

TASMANIAN YOUTH FORUM 2025

OUR VOICE IN ACTION!

What young Tasmanians 12–25 years had to say on youth participation and engagement.

Consultation Report
July 2025



Speak up. Be heard. Drive change.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Palawa/Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and continuing custodians of Lutruwita/Tasmania and recognise the continuing connection that Palawa people have to the land, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



The Tasmanian Youth Forum is funded by the Tasmanian Government and supported by the City of Launceston.

Artwork and imagery included in the report were produced by young people who participated at TYF. Direct quotes were obtained from written forum feedback. Minor changes to improve readability or provide context is annotated by [...].

Enquires about this Report can be directed to the Youth Network of Tasmania by email admin@ynot.org.au or post PO Box 4679, Hobart, Tasmania 7000.

Further information about YNOT and the Tasmanian Youth Forum can be found at our website www.ynot.org.au.

Acknowledgements

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- Hobart City High School
- Kennerley Kids Children's Homes
- Launceston Big Picture School
- Launceston Grammar School
- Riverside High School
- St Patrick's College
- Tasman Council
- Tasmanian Department of Health
- Tasmanian Government Education International
- Waratah Wynyard Council
- West North West Working
- West Tamar Council
- Workskills

"...this is our life and our right to speak up on what we believe should happen. As young people we are constantly told that our opinions and voices matter yet our ideas are not taken into account as we are 'too young', 'not mature enough' to make decisions, then our opinions are completely disregarded and our voices are silenced."

Executive Summary

The 2025 Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF), *Our Voice in Action*, brought together over 100 young people aged 12–25 from across Tasmania to explore how they can more meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The forum, held in Launceston on 16 May, centred around two key questions:

- *What makes you feel heard, included and safe to speak?*
- *What do we need to keep, change and create for young people to participate in decision-making?*

Young Tasmanians shared clear and consistent messages: they are ready and willing to contribute to policy and decision-making, but too often face barriers that prevent their voices from being heard or acted on. While some participation opportunities exist, young people described them as tokenistic, adult-led, or accessible only to a select few.



Young people want a two-way exchange of information, to share decision-making power, and timely follow-up on their contributions.

Key needs identified by young people include:

- **Better communication.** Young people want clear, youth-friendly information shared through the platforms they actually use. They called for a centralised, accessible platform like a website or app to find opportunities, services and events in their local area.
- **Diverse and accessible opportunities.** Young people want more participation opportunities, especially for those often excluded due to geography, ability, confidence or other barriers. Participation must be designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind from the start.
- **Active and transparent engagement.** Young people want adults to listen, treat them as equals, respect their contributions, and be honest about how decisions are made. They expect feedback on how their input influenced outcomes, or not, and why.
- **Adults taking a step back.** Young people want space to lead and for adults to provide support, resources and guidance without taking over.
- **Building skills and networks.** Young people want to grow their knowledge, skills and confidence through training, mentoring and peer-led opportunities. They also want stronger support for youth groups and networks to collaborate and advocate together on the issues that matter most to them.

“We want to work with decision-makers, not just be told what’s happening.”

Many of these findings are not new. They are long standing issues that reinforce key findings from previous YNOT consultations, including the *2023 Tasmanian Youth Story, Pathways to Adulthood*, and past youth forums on housing, mental wellbeing, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

The resounding question from young people to decision-makers remains the same: *“When will we actually see these things happen?”*

A shared strategic vision for Tasmania’s young people is essential, not just to support government’s ongoing reform efforts, but also to plan for the future. By creating systems that proactively seek the views of young people, we can shift from reactive approaches to one that identifies emerging issues and trends early. This enables more timely interventions, improved outcomes, and better use of limited resources.

A two-way exchange between government and young people, where young people’s views inform public policy as well as providing a platform to communicate new issues affecting their lives, will lead to better outcomes.

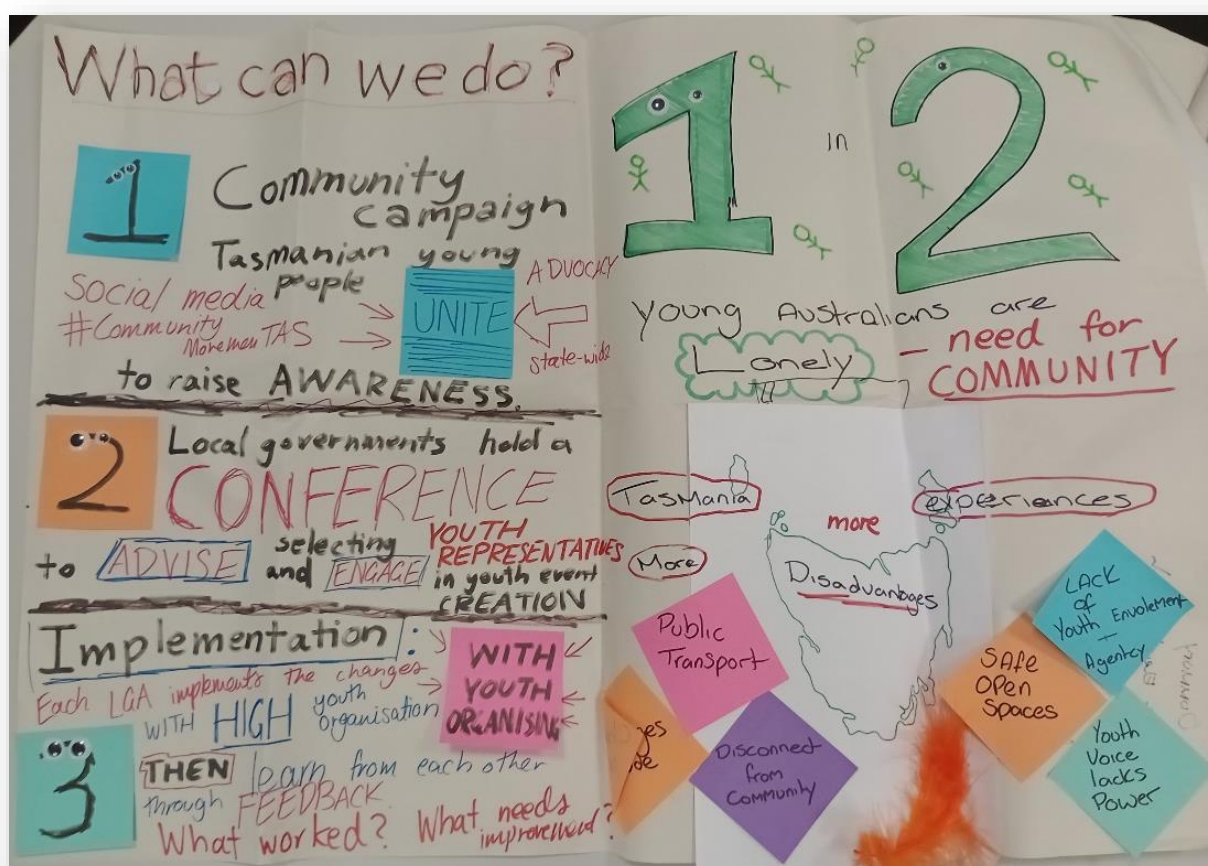
This report presents the key findings and recommendations needed to embed meaningful youth participation across schools, communities and government. It is a plea to move beyond consultation and towards real partnership – where young people are recognised as experts in their own lives and as active contributors to a better Tasmania.

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Introduction

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) is one of the largest annual consultative events for young people 12-25 years in Tasmania. An initiative of the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), TYF brings together young people from across the state to share their views and opinions on a topic of importance to them. TYF provides young people with a platform to share their ideas and propose solutions to improve outcomes for their peers and communities.

As the peak body representing young people and the youth sector in Tasmania,

YNOT works to amplify the views, rights and leadership of young people. Through meaningful youth participation, we empower young Tasmanians to share their experiences, contribute to and influence decisions that affect their lives, and to actively participate in their communities.

Our policy and advocacy efforts are grounded in meaningful youth participation and engagement, supporting young people to drive positive change on the issues that matter most to them.

Why We Focused on ‘Our Voice in Action’

The 2025 forum theme, *Our Voice in Action*, was chosen by YNOT’s Youth Advisory Council and informed by extensive consultations with young people. During recent consultations, young people have consistently told us that they feel dismissed, silenced and excluded from policy and decision-making that affect their lives and futures.

