than ever through digital technology, but struggle to access appropriate, reliable and timely information. There is currently no single, reputable, accessible information source – information is spread across various websites, social media and broader directories designed for adults with familiarity of the service system.

Young adults often hear about opportunities or supports too late, and for many, not at all. It’s even harder when young adults don’t know what they don’t know - they often don’t know the right questions to ask or information to look for, and funding cycles mean that programs come and go. Service providers also lack resources and sometimes knowledge, to effectively communicate with young people, meaning young people don’t find out about them.

Communication with young adults needs to be varied and age-appropriate – posters, banners and flyers where young adults hang out can supplement and link to online information and avoid digital exclusion. Anyone who supports a young adult – parents, teachers, social workers, youth workers, sport coaches, employers – also plays a crucial role in supporting access to the right information at the right time.

**Question 9.** What would a centralised, age-appropriate communication platform for young adults look like?

# References

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