

South East Youth Engagement Project Consultation Report

April 2024

The South East Youth
Engagement Project is an
initiative of



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 Elders past and present.

Prepared 18 April 2024

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About YNOT

The Youth Network of Tasmania (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 is for a Tasmania where all young people are valued and can achieve anything.

Our Purpose is to drive positive change with young people and the youth sector in Tasmania.

Acknowledgements

YNOT would like to thank the young people, community and service providers who participated in this consultation process. We also acknowledge and thank the educators, youth service providers, volunteers, and parents and guardians who supported young people to participate.

This project was delivered in consultation with our South East Youth Engagement Project Youth Advisory Group (YAG) who helped inform the consultation approach, marketing and promotional material, online survey, workshop activities and resources, and report for young people. Thank you to Heidi (19), Kane (15), Pippin (13), Matilda (14), Matilda (15), Payton (13), Sophie (12), Josh (14) and Sebastian (18) for their passion and dedication helping shape a successful project.

The South East Youth Engagement Project was funded by the Tasmanian Government, Tasmanian Community Fund.

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Executive Summary

What would make the South East a better place for young people to live?

This is the question that was posed to young people aged 12-19 years and service providers in the Glamorgan-Spring Bay, Sorell and Tasman Local Government Areas (LGAs) between January and March 2024. Over 245 young people and 34 organisations told us what they wanted to see:

- Equitable opportunities that support participation and engagement of all young people.
- Affordable, reliable and safe transport options that suit their needs.
- Adults actively engaging young people in their communities.
- Social and recreational opportunities just for young people.
- Programs that identify and build on young people's strengths, gives them self-agency and treats them with respect.
- Opportunities for young people to build their confidence and self-esteem, and to build positive relationships with adults and peers.
- Safe spaces in their community for them after school and on weekends.
- A feeling of belonging and value in their local communities.
- More opportunities in culture, arts and music.
- Programs that focus on building their capacity and preparedness for entering the workforce and becoming independent.

So what is getting in the way?

Transport. No or limited public transport options available after school for most areas. Young people are heavily reliant on private transport options to get to events outside of normal commitments (school, work and extra-curricular activities).

Cost to participate. Young people often have limited income to afford costs associated with accessing private services, transport or fees to participate in club sports and activities.

Lack of existing youth engagement. Beyond sporting clubs and associations, there are few ongoing community youth engagement opportunities, particularly in rural areas. Many young people have not experienced participating in organised youth events or activities in their local communities.

Confidence and relationships. Young people are hesitant to participate in new opportunities without the support of a trusted adult or friend to encourage them.

Communication challenges. Information is often spread by word of mouth and it can take a significant amount of time for community to become aware of opportunities despite social media, email communications and posters in common public spaces.

Limited local services. Young people have limited access to local, youth targeted services. Young people lacking support networks, access to private transport, have individual vulnerabilities, or are disengaged (or at risk of being disengaged) from education, training and employment find getting support insurmountable.

Negative community perceptions towards ‘youth’. Concerns for addressing youth crime and antisocial behaviour have overshadowed positive contributions and visibility of young people in their communities.

Safety in public spaces. Young people often don’t feel safe in public areas like local parks, skate parks, and public bus stops due to concerns (both perceived and actual) of antisocial behaviours and alcohol, drug and vaping use by their peers – with many avoiding these spaces altogether.

Organisations working in silos. Organisations are working with limited resources and lack mechanisms to collaborate effectively and respond to the needs of young people.

So what needs to happen?

Youth hubs. Youth-centred facilities that provide young people with safe spaces, social and recreational opportunities, outreach services and youth programs.

Safe spaces and places in the community and drop in programs. Indoor and outdoor spaces and places where young people feel safe to socialise and recreate after school, on weekends and during holidays.

Better transport. Transport services that take young people when and where they need to go, and support to get their driver’s licence.

A voice to government and decision-makers. Formal mechanisms for young people to have a say on issues and matters that impact their lives, and that builds their capacity to participate in decision-making processes.

Youth-targeted programs. Delivered in and outside of school, young people want programs designed with and for young people that support them to:

- Enter the workforce – building knowledge and skills such as job readiness, financial literacy and leadership.
- Socialise and recreate – activities and programs that help them explore their passions, try new things, build confidence, independence, meet new people and ‘let off steam’.
- Engage with community – offering youth development opportunities for young people to build their knowledge, skills and capacity to participate in community projects, events and decision-making.
- Build positive relationships – peer support groups, networking groups, mentoring and coaching for young people to build supportive, positive relationships.
- Find help when they need it – increase their knowledge and awareness of supports and services available to them, and know where they can go to for help if they need it.

Better communication. Finding ways to better advertise and promote opportunities to young people and community.

Breaking down silos and coordinating efforts. Bringing government, service providers, community and young people together to work collaboratively, share resources, better respond to emerging needs and advocate for young people in the South East.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Co-design initiatives with young people.

Community and Government must work collaboratively with young people to design, implement and evaluate policies, programs, and services designed for them. Participation mechanisms must be meaningful and purposeful, empower young people, build trust and build capacity to engage in decision-making processes. Co-designing initiatives with young people will ensure that initiatives are relevant and meet their needs, creating more inclusive, responsive and sustainable policies, programs, and services for young people.

Recommendation 2: Provide affordable, reliable and appropriate transport that meets their needs.

Transport is essential for young people to access school, work, essential services, and social and recreational opportunities, and contributes towards their overall wellbeing and socioeconomic participation. Explore opportunities to better utilise existing community and public transport, and invest in youth-targeted transport services that allow young people to readily move about within and between their communities.

Recommendation 3: Collective Impact - a strategic and collaborative approach to youth participation and engagement.

Establish and adequately resource an independent Collective Impact model for the South East. The model should offer a shared vision for young people in the South East, address challenges posed through siloed organisations and resource constraints, and foster collaboration between State Government, Local Government, community organisations, outreach services and young people.

A collective impact approach will allow services to better respond to emerging needs, avoid duplication of effort, mobilise and promote resource sharing, and maximise the impact of limited available resources. Embed shared measurement and evaluation frameworks to monitor and evaluate progress, and collectively advocate for improved outcomes for young people.

Recommendation 4: Invest in safe spaces and places for young people.

Explore opportunities for young people to meet in safe, accessible spaces in the community after school and on weekends. Young people want to see a dedicated, holistic drop-in Youth Hub established in Sorell that can support their wellbeing and social connection, participate in recreational and youth development programs, access outreach services and find help when they need it.

Recommendation 5: Invest in youth development officers and youth workers.

Invest in appropriately trained, skilled youth workers and youth development officers to facilitate and support the development of youth-targeted programs and opportunities. These roles should work collaboratively with local government, schools and local youth services, and support holistic development and wellbeing of young people. Importantly, they will be crucial in fostering positive engagement and visibility of young people with community, empower them to participate in decision-making processes, and can advocate to government and community on their behalf.

Recommendation 6. Develop targeted youth-focused programs for young people.

Work with young people to create a range of opportunities for young people aged 12-19 years to socialise and recreate, explore their talents and passions, support learning and workforce readiness, respond to their individual needs, and build their capacity and confidence to actively participate in school, work and community. Programs must be accessible to all young people, address known barriers to participation and engagement, and offer services available to them after school, on weekends and during school holidays.

Recommendation 7. Invest in holistic, therapeutic, strengths-based responses for young people who are vulnerable, disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged.

With growing concerns of antisocial behaviour and disengagement in the region, government must invest in strategies that address the underlying issues and promote long-term positive outcomes for young people and community. Initiatives must prioritise mental and emotional wellbeing, use a trauma informed approach, be strengths-based and age-appropriate. Emphasis should also be placed on building resilience and confidence, responding to individual needs, and fostering positive relationships. Young people can be empowered to overcome their challenges, and thrive given the right interventions at the right time with the right approach.

Recommendation 8. Develop a targeted communication and information sharing platform for young people and other stakeholders.

Develop a shared information and communication platform for young people to find out about different social and recreational opportunities, local services and supports, and resources and information that is relevant to them.

Recommendation 9. Establish formal mechanisms for young people to engage with Local Government and decision-makers.

Sorell, Glamorgan-Spring Bay and Tasman Councils must establish meaningful and ongoing mechanisms for youth participation. Councils should invest in a dedicated resource, such as a youth development officer, to facilitate youth and community engagement. Mechanisms to support youth participation could include dedicated Youth Advisory Groups, Youth Councils, Youth Mayors, and youth town hall meetings.

Background and project scope

The Sorell Council engaged the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) to undertake an extensive consultation with young people aged 12-19 years living in the South East region. Consultation feedback would be used to inform the development of a project that supports youth engagement in the South East, and aims to increase participation of young people in their local communities. The consultation would:

- Target young people 12-19 years and relevant stakeholders.
- Help understand the experiences and needs of young people living in the South East.
- Identify the gaps and priority areas impacting the engagement and participation of young people in their local communities.
- Target eight (8) locations: Bicheno, Swansea, Triabunna/Orford, Sorell, Southern Beaches, Primrose Sands, Dunalley and Nubeena.

Feedback from the consultation would be used to provide recommendations to inform future programs, services and/or activities design to address youth engagement and improve participation of young people in their local communities.

Consultation approach

The consultation approach was developed in collaboration with Sorell Council. This included an environmental scan of existing youth services and programs and engagement of relevant stakeholders working with young people such as schools, local councils, neighbourhood houses, sporting clubs and youth groups.

Consultation mechanisms were developed based on YNOT's expertise and experience in youth consultation, and informed by the project's Youth Advisory Group (YAG) and key stakeholders in the South East.

The consultation was framed around the following questions:

Question	Purpose
What do you think young people 12-19 years like about living in the South East and why?	Capture experiences and assets that connect or support them in their community to identify what already exists and can be leveraged.
What do you think is the biggest issue facing young people 12-19 years in the South East and why?	Identify the gaps and needs.
What do you think would make the South East a better place for young people 12-19 years to live and why?	Identify and explore the solutions to improve engagement and participation.

Demographic information of young people was recorded including their age, suburb and gender, along with their email address to share project findings and to enter an incentives prize draw.

Early feedback identified several key barriers to youth participation, including limited transport, consultation fatigue, participation anxiety and a lack of formal youth networks in the region to support and encourage participation. It was determined that workshops delivered in partnership with stakeholders would address some existing barriers to participation by meeting young people 'where they already are'. This approach minimised any additional costs or supports needed to participate and allowed young people to meet in a safe and trusted environment with adults known to them and their families.

The following consultation mechanisms were used:

- Online Survey: open for four (4) weeks between February and March 2024. This method was used to capture general feedback from young people and community. Feedback cards were made available to organisations working with young people to elicit responses from those who may be experiencing disengagement, or digital and/or literacy exclusion.
- Youth Workshops: held throughout February and March 2024. Workshops were delivered in partnership with organisations working directly with young people, and sought to engage people from different communities and population groups such as sporting clubs, religious groups, after school drop in programs, and secondary schools. An open, online workshop was offered for people who were not engaged in the identified institutions, clubs or programs.
- Stakeholder Workshops and individual interviews: held between January and March 2024 to capture feedback and perspectives from service providers, community organisations and volunteers working with young people.

Marketing, promotion and incentives

Participation in the project was voluntary. Information about the consultation process, including the online survey link and incentives prize draw, were made publicly available on the YNOT website at www.ynot.org.au, and promoted through YNOT's social media and member mailing lists. Information was also promoted through the Sorell Council Service Provider Network, City of Hobart Youth Action Priorities (YAP) and East Coast Regional Development Organisation (ERDO). A project statement and consent form were developed and made available to workshop participants and on request.

Posters and feedback cards were made available to stakeholders during the consultation period, with posters displayed in common community areas including nearby bus stops, takeaway stores, public toilets and public notice boards.

Youth participation was incentivised with a total prize pool of \$2,000 in prizes, including 10 x \$50 e-gift vouchers (GiftPay Express) and up to \$1,500 towards an electronic device (computer, tablet and/or mobile phone) to support learning and community participation. Organisations who partnered with YNOT to deliver workshops were provided group incentives, including light refreshments, activities and/or \$150 group gift vouchers in recognition of their time and contributions to the project. Prize winners were drawn through random selection by the youth advisory group and listed on the YNOT website www.ynot.org.au.

Data collection, analysis and reporting

Privacy and confidentiality of participants were a priority, given the potential for individuals to be identified from basic demographic information as a result of living in small communities. Some young people chose not to share personal details, while some organisations chose to provide deidentified group demographic information.

To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants, a general demographic overview has been included in this report with direct quotes de-identified.

Furthermore, several groups reported issues with gaining parental consent to participate, requesting that individual demographic information was not collected for those participants.

Feedback obtained throughout the consultation was analysed to identify key themes and to capture what is already working well, what needs to change and what could be created to improve youth participation and engagement in the South East.

Project Limitations

It should be noted that there are several limitations to this consultation approach.

Participant diversity: Efforts were made to consult with disengaged and vulnerable young people; however, a different engagement approach is required to elicit meaningful feedback. This approach would involve working with service providers and trusted individuals who have an established relationship.

Duplication of data: Some individuals participated in both the survey and workshops. Due to data collection limitations, we cannot confidently identify the number of potential duplicate participants and have chosen to report the number of survey responses and workshop participants separately.

Representation: Young people aged 20-25 years were excluded from this consultation. While the project scope was clearly defined at 12-19 years to identify barriers to youth participation and engagement, young people are largely defined as 12-25 years of age.

Privacy and confidentiality – limitations to data collection of demographic information impacted the ability to further break down data and explore location, age or gender-specific trends.

Participation

Youth workshops

YNOT consulted with 245 young people aged 12-19 years. Of these, 44% identified as female/woman and 56% identified as male/man. The median age of participants was 15 years, with 73% aged between 12-15 years and 27% aged 16-19 years (Fig 1).

Participants were identified by their Local Government Area (LGA), with 34% living in Sorell, 28% in Tasman, 27% in Glamorgan-Spring Bay, and 11% from other LGAs including Clarence, Hobart, Southern Midlands and Launceston. In total, 51 different suburbs were identified (Fig 2).