In recent years, the Tasmanian Government has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to improve outcomes for Tasmania’s children and young people. This includes the introduction of legislation to protect and promote the safety of children in our communities, and whole-of-government strategic policies aimed at improving health and wellbeing, and economic outcomes for children and young people.

Current state government policy initiatives clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to seeking the views of children and young people to inform decision-making and policy development. It is evident that prioritising the rights of children and young

people, as well as creating child-centred systems, is a key focus for the government.

However, there is considerable duplication in effort and budget expenditure across government agencies in implementing child and youth participation initiatives. Government agencies appear to work in silos, often seeking to engage with the same established youth participatory groups and entities.

This contributes to consultation fatigue, tokenism, a lack of diversity in views and the inefficient use of resources. On occasion, well-intentioned youth participation activities have resulted in unintended consequences such as power imbalances, safety issues and ethical dilemmas.

This report captures the views of TYF participants and their recommendations for building a more inclusive, coordinated and effective approach to youth participation and engagement.

Methodology

YNOT worked collaboratively with service providers, secondary schools and young people to determine the most suitable methods and activities for seeking feedback from young people on the TYF topic.

TYF 2025 centred around two key questions:

- *What makes you feel heard, included and safe to speak?*
- *What do we need to keep, change and create for young people to participate in decision-making?*

Feedback was collected through written notes, group reporting, verbal discussions, videography and a short feedback survey. Data was explored using Microsoft Excel and NVivo14 to identify key and emerging themes. All data was analysed thematically and is presented as key themes.

This year, TYF focused on solely delivering the in-person statewide forum and did not include an online survey component. This decision was based on a notable increase in AI-generated and bot-driven responses through online platforms.

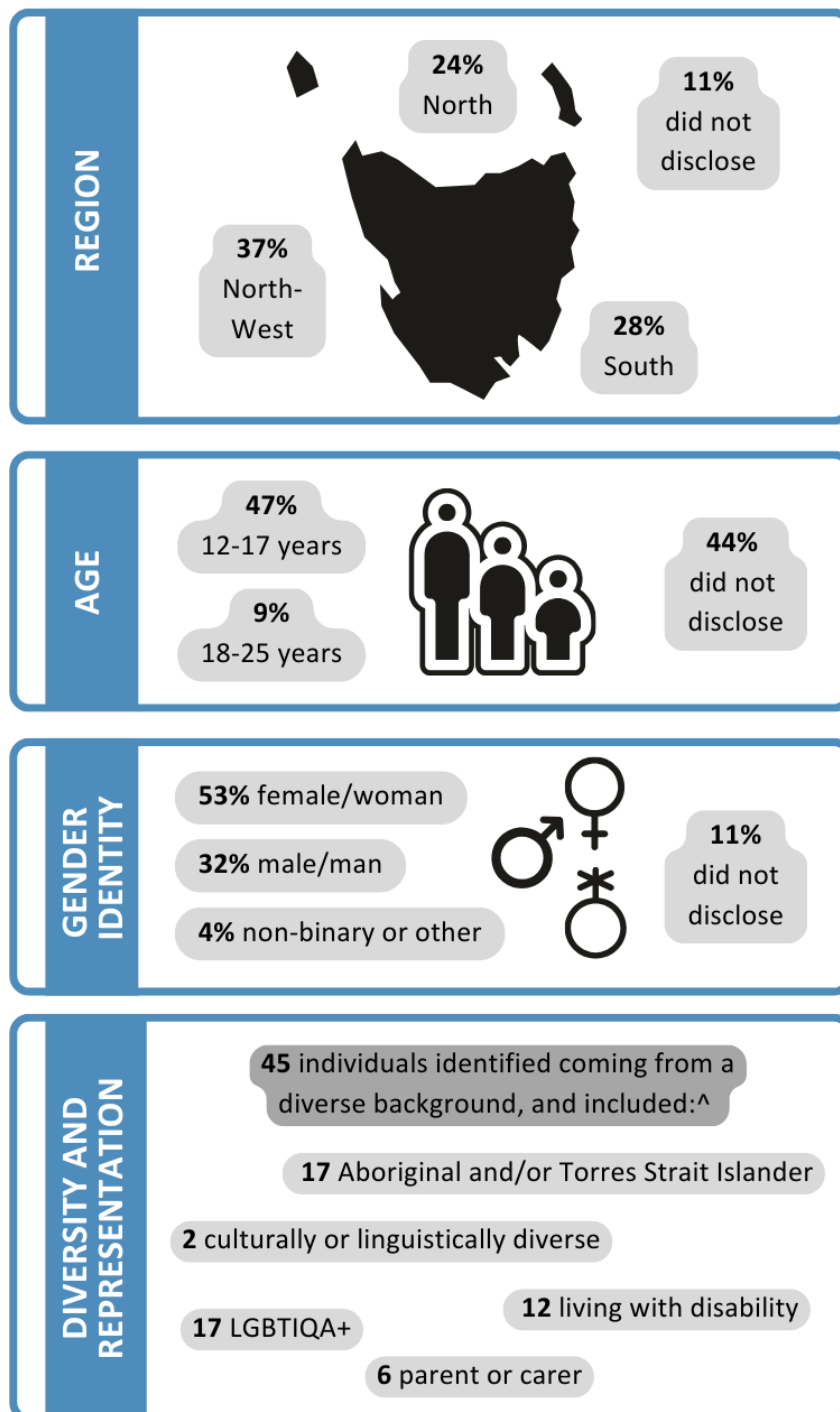
Anticipated changes to social media, including platform restrictions to individuals under 16 years and the potential introduction of ID requirements, are expected to further reduce access and participation of young people online.

In response, YNOT is working with our Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and key stakeholders to identify more robust and reliable ways to engage young people through online platforms.



Participant Snapshot

105 young people aged 12-25 years attended the statewide forum.*
The average age of participants was 16.3 years.



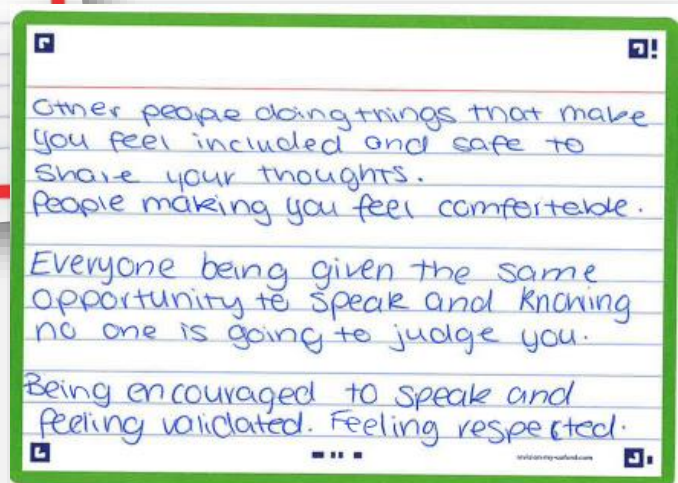
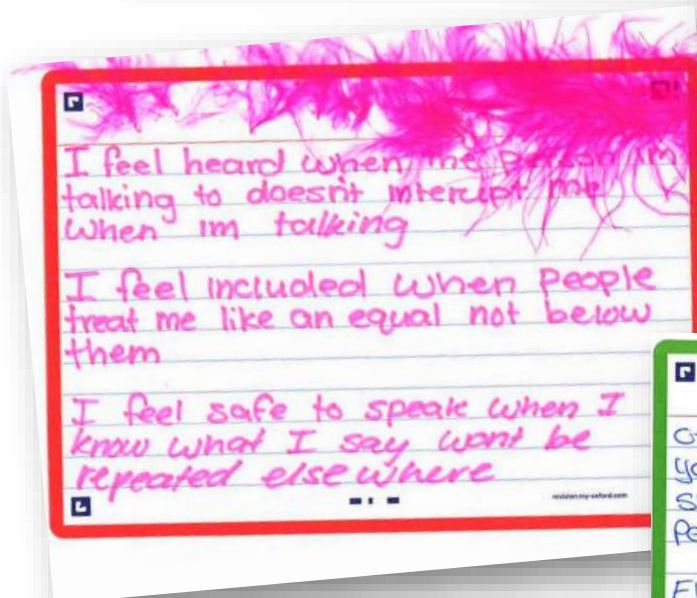
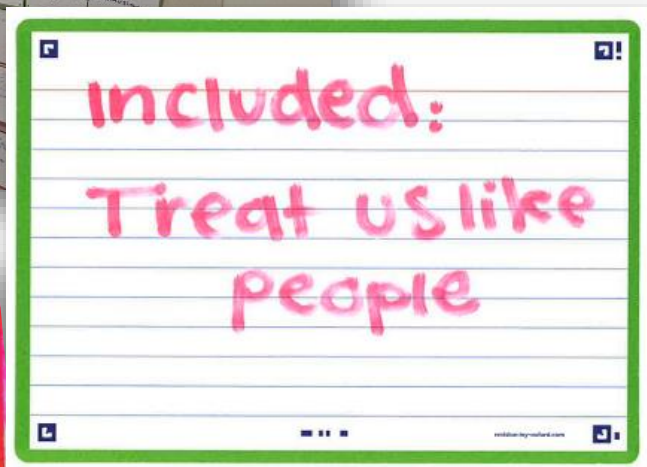
*99 individuals completed the demographic feedback survey. Percentages (%) are based on total number of survey respondents (n=99).