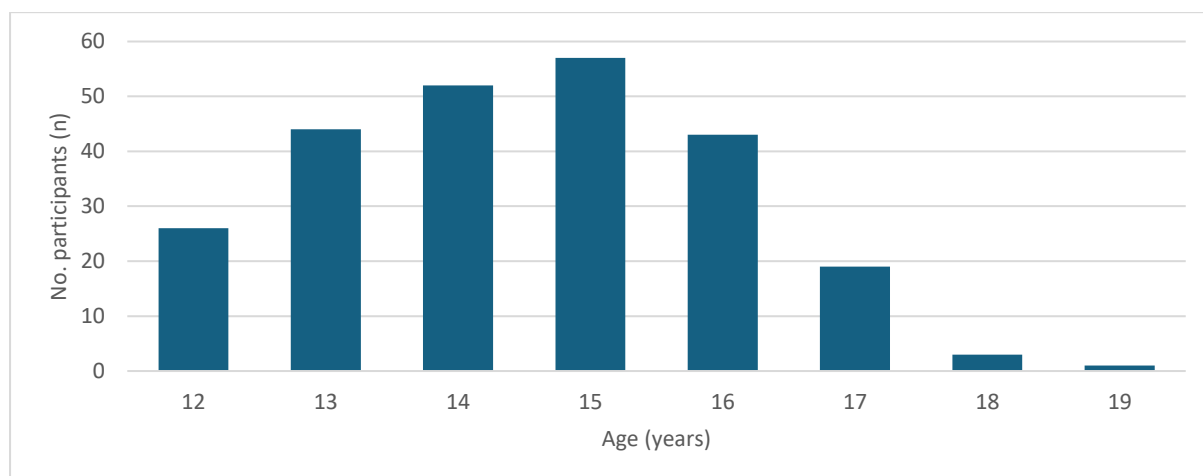


Figure 1. Youth workshop participant demographics by age (N=245).

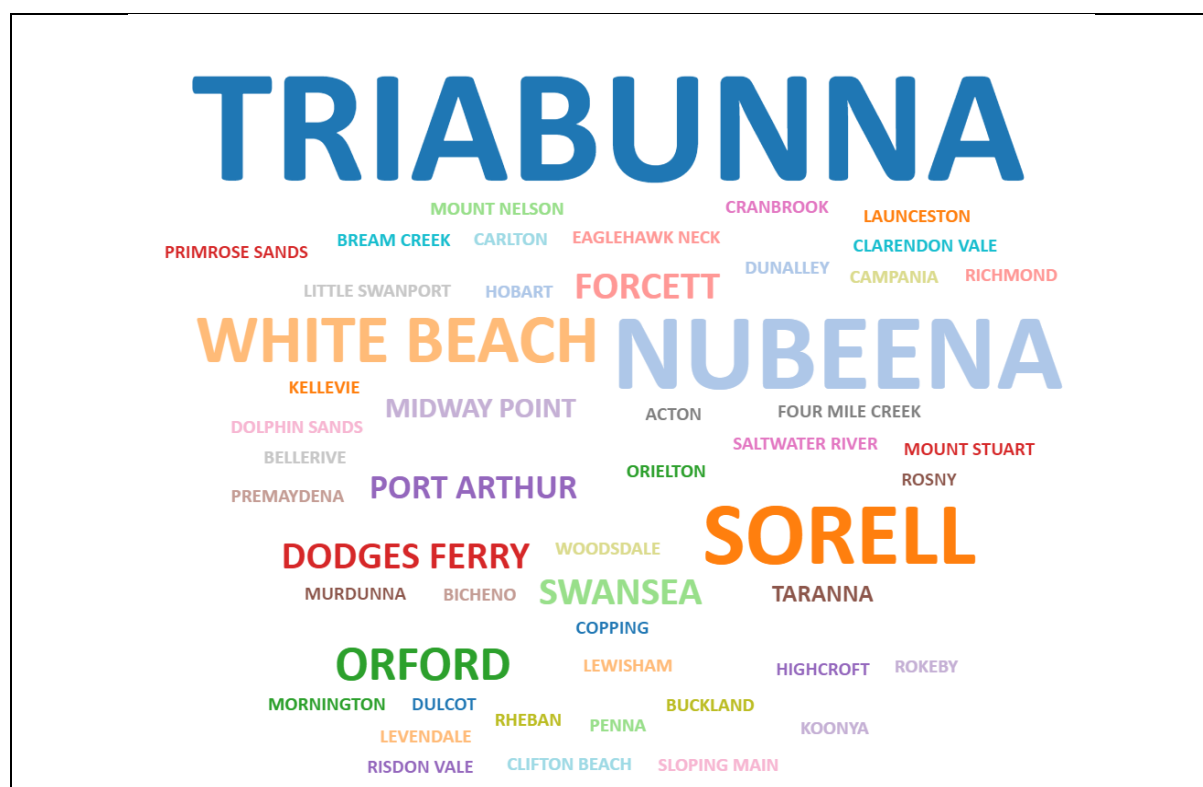


Figure 2. Suburbs reported by youth workshop participants. Text size indicates a higher proportion of respondents from those suburbs.

Youth survey

YNOT received 71 youth survey responses, collected through the online survey and written feedback cards. From this, 51% identified as female/woman, 45% as male/man and 3% identified as non-binary/other or chose not to disclose. The median age of survey respondents was 14 years, with 76% aged 12-15 years and 24% aged 16-19 years. Of these, 36% were from the Glamorgan-Spring Bay LGA, 45% from Sorell LGA and 19% were from other LGAs including Clarence, Hobart, Kingborough and Southern Midlands. No responses were received from the Tasman LGA.

Feedback from service providers and community

Feedback from adult members in the community throughout the youth engagement activities was collected and incorporated into the project findings.

In total, 34 organisations participated in the consultation process:

- Anglicare Tasmania (C)
- Bendigo Bank South East Suns Netball Association | SENA Suns (B)
- Bicheno Surf Life Saving Club (A, B)
- Break O'Day Employment Connect (C, D)
- Business & Employment South East Tasmania (BEST) (A, B, C)
- CoHealth (Tasmania)
- Colony47 (C)
- Copping Community Centre | SMS Youth
- Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House Inc. (Nubeena) (A, B)
- Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House Inc. (Dunalley) (A, E)
- East Coast Crusaders PCYC (A)
- Glamorgan Spring-Bay Council (B, D)
- Indie School Sorell (B)
- Impact Communities | Workskills (D)
- Libraries Tasmania (B, C)
- Midway Point Neighbourhood House (A, E)
- Mission Australia (C)
- National Disability and Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (C)
- Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People TAS (C)
- Okines Community House (A)
- Reclink Australia (B)
- Sorell Council (A, C, D)
- Sorell Cricket Club Inc. (B)
- Sorell School (A, B)
- South East Tasmania Salvation Army | Youth Matters (B, C, D)
- Sweep Consulting (A)
- Tasman Council (A, B)
- Tasman District School (A, B)
- Tasmanian Association of Police & Community Youth Club Inc. | PCYC Tasmania (A, B)
- Tasmanian Fire Service | Volunteer Fire Brigade (C)
- Triabunna District School (A, B, D)
- Triabunna Suicide Prevention Network (A)
- The Village, Triabunna (A, D)
- Youth With a Mission (B, C)

Legend

A: Interview/conversation via phone, in person or online, or via email.

B: Additional feedback provided during youth workshop activity.

C: Attended Sorell Stakeholder Workshop Thursday 14/4/24.

D: Feedback gained through regional network groups.