^Individuals may identify as belonging to more than one population or demographic group.

The Principles of Youth Participation

What makes young people feel heard, included and safe to speak?

Young people emphasised the need for respectful, inclusive and accessible youth participation opportunities underpinned by the following principles.



1. Respect and being taken seriously

Young people feel heard and safe to speak when they are treated with respect and their views are taken seriously.

“Feeling respected when I speak and not treated like an idiot.”

“Being able to communicate my ideas without judgement, but also be able to have time to think through and change my opinion.”

This means:

- Being able to express their personal opinions without judgement.
- Feeling valued and respected when speaking; not being treated as a ‘child’.
- Having their opinions respected, even when others don’t agree.
- Not being spoken down to or limited in the topics they can speak about.

2. Active listening and genuine engagement

Young people feel heard and included when adults genuinely seek their views and actively listen to their opinions.

“Too many instances where teachers won’t listen because we’re just ‘children’.”

“Adults that actually have the time of day to acknowledge your thoughts and opinions, not just listening because they are obligated to.”

This includes:

- People listening, responding and engaging in dialogue.
- Using attentive body language and eye contact.
- Asking follow-up questions, exploring new ideas and showing genuine interest.
- Acknowledging young people’s input and checking that their views are understood.

3. Inclusive opportunities and environments

Young people feel included and safe to speak when no one is excluded and everyone is supported to participate.

“Being brought into the conversation.”

“Being asked and prompted when quiet.”

“Being reassured by peers that you can have an opinion and friendly encouragement to join the conversation.”

This includes:

- Being invited and welcomed into conversations by those around them.
- Being actively involved in conversations.
- Having different ways to share their views (verbal, written, creative).
- Support and encouragement from peers and adults to express their opinions.
- Recognising when someone is left out and prompting them in a way that works for them.
- Providing options for anonymous feedback.

4. Accessible opportunities

Young people feel included and safe to speak when opportunities are inclusive and accessible to all.

“Offer diverse opportunities to be heard.”

“Large crowds and talking (make me feel uncomfortable to speak).”

This means:

- Physically accessible spaces, nearby to public transport.
- Opportunities offered outside of school.
- A range of participation mechanisms (e.g., surveys, workshops, youth advisory groups, creative expressions, small and large group discussions, feedback boxes).
- Youth-friendly, easy to understand language used in all communication.

5. Action, follow-through and influence

Young people feel heard and included when their input leads to real outcomes.

“When people take on my thoughts and actually give constructive feedback on my thought and shows me what the next step is.”

“Having a connection and having influence on something is great for feeling heard, it makes me feel like I had a say in the matter.”

This involves:

- Ideas being seriously considered, with feedback on how they were (or were not) used.
- Being part of the decision-making process and feeling a sense of ownership.
- Receiving follow-up after participation.
- Ensuring that their input can lead to real change or action.
- Crediting young people for their contributions.

6. Safe and trusting environment

Young people feel safe to speak when the environment supports trust, privacy and choice.

“Being asked to help do something or come along to do something without being told I had to.”

“[being] given the chance to have your opinion even if its criticism without worry of consequences.”

This includes:

- Confidence that what is shared won't be repeated or used without permission.
- Trusted adults and supportive peers.
- Choosing to participate without pressure.
- Understanding how their views will be shared and used, and what they will influence.
- Conversations that validate, rather than debating or criticising their experiences.
- Being able to speak openly without fear of consequences.
- Private, comfortable and neutral settings.
- Genuine interest from those engaging with them.

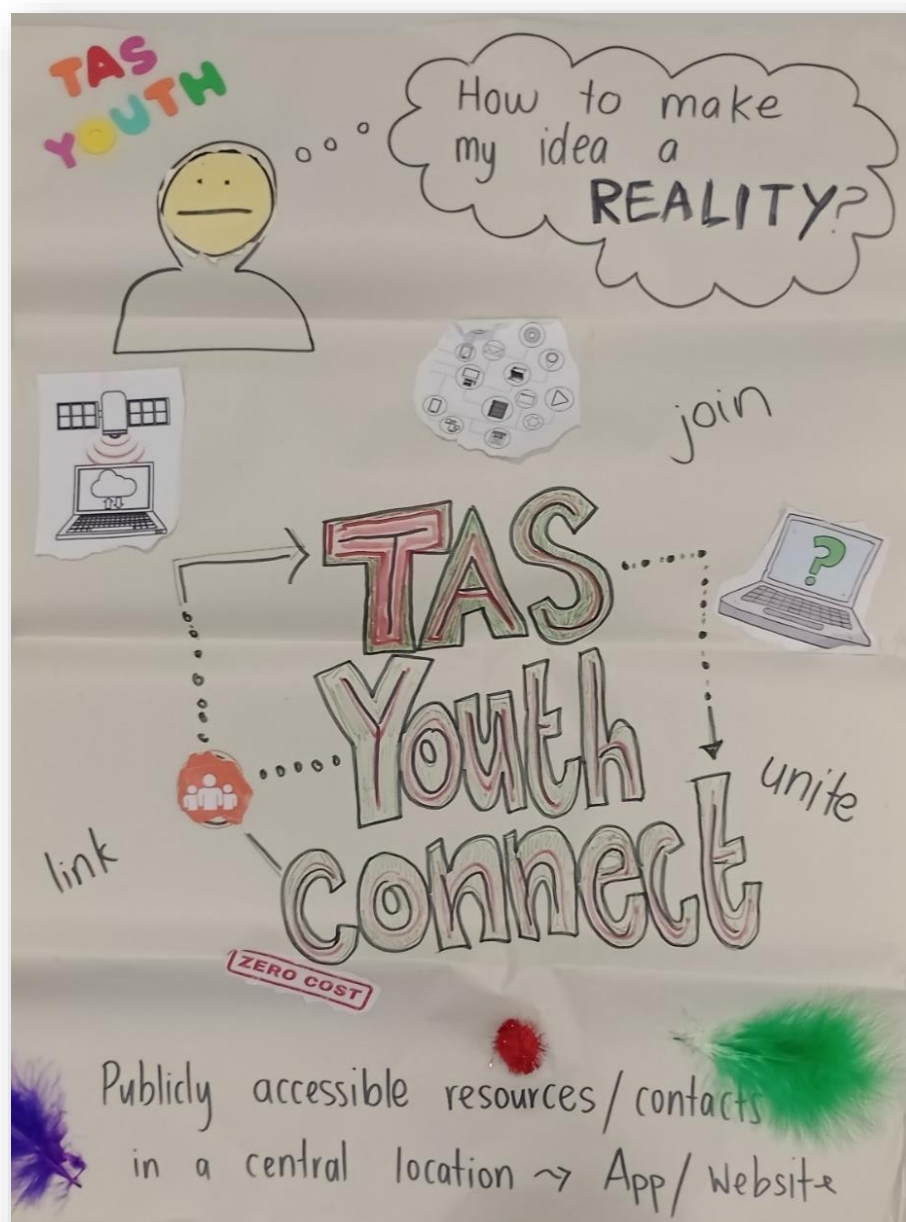
Young People's Ideas and Solutions on Youth Participation

Communication and Access to Opportunities

Young people want to engage in public discussion and decision-making, but they often find existing participation opportunities inaccessible, overly adult-centric or irrelevant to their interests and needs.