E: Collected written responses via feedback cards.

Summary of Project engagement activities and participant demographics.

Group	Date	No. participants	Demographic descriptor / commentary
Project Youth Advisory Group (YAG)	January – April	9	Participants from Sorell LGA aged between 12-19 years.
Sorell Cricket Club Inc. (Sporting Club)	Tuesday 20/2/24	17	Majority male participants aged 14-16 years from Sorell and surrounding suburbs (incl. Midway Point, Forcett and Southern Beaches) and Southern Midlands LGA.
Bicheno Surf Life Club (Sporting Club)	Sunday 25/2/24	5	Ages 14-16, participants from Bicheno and surrounding suburbs, noted that several individuals were boarding in Launceston or Hobart for school, returning on weekends/holiday breaks.
SENA Suns (Sporting Club)	Tuesday 27/2/24	7	Female participants aged 11-15 years from Sorell, Midway Point and Dodges Ferry, and Clarence LGA.
Triabunna District School	Monday 4/3/24	65	Five workshops run in total with grades 7-12. Participants aged between 12 and 17 from Triabunna, Orford, Buckland Swansea and Bicheno, and Southern Midlands LGA.
Indie School Sorell	Thursday 7/3/24	28	Whole school workshop with junior and senior grades aged 14-17. Participants from Sorell, Midway Point, Southern Beaches and Dunalley, and Clarence and Hobart LGAs.
SMS Youth Copping Community Care (Youth program)	Saturday 9/3/24	21	Participants aged 12-18 years from Southern Beaches, Forcett, Dunalley and Tasman Peninsula, and Clarence LGA. Group consists of a high proportion of local homeschool students.
Online Workshop	Wednesday 13/3/24	N/A	Open workshop promoted with online survey, cancelled due to limited registrations.
Sorell Service Provider Stakeholder Workshop	Thursday 14/3/24	24	Open workshop promoted to young people, local secondary schools and service providers. Workshop included a presentation of early consultation findings from young people, feedback from service providers, and activities to explore barriers and solutions.
Tasman District School & Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House	Wednesday 13/3/24	55	Three workshop sessions with grades 7-11. Participants aged 12-16 years predominately from Nubeena, Port Arthur and White Beach, and included people as far as Primrose Sands, Forcett and Dunalley.

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Group	Date	No. participants	Demographic descriptor / commentary
Sorell School	Tuesday 19/3/24	23	Workshop held with Sorell Trade Training Centre: Pathways to Work, Construction and Electrical students. Male participants from Sorell, Midway Point, Southern Beaches and Murdunna, and included a number of participants from Clarence City Council and Southern Midlands LGAs.
Youth Matters South East Salvation Army & Youth With a Mission	Thursday 21/3/24	15	After school drop in program predominately attended by Sorell School students. Participants aged 12-17 years from Sorell, Midway Point, Southern Beaches, and Orielton, and Clarence LGA.
Small Town Market Okines Community House	Sunday 24/3/24	N/A	Open community event with members of public from surrounding and external suburbs. Event organisers estimated approximately 1000 people in attendance, however it was observed that the majority of attendees were older individuals or families attending with younger children. YAG members attended to support activities with children and young people, and to encourage eligible young people to complete the online survey or feedback forms. Feedback was incorporated into the survey results.
Online Survey	19/2/24 – 25/3/24	78 (71 x youth, 7 x adult)	Responses received from young people aged 12-19 years, across all three targeted LGAs, as well as Hobart, Clarence, Kingborough and Southern Midlands LGA.

What young people like about the South East

Key Finding 1: Young people with strong support networks and access to local recreational opportunities feel a greater sense of connection to the South East.

Young people were asked to reflect on what they liked about the South East, the services and supports they use, and the things they enjoy and would like to see more of. This is what young people had to say...

Nature and the environment. Young people appreciated the natural wilderness, stunning landscapes, local beaches and close proximity to nature. These areas were also important locations for young people to participate in many nature/adventure-based activities including mountain bike riding, bushwalking, fishing, shooting and swimming.

“The opportunity to go surfing whenever plus fishing and awesome seafood”. Young person

“Beaches, lifestyle, growing up with our friends & family around us.” Young person

Friends, family and the close-knit community. Young people regarded their social groups and connections to family, friends and the community as an important aspect for them. However, young people generally reported a sense of belonging by participating in local sporting clubs and associations, and for those who had strong family support and close friends.

Slow, relaxed pace of life. Young people highly value the quieter and more relaxed lifestyle that comes from living in the area. The lack of infrastructure, activities and opportunities in rural areas was viewed as an acceptable trade off by those who were able to easily access what they need in Hobart or other major nearby towns.

“I think 12–19-year-olds would like to live here because of all the nice beaches and it’s not as busy as Hobart.” Young person

Community assets. Young people often mentioned the local parks, skate parks and wharf, jetties and marinas as important places for them to hang out after school and on weekends. These spaces offered young people opportunities for exercise, recreation and socialising with friends.

Local Sports and Sporting Infrastructure. The South East Sporting Complex was highly regarded by young people who used it, and had become a hub for the sporting community across the region and other surrounding areas. Beyond the Complex, young people shared their appreciation for smaller school and club sporting opportunities including golf, horse riding, surf life-saving, local gyms, netball, cricket, soccer and bike riding.

Existing youth programs. Two open access (non-secular) youth programs were identified during consultations: *Youth Matters* an afterschool drop-in program delivered by South East Salvation Army and Youth With A Mission in Sorell, and an afterschool drop-in program facilitated by the Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House in Nubeena. Young people who participated in these activities found them to be highly beneficial, providing a safe space to wait for the bus home, meet new people, let off steam, and find help from a trusted adult if they needed it. The Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House recently acquired two mini buses, providing young people with free, safe transport to get home at the end of the program.

People with the right approach. Often young people spoke fondly of a particular person in their community, such as a youth worker, teacher, sports coach or volunteer. These adults had made a positive and lasting impact on the young people that they worked with. When asked why these people were special to them, young people said they:

- Built trust and relationships over a long period of time, young people said that they felt there was a level of trust and mutual respect.
- Were treated as an individual with individual needs, interests and passions, and not as a child who 'needs to be told what to do'.
- Have a fun, empathetic and caring personality.
- Listen to their concerns and take them seriously, and can help them think of ways to problem-solve or connect them to other services that can help.
- Would join in new opportunities or activities with their encouragement and support.

But many did not feel the same...

Many young people did not feel a strong connection to place, stating that the region had little to offer them other than a place where they go to school, work or home to live in. This feeling was reiterated by young people who saw themselves as highly engaged, socially connected and supported in the community - who were quick to point out that some of the region's strengths equally posed unique challenges for them to overcome.

Young people often spoke of boredom, social and geographic isolation, a lack of personal agency and problems with transport as the main barriers preventing them from actively participating in school, work and their community.

"I think that a lot of the community consists of an older age group, and this really shows through when you look at the social events and activities available. I find that this often leads people of our age group to 'less ideal' forms of entertainment (such as alcohol, drugs, vandalism, etc). I believe that if there were more social groups and events targeted toward our age group, this would strengthen a sense of community within the youth themselves." Young person

Needs and barriers to youth participation and engagement in the South East

Transport

Key Finding 2: Access to affordable, reliable and appropriate transport makes or breaks a young person's ability to participate.

Across the region, transport was identified as a significant barrier to participation and engagement, with many struggling to access affordable, reliable and appropriate transport. The majority of young people are highly reliant on transport support until they have the ability and/or means to obtain a driver's licence and personal vehicle. When young people need to travel outside of their immediate suburb, they are almost completely reliant on a parent, family member, friend's parents, a friend with a licence or public transport.

Three common transport themes include:

- **Travel within their community:** often active transport options using a push bike, scooter or walking to access local businesses, supermarkets, takeaway shops, visit family and friends who live nearby and going to public spaces such as parks, skate parks, beaches and wharf/jetties.
- **Travel between communities:** more reliant on private and public transportation to access businesses or services not offered in their suburb, visit family and friends, and to access social and recreational opportunities – typically sporting clubs and activities.
- **Travel outside of the region:** public and private transport needs to get young people to Hobart, Rosny, St Helens and Launceston to access services, social support networks and other social and recreational opportunities not offered locally.

Transport barriers were reiterated by service providers and educators across the region, stating that it significantly limits young people's options to find and keep work, and participate in local sports and community activities.

The issues with transport...

Public transport is available, albeit very limited particularly for young people living outside Sorell. Young people with regular and reliable private transport options reported fewer barriers to participation, although they wished that they weren't reliant on others to get about. Those with access to a personal vehicle and driver mentor (typically a parent or other adult family member) were excited to get their licence and experience greater independence.

However, those without access to a personal vehicle or parent/guardian with the ability or capacity to transport them reported finding themselves 'stuck' – waiting around for buses in Sorell or on the sides of highways and major roads, or simply at home after school and on weekends.

Young people said that transport simply isn't meeting their needs. Common issues were:

- **Buses not going where young people need to go or when they need to be there.** The majority of public transport options are designed to support participation at school and 9AM-5PM work commitments, not to connect them to social and recreational opportunities after school and on weekends.
- **Limited public transport options.** Young people travelling to Hobart or Launceston to access major services. Those living outside of the immediate Sorell suburb reported having few options available to them, usually a single bus departing in the morning and returning in the afternoon. Young people said that this can make accessing a single appointment a full day event, which many stated was an insurmountable barrier for people struggling with mental health, complex needs or other vulnerabilities.
- **Bus services not matching up.** Young people spoke about waiting for long periods of time between buses, particularly where there is a mismatch between school and public transport bus times. Some young people reported waiting over an hour for the next scheduled bus and were frustrated by the lack of safe public shelters to wait in.
- **Problems with getting a licence.** Young people said that getting a licence is difficult without access to a car or driver mentor, and that many could not afford the costs to access private driving lessons at \$85 per hour. In addition to this, young people need to get themselves to a Service Tasmania service centre in Hobart, St Helens, Sorell or Triabunna to complete their driver's licence application and payment, which was another barrier.
- **Lack of shelters and safe areas.** Young people spoke of concerns with bullying and harassment on public buses and while waiting in public shelter areas. The Sorell Park and Ride was a problematic area due to reports of peers vaping in the toilets and the lack of sufficient shelter in inclement weather.
- **Unsafe footpaths or none at all.** Young people everywhere were frustrated by the state of many footpaths and the lack of them in many rural areas, restricting their ability to safely move about within or between different suburbs. Those living in rural areas and/or on dirt roads did not feel safe riding or walking in these areas due to the high road speeds (typically 80km/hr), presence of logging and quarry trucks, and 'hooning' vehicles.

Many educators said that young people's experience with transport would commonly disrupt their student's education and learning. Young people would arrive at school tired having begun their journey as early as 5:30AM, needing to take time off school to travel to Hobart or Launceston for appointments, and had limited school-based work experience opportunities and apprenticeships without private transport. Local employment service providers mentioned significant challenges supporting young people to find work without a private vehicle or driver's licence, and that there were no affordable local driver mentor programs available to help them.

"I have to work out where and how we can get our students to a work placement. I have to ask them first 'Where can you get to' and then I see what I can find that fits that location. It really limits their opportunities and ability to experience work they are really looking to learn more about." Educator

"I have a car, but dad doesn't have enough time to give me lessons. I'm doing [private driving lessons] when I can afford it, but I have to get a manual driving licence to get my apprenticeship and it's gonna take ages." Young person

"Please give us a bus that goes up the coast in the morning! I will love you forever (PLEASE)!" Young person

Proposed solutions

Young people want their transport needs considered when designing services and supports for them, and to ensure that they have equitable access to school, work, sports and other social and recreational opportunities.

Young people want to see:

- Affordable transport options that can take them from surrounding areas to access services and existing opportunities in Sorell, Triabunna, Nubeena and St Helens.
- Buses that connect them between suburbs and towns to visit friends, access local community assets and public spaces across the three regions and up to St Helens.
- Buses that can pick them up where they live, especially in rural areas or late at night where young people may feel unsafe walking alone.
- Later school bus options so they could hang out with friends or participate in local sports and other activities.
- More lighting and shelters at public bus stops.
- Expansion of the Sorell Park and Ride shelters and greater monitoring of the public restroom nearby for antisocial and problematic behaviours.
- Youth buses or taxis that service the Tasman Peninsula, Sorell and surrounds, and the East Coast, and connections between services.

Young people also spoke about solutions that could help them get about their local towns and communities easier. Young people want to see government and community invest in areas that specifically help them to move about more easily and safely. These include:

- Free services that can help young people to repair and maintain bicycles and scooters. Many said that they did not personally have access to the tools or have the knowledge or skills to use them to maintain their equipment. Young people suggested bike sheds or a mobile mechanic that could deliver workshops or support them to keep them moving about safely.
- Rentable electric scooters and bicycles.
- Footpaths being properly maintained in local towns, especially near areas with high traffic, near local shops, schools, parks and skate parks.
- Building footpaths/bike trails on rural roads and between satellite towns.

Social and recreational opportunities

Key Finding 3: Social and recreational opportunities are the foundation of youth participation and engagement, and create a sense of belonging and social cohesion in local communities.

Key Finding 4: Young people are highly dispersed across the region and regularly move between communities and local government areas to access the opportunities, services and supports that they need.

While many young people loved the relaxed, slower pace of life in the region and the close proximity to nature, they reported that there was little to engage young people outside of school, work and sports. Despite ready access to outdoor and adventure activities, young people said that these are not always available to them as the cost or poor weather were often prohibitive. This was especially hard for young people living in rural areas, often finding themselves 'stuck at home' due to the geographic isolation caused by sprawling and sparsely populated towns.

Young people want to see greater focus on addressing barriers to participation, namely transport and cost to participate, and investment in initiatives that support youth development, social engagement and exploration of culture, music and the arts.

Young people also linked boredom, the lack of social and recreational engagement, and the absence of youth-targeted services to disruptive and antisocial behaviour and poor mental health.

"If you aren't into sports or nature, there isn't a lot to do here."

"Probably the fact that everything is so far away and that in the winter there is really nothing to much to do."

Young people consistently reported feelings of loneliness, isolation and boredom throughout the consultation. Young people said that social and recreational programs are essential for them to feel valued, happy, engaged and supported in their community. They also wanted activities to be delivered outside of schools to meet new like-minded young people, and help them stay connected from their friends and peers who go to different schools.

Safe places and spaces in the community

Young people were deeply concerned about 'eshays' and antisocial behaviour in the community. Many spoke of avoiding common public spaces used by young people, like bus stops, parks and streets, because of concerns with bullying and assaults, theft, and the presence of vapes, alcohol and/or other drugs.

Young people said that the Sorell township was particularly challenging on weekday afternoons due to the sudden dispersal and movement of public and private school students through the area. Young people and adults in the community reported feeling intimidated by large groups of unsupervised 'youth' and were concerned that young people's behaviour was unpredictable, rowdy and sometimes destructive. Some service providers however, felt that this perception was sometimes unwarranted and that young people were simply being 'noisy young people' having fun with their friends and letting off steam.

Despite their frustrations towards antisocial behaviour, young people were largely understanding that this may be a symptom of unmet needs in their peers; including boredom and isolation, domestic/family violence, mental ill health, alcohol and other drug misuse.

“...there might actually be a reason why they aren’t going home and are acting out. I just want to see them get the help they need.” Young person

Young people wanted more safe spaces in the community where they can hang out and socialise with friends or pass time while waiting for transport or other services. Many young people thought that these spaces could be achieved with existing organisations and businesses, such as Neighbourhood Houses, community halls and hubs, and local libraries. Community safe spaces were commonly described as places where young people can be warm, dry and safe in bad weather, socialise with their friends and meet new people, charge their phones, access free or low cost activities, have free food, and even attend peer networking and/or support groups for like-minded youth.

Young people said that community spaces can be made safer with the presence of a supervising or trusted adult with experiencing working with young people and responding to unsafe, antisocial or other challenging behaviour. Young people said that they often wanted to see an adult nearby, but not feel that they were being monitored or judged. They thought that this role would be best suited to a youth worker or social worker, and not security or police as authoritarian presence conversely made them feel less safe – as if an issue had occurred and was needing to be controlled, rather than supporting positive behaviours.

“I get really nervous when I see them [security or police]... it makes me feel like I’ve done something wrong or like something bad’s about to happen.” Young person

And there is evidence that this type of approach has and can work in the Sorell...

“Youth Matters started out with a couple of youth workers heading down to the skate park with donuts and soft drink once a week after school. It took months to build a relationship with the young people but the word started to get out and more youth would show up. Families and young children started to use the skate park when we were there as they felt more comfortable sharing the area [with young people] with us there... which is great, but young people stop coming when there’s too many small children about...” Service provider

Improving existing community assets

Ideas from young people to improve the region centred around maintaining and improving community assets they already use, as well as reducing barriers to access them. Ideas included:

- Upgrading local skate parks to be more exciting and engaging, such as adding graffiti walls, new bowls, jumps, ramps and flat areas, and to be extended to include pump tracks and public exercise equipment. Other practical solutions were to improve safety by ensuring that there is adequate weather shelter and lighting in the shorter months (April – October).
- Repairing local sporting facilities and equipment young people access outside of competition sports, such as local cricket nets, and basketball and netball courts.
- Improving public safety by adding adequate shelter and lighting to local parks and skateparks, bus stops and the Sorell Park and Ride.

- Helping young people afford the costs to participate in local sporting opportunities, including transport to/from activities, subsidised club, equipment and uniform fees for people on low incomes, and access to local gyms.

The 'fun stuff'

Young people everywhere wanted greater access to 'fun stuff'. Some of what they identified were new programs, activities or opportunities, while others were more focused on infrastructure they could utilise. Young people wanted to see:

- More local community events, such as fun runs, colour runs, music and art displays and youth markets.
- Fun local entertainment and activities for young people after school and on weekends, such as movie and pizza nights, arts and craft workshops, and music lessons.
- School holiday programs that keep them busy over longer periods of time, including overnight camping activities, and full day excursions to popular activities for paintball, go-karting, swimming/water sports, motorbike riding, mountain bike riding, minigolf and the cinemas.
- Youth development activities that help them build their confidence, gain new skills and experience, such as cadet programs, volunteering, and working with adults to plan and deliver community events and activities.

Young people's ideas varied significantly based on their previous experiences, individual interests and social circles, however they all had a common 'ingredient list' for success:

1. Opportunities for young people should be free and provide transport to help them get home safely.
2. It should empower young people, build on their strengths, build their confidence and self-esteem, and treat them as a 'person' not 'just a child'.
3. Be delivered by people who have the right skills and experience, and enjoy working with young people.
4. Supports young people to develop important transferrable life, employability and social skills.
5. Provides a platform for young people to demonstrate their skills and contributions to local community.

Community engagement

Young people were quite frustrated with the lack of opportunities available to them and felt that existing programs, supports and services were largely designed for children, families and adults, leaving many to feel forgotten and less valued in their community. Young people had a multitude of ideas and suggestions to address issues facing young people, but felt that adults were more concerned about controlling problematic and antisocial youth behaviour.

However, young people currently have no mechanisms to share their concerns, ideas and solutions in a meaningful and impactful way. Further, when asked if they would speak to government on issues important to them or participate in other community consultations, young people fervently said 'no' – due to not knowing where or who to speak to, had previously had their concerns dismissed or

participated in tokenistic consultation processes, or found adult-targeted feedback mechanisms confusing and intimidating.

“I’m just a kid. Adults just tell me what to do and that’s it.” Young person

This consultation has demonstrated that young people are passionate about their local community and want to be more actively engaged. But it is essential to facilitate this in ways that work for young people, provides support to meet their individual needs, allows them to explore their passions and interests, gives them a sense of belonging, and builds their capacity to participate.

A public pool

Young people were acutely aware of the public discourse surrounding investment in a local public pool across all three LGAs. Schools across the region facilitate access to local pools, both public and private, for swimming lessons, water safety and school carnivals, however young people are largely unable to access these facilities on their own – typically due to booking costs and transport needs.

Young people see a public pool as a critical piece of infrastructure that can support their local participation. Some saw a pool as a way for them to socialise and stay healthy, particularly in the winter months and in poor weather when beach activities can be dangerous. Others believed that it would be a good employment opportunity for young people seeking entry-level and casual work.

Proposed solutions

Young people understood that there are limitations to the number of programs and activities that can be funded by government, and that not everything could be made available to them at all times. However, young people were clear that they wanted to see opportunities be equitable and accessible to all young people, not just those with the greatest access to transport, money and resources.

Ideas to improve social and recreational opportunities included:

- Invest in safe spaces and drop-in programs for after school and on weekends.
- Create youth-specific activities just for young people over the age of 12.
- Provide equitable opportunities for young people across the region; ensuring that they are free and consider their transport needs.
- Establish a range of mechanisms for young people to meaningfully engage with local government and decision-makers.
- Facilitate fun, engaging activities in areas where larger groups of young people congregate after school, such as pop-up events at local skate parks
- Create a Peer Support Network that connects young people with positive role models and builds supportive, trusting relationships with adults and young people.
- Invest in local youth development officers and youth workers to support them and facilitate engagement activities in and with communities.
- Create mobile activities and programs that can move about and between communities depending on the need, such as mobile activity trailers and youth buses.
- Work with local businesses to identify mechanisms to subsidise costs to participate in private activities, such as volunteering and fundraising.

Education, training and employment

Key Finding 5: Young people want to be job ready, confident and prepared to enter the workforce when they finish school.

Key Finding 6: There is a perception that rural communities have little to offer young people in education, training and employment, and that only those with access to resources and strong support networks are able to get ahead.

The majority of young people consulted in this project were current students and very well acquainted with the education system. They often expressed frustration towards the education system and curriculum, reporting grievances in school including bullying, harassment and assaults from peers, and feeling disempowered by adults.

Despite this, young people were quick to point out where schools were getting it right...

A teacher with the right approach, and schools that had good support systems for people with additional needs and flexible approaches to education, such as those offered by the Trade Training Centre and Indie School Sorell were highly regarded by young people – both students and their siblings/friends.

“We’re always being told what to do. Here [Sorell Trade Training Centre] I feel like a person, not just a student...” Young person

“My [sibling] goes to Indie School. He was having heaps of trouble at [public school] getting bullied and stuff. He’s doing a lot better now.” Young person

Young people said there are few employment opportunities available to them in the South East. They reported competing with each other for limited entry-level positions in retail, hospitality, tourism and agriculture, and lamented the loss of local businesses that would employ them such as the hardware store in Triabunna, and local takeaway shops. Again, transport was a key factor in limiting young people’s employment choices and ability to work.

Moving to town (Hobart or Launceston)

Young people living in rural areas often spoke of feeling pressured and anxious about preparing for senior secondary school. Despite the expansion of District Schools to grades 11 and 12, many young people feel the need to leave their hometowns for ‘better education and career opportunities’. This sentiment was most strongly observed in Bicheno and Swansea where young people had fewer local education options available to them. This also applied to a limited extent in the Tasman Peninsula, where a small proportion of young people were reported boarding in Hobart and returning on weekends¹, however the majority of young people leaving the area for schooling were able to do so with existing public transport options. Service providers in Nubeena reported a growing number of homeschool students and a strong homeschool network, which may also contribute to fewer young people leaving the area.

However, service providers also reported that cost of living pressures, high house prices and climbing boarding and private school fees, had meant that families were often choosing to move their entire

¹ Sweep Consulting (2024) Life is for Living – A Youth Strategy Project.

family to support their child's education instead of college boarding. Service providers felt that this was a loss to their local communities where several, highly engaged and skilled members of the community had left, finding it challenging to fill their roles with suitable individuals or leaving a void in local volunteering efforts.

Young people who made this move reported their experience as stressful and often isolating. Some said that they struggled with newfound responsibilities and independence when boarding away from their parents and leaving their friends behind. Young people also said that the lack of local youth engagement and participation opportunities made it particularly challenging for them to socialise and reintegrate with their peers when they return home on weekends or during school holidays.

For those who stayed, either by choice or due to other personal limiting factors, they believed that moving didn't always lead to better outcomes, especially for young people who wanted to enter into local trades and industries where university qualifications weren't required.

"If you're new or moved away for a bit it's really hard to fit in here [rural community]. There's nothing really that brings us back together except school. So if you go to a private school, end up boarding or go to public school, you just get stuck with those same groups." Young person

Work readiness and preparing to enter the workforce

Young people spoke about the importance of career pathway planning in schools and having opportunities for student work-based placements. They wanted a greater focus on learning outcomes that build knowledge and skills that can be applied to the workforce and in real-life. In particular they wanted highly practical training, like preparing a resume or going for an interview, how to find work, how to get help with their employer if they need it.

"When am I ever going to use calculus? I need to know how to get a job!" Young person

The Department of Education Years 9-12 project focuses on offering training that builds capacity of young people to prepare for and participate in the workforce, e.g., through student placements and school-based apprenticeships, however these opportunities are often limited to the local schools' networks and resources available to them. Young people who had participated in educational outreach programs, such as the BEST Youth Career Coach working with Tasman District School students and the defunded Beacon Foundation Collective Ed. program (defunded in 2021), and current students at the Trade Training Centre were more likely to report feeling confident and prepared for 'whatever comes next'.

"I don't know why more people don't want to do a trade. I love the hands on stuff... I know I'm gonna have a job and money quicker than anyone going to uni." Young person

Many individuals we spoke with reported having a job, however their experiences were not always positive. Young people reported being harassed by customers, would lose work during off-peak seasons and managing multiple jobs due to not receiving enough hours. Several individuals spoke of having workplace conflicts that they had been unprepared to handle, often needing support from a parent or other adult to help them resolve it.

While young people often reported having few employment opportunities available to them, this was not the sentiment shared by local service providers. They said that there is work, but young people may not know what is available, not have the skills or confidence they need to access them,

or lack essential qualifications (e.g., white card, RSA, Barista, First Aid) and a driver's licence or reliable transport to get there. The South East region is serviced by two Jobs Hubs, BEST and Break O'Day Employment Connect, with the Youth Connector pilot program only offered through BEST at this time.

Proposed solutions

- Support young people to develop life skills and confidence needed to be independent when moving away from rural communities, and invest in initiatives that support social cohesion between different school groups.
- Increase opportunities for young people to explore education and career pathways, and develop employability skills like writing resumes, tailoring job applications, and student placements and traineeships that provide on the job experience.
- Build capacity and support local businesses to work with young people and provide early support to young people to advocate for their workplace rights.
- Support young people to access local opportunities by expanding on the pilot youth connector program and local jobs hubs, offering targeted programs in and out of school.
- Increase young people's awareness of and access to Area Connect to help them get to school, work or training where public transport is not available.
- Invest in local social impact programs that support young people who are vulnerable, have complex needs, are disengaged and/or at risk of disengagement to enter the workforce. Successful examples delivered in Hobart that could be adapted locally are Hamlet Café and Impact Communities Troublesmiths program.
- Investment in skills building and ready to work programs focused on developing practical skills including job readiness, financial literacy, confidence and resilience, and leadership.

Service gaps and needs in the South East

Key Finding 7: It takes time to develop relationships with young people and community, to build trust and awareness of the services available to them.

Key Finding 8: Outreach services have better engagement with, and uptake by, young people when delivered in partnership with local schools, community and service providers – “it’s all about the relationships.”

Service accessibility

Just because a service is available to a young person, it does not mean that it is accessible to them. Young people said that the cost of accessing a service, transport needed to get there, and often the disruption to their school day was a huge barrier for getting help. Common barriers to accessing services were:

- **Awareness.** Young people were commonly unaware of relevant services and supports until they needed to access them, often relying on recommendations or referrals from a friend, parent, teacher or other trusted adult. Often opportunities were promoted through social media pages or websites that young people weren’t aware of or using.
- **Cost.** Young people often have limited income and many stated that they simply couldn’t afford the costs to participate, such as affording equipment or sport levies, paying for private mental or physical health services, or to pay for the transport needed to get themselves there.
- **Location and operation times.** Most services are typically delivered 9AM-5PM Monday to Friday, a challenging feat for most young people already when they are in school or training. Young people travelling from rural areas to Sorell, Hobart, Launceston or St Helens for services and support, reported needing to leave school early or skip the entire school day to attend their appointment.

Young people living with additional needs or facing certain adversities were further disadvantaged, particularly people living with disability, identify as LGBTQIA+ or are experiencing mental ill health or engaging in illicit substance misuse. The lack of safe spaces and support groups also meant that some young people felt more vulnerable to harassment or bullying, and had weaker social supports compared to others. Further, stigma towards mental health and alcohol and other drug supports was a deterrent for young people wanting or seeking help.

“I think it can sometimes be really difficult for this age group to find the support they need. Unless you’ve got the help of family, actually finding assistance in areas such as joining the workforce, mental health, studying, etc, can not only be extremely confusing and difficult, but intimidating and off putting. As you take into account hurdles such as mental, social and learning disabilities this only feels even more difficult.” Young person

Mental health

Mental health is a significant concern for many young people and support is limited beyond crisis or tertiary outreach services. Young people have few early intervention and prevention services readily available to them, largely restricted to the private health system and drop-in services offered in Hobart and Launceston (headspace, Head2Health, the Phoenix Centre). Outreach services offered through the Royal Flying Doctor Services and Rural Alive and Well (RAW) were present, but again very limited. Young people acknowledged that telehealth services can help bridge this service gap, the service delivery style doesn't work for everyone and that young people need to have in-person options available to them.

Many young people said that they had regularly felt stressed, anxious and worried, and sometimes felt overwhelmed by what was expected of them. Young people shared concerns for their future, how they would be able to afford a home and support a family one day, and felt pressure to know what they want in the future and to have a good plan for their careers.

"I just started driving and want to move into my own home one day and have a pet and get married... I don't think that my generation will be able to live if the cost of everything doesn't go down. I shouldn't be worried about being able to live on my own at this age, I should be worrying about it when I'm older and getting to the point when I need to buy a house and want to get married. Not when I'm 16, still in school and haven't even started my first proper job yet." Young person

Issues reported and experienced by service providers

Duty of care. All organisations have a responsibility to keep children and young people safe from harm when engaged with their service and now must legally comply with the Tasmanian Government *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023*. Common challenges reported by service providers implementing the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework and Standards included:

- Issues gaining parental consent for their child to participate in an activity. Confusion on when or how much personal information is required to be collected for them to participate.
- Relying on schools to take on responsibility of consent and duty of care, restricting outreach efforts and support to education institutions where young people not in mainstream school miss out.
- Resources required to implement the Framework and Standards, a challenging feat for organisations not typically working with young people or in voluntary capacity.

Resource Constraints. Short-term funding cycles, the need to create new and innovative programs, and resource constraints make it incredibly challenging for service providers to maintain consistency and presence in the community, build relationships and trust to work with young people, and retain appropriate skilled and qualified staff and volunteers. Service providers operating in smaller towns reported a high level of pressure on the volunteer workforce who struggle to keep momentum going without appropriate resourcing. Volunteers stated that they wanted to work with young people to 'actually work with young people', not be bogged down with administration and compliance.

Service providers identified a multitude of existing resources in the community, but that they were unable to access – for example local community buses, halls and clubs, and equipment such as drum kits, mountain bikes and sporting equipment.

“We have so many resources, there’s a community bus, plenty of volunteers who want to work with youth, community buildings... but we need someone who can actually drive it and keep the momentum going. We need someone who can help us connect the dots.”

Service provider

Maintaining a ‘youth service’. Several service providers delivering youth targeted programs also reported issues with maintaining the age of participants. The incremental lowering of the minimum age of participants (often to as young as 8 years old) was typically done to accommodate large groups of children in the area or to ensure that young people with sibling care responsibilities could participate. Unfortunately, all service providers who experienced this had the same result – an overall reduction in youth participation, especially by those over the age of 14, and movement towards family and child programs to cater to a younger demographic now using the service.

“Youth groups need to be for teenagers, not children. I want somewhere I can relax and hang out.” Young person

Operating in silos and duplication of effort. Service providers often spoke about working in silos and the need to be collaborative. There was also considerable feedback that current outreach efforts are fragmented and not meeting demand due to a lack of engagement and collaboration with local schools and organisations. Service providers also spoke of outreach services visiting local areas but struggling to engage with local young people, then moving on deeming that the need does not exist.

“The ‘Hobart heros’ come in, try to do something and it doesn’t work. If young people don’t know them they’re not gonna trust them and they aren’t going to use their service. It doesn’t mean that the service isn’t needed, but they haven’t told anyone about what they’re up to...” Service provider

The Dunalley Tasman Neighbourhood House in Nubeena, has demonstrated how a collaborative approach between schools, community and young people can work well. They facilitate an after school drop in program, homeschool network program and the Royal Flying Doctor Service mental health youth worker weekly. Young people seeking mental health support were doing so in a relaxed, friendly environment with known trusted adults who encourage them to access the service and can provide follow up support. Service providers stated that this approach had been so successful due to ongoing engagement with the Tasman District School and homeschool network to build trust and relationships with young people, their families and the wider community.

Some service providers also raised concerns about duplication of efforts and over consultation of young people. Indeed, this project immediately followed a youth consultation to inform the Tasman Council’s Youth Strategy, leaving stakeholders questioning if findings or recommendations will be followed through.

Proposed Solutions

Resoundingly, young people want a **youth hub** in Sorell – a space that is uniquely theirs and accessible to all young people across the region. It could provide a safe space for young people in the community, facilitate social and recreational youth programs, and feature as a centralised location for outreach services including mental health, housing, alcohol and other drug, family or domestic violence, and sexual and reproductive health supports.

Young people stressed the importance of affordable, reliable and appropriate transport to support them to get there and home again, and suggested offering direct outreach to satellite towns using a

‘youth hub bus’ for young people who are more vulnerable, experiencing or at risk of disengagement.

Other suggestions to address service needs in the South East include:

- Establish a regional youth network group for service providers to network, share information on current programs and services available to young people.
- Improve awareness of existing youth services, supports and resources available to young people across the region through a centralised information platform that young people use.
- Improve communication of existing services and supports available to young people, using a youth-targeted platform.
- Ensure that outreach services are offered both in and out of school.
- Build capacity of local organisations to work effectively with young people and compliant to the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework.
- Consider professional development needs of service providers and volunteers, including mental health first aid training and responding to complex behaviours and needs.
- Work collaboratively between organisations, local government, community and young people to coordinate services, share resources, and better respond to emerging needs.

Conclusion

In general young people love the South East, but they acknowledge that there is a lot that can be done to improve youth engagement – to see them be active, confident and capable participants in school, work, community and their own lives. Currently, too many young people feel shut out, pushed aside and forgotten by adults, and that it is only those with the access to the greatest resources and supports who are able to get ahead.

Young people have highlighted some significant concerns and systemic barriers that directly impact their lives, including issues with public safety, service accessibility, self-agency, transport, mental health and limited social and recreational engagement. Despite these concerns, many were quick to acknowledge where adults and community were doing things right, through youth-targeted programs, shared community assets and ‘the right people with the right approach’.

This report has shown that young people can and do want opportunities to speak up and find solutions to the issues they face. However, it is the responsibility of community and decision-makers to provide these opportunities, to actively listen to them and take their ideas and concerns seriously. And young people have made it clear that they are watching to see what will happen next.

Service providers alike are equally frustrated for young people in the South East. Resource limitations, competitive grant processes, organisations operating in silos and the lack of outreach services directly delivered in the area are limiting their ability to support and improve outcomes for young people. It’s time for adults to be strategic, work collaboratively, and give young people the platform and support needed to work together and improve youth participation and engagement in the South East.