Young people want inclusive, youth-friendly processes and greater involvement in shaping how information and opportunities are shared so that participation works for them, not just the systems around them.

"There should be a central hub with contact info, grant info, and a way to connect with people who can help."



1. Improving access to information

Young Tasmanians are overwhelmed by online content, yet struggle to find relevant and timely information about supports, services and opportunities. Current communication systems are fragmented across various platforms and networks, inconsistent and difficult to navigate. As a result, young people frequently miss out on opportunities or find out about them too late.

“[We need to change] vocabulary/marketing for youth. Only because some kids will see an opportunity for something but not wanna do it because it might sound too formal or too childish.”

Young people want communication that is clear, targeted, and designed with their input. This means:

- Using a range of platforms and channels, including Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, newsletters, posters, videos, podcasts and school newsletters.
- Involving young people in the design of communication strategies, marketing and promotional materials, so that messaging is created with them, not just for them.
- Framing opportunities in a way that reflects their diverse interests and lived experience.
- Avoiding language that feels too formal or too childish.

Proposed solutions:

- Develop a central, youth-led communication platform. A trusted, place-based website or app that filters and shares information by region and interest, covering services, supports, events, and participation opportunities.
- Improve outreach and awareness of opportunities by actively promoting opportunities through/in schools, community networks, social media, public spaces (e.g., waiting rooms, youth drop ins) and youth and community events.
- Use targeted, youth-friendly messaging that speaks directly to young people in a tone and language that is respectful, empowering, and accessible.
- Ask young people to develop communication and marketing materials for youth participation opportunities, reflecting their interests, style and values.
- Support youth-led communication and encourage and peer-to-peer communication in schools and communities.

“The communication systems are flawed in Tasmania... there are too many platforms and various methods of communication going on... Disjointed communications, leads to overwhelming disengagement.”

Recommendation 1. Develop a centralised, youth-led communication platform and resource library.

Create a statewide, youth-led platform and resource library that shares place-based information about services, supports and participation opportunities. Involve young people in the design, content creation and promotion of the platform to ensure it is relevant, accessible and engaging.

2. Addressing barriers to participation

Access to youth participation opportunities is not equal. To be genuinely accessible, participation opportunities must prioritise equity and inclusion, recognise and fairly remunerate young people's contributions, and address participation barriers. Barriers include out-of-pocket costs, transport, accessibility needs for people with disability, vulnerable backgrounds or geographic isolation, and existing commitments like family, school and work. Participation spaces must also be safe, welcoming and youth-friendly to support young people to share their views.

“Adjusting [the] time of opportunities that suit young people's schedules. Flexibility and series of times available so others don't miss out.”

Young people also identified that their participation is often dependent on adults, such as youth workers or teachers, to encourage and enable their involvement, especially when activities take place during school hours. They want adults to support their participation, but not to be reliant on adults to make things happen.

“Be accountable and use my ideas in a way that isn't stealing, but collaborating.”

Proposed solutions

- Offer practical supports such as covering transport costs and offering youth-friendly, accessible venues. Ensure that there are no out-of-pocket costs to participate.
- Design activities that accommodate different accessibility needs, including neurodiversity, physical and mental disabilities.
- Design inclusive engagement approaches that are culturally safe and offer varied ways to get involved.
- Provide multiple options for involvement (e.g. surveys, creative projects, workshops, anonymous feedback).
- Schedule activities at flexible times (after hours, evenings and weekends) and offer multiple sessions to suit different availability and existing commitments.
- Recognise and value young people's time and contributions through incentives, payment, or formal acknowledgement.

Recommendation 2. Invest in Youth Participation and Outreach Officers.

Invest in Youth Participation and Outreach Officers to engage directly with young people in schools, services and communities where young people meet. Officers should promote opportunities, support young people to get involved and address barriers to participation, and strengthen local engagement networks.

3. Connecting through trusted spaces and people

Young people want safe, welcoming environments where they can build relationships, access support, and engage in community life. These ‘third spaces’ (places outside home and school) should be designed by and for young people, and supported by trusted adults, such as youth workers, who can offer guidance, early intervention support and referrals to relevant services.

“Young people [are] struggling to find a sense of belonging within the wider community. The Young Person Café (YPC) ran by students for youth. Sole purpose is to create a safe space for young people to feel where they belong. Place to study for people without safe homes. Non-profit, charity - one in Hobart and Launceston, free buses to get there. flexible seating and areas. board games, quiet hours for people who may struggle with sensory issues and get easily overstimulated. Groups games/tasks to bring the community together.”

Young people proposed greater investment in youth hubs, similar to Hobart City Council’s Youth Arts and Recreation Centre (YARC), which provide inclusive, safe, drop-in spaces that combine recreational activities with access to information, services, and peer connection. These hubs play a vital role in providing opportunities for social, recreational and civic participation, such as supporting youth-led events, activities and leadership development.

Proposed Solutions:

- Establish youth-led community spaces co-designed with young people.
- Support local councils and service providers to partner with young people to deliver inclusive, accessible youth hubs.
- Ensure these spaces offer flexible use, including sensory-friendly areas, peer-led activities, and access to support services.

Recommendation 3. Establish place-based youth hubs across Tasmania.

Invest in safe, inclusive, one-stop drop-in spaces where young people can connect, access support and participate in community life. Co-design these hubs with young people and ensure they are culturally safe, accessible, and welcoming to all.

Engaging Young People in Decision-Making

Young people want to be actively involved in shaping the communities they live in and the decisions that affect their lives and futures. However, many feel excluded or discouraged by tokenistic and adult-centric approaches.

When opportunities do occur, they are often limited in scope and representation, are short-term and/or lack follow-through. Young people want genuine engagement, inclusive and sustainable opportunities, and systems that actively seek out and respect their views.

“At the RTO meeting in 2024, we were talked at and not listened to, disregarded our questions, talked down to us based on our age... they were not transparent about who was consulted within industry to help make the decision about stopping Cert III certificates.”

“Every student in our group has had an idea or voice ignored by staff or people in leadership.”

“[Have a] conversation rather than emails and proposals - listen to young people's ideas!”



1. Genuine engagement and adult support

One of the greatest barriers to youth participation is adultism - how young people are perceived and treated negatively by adults. Young people commonly described feeling dismissed, stereotyped or overruled by adults in government, schools, services and councils and community settings. They believe their ideas are frequently undervalued or disregarded simply because of their age.

To feel safe and supported to participate, young people want adults to act as allies and collaborators. This means building respectful relationships, actively listening, respecting and valuing their time and contributions, and creating space for young people to speak up and lead. Adults must shift attitudes about young people's capabilities, develop their own skills to work ethically and inclusively with young people, and be willing to share decision-making power in practice.

"Change adults views on how strong and how much our opinions matter - no more using 'youth' as an excuse."

"Change the attitude towards young people."

Proposed solutions:

- Train workers, including government and community leaders, on their responsibilities to uphold young people's rights to participate, ethical engagement, and inclusive practice.
- Create genuine engagement and ethical practice by embedding youth participation within government and organisational policy, such as youth advisory groups and ongoing feedback mechanisms.
- Embed youth participation across all areas of an organisation, not just youth-specific roles or programs, by engaging young people in governance and leadership positions.
- Provide regular opportunities for young people to interact with decision-makers and build trust.
- Challenge stereotypes and build a culture of respect for young people's perspectives.

"[We need] more supportive adults that are willing to step forward to support change!"

2. Designing participation that works for young people

Young people want opportunities to meaningfully shape decisions, not just to be consulted at the end. Young people value existing participation opportunities such as youth advisory groups, youth forums and school leadership positions, but say these are often only accessible to the most confident or engaged, have limited scope or impact, or don't reflect their interests or availability. Many are looking for more flexible and relevant ways to share their views.

Too often, participation is shaped by adults with few entry points, limited creativity, and little room for autonomy. Young people want

to be involved early, have real choices in how they engage, and see how their input leads to change.

To be truly inclusive, participation must be designed with and for young people from diverse backgrounds with attention to accessibility, location, timing, language and support needs. Opportunities should be ongoing, resourced, and embedded across government and organisations, not dependent on individual programs or champions.

"Involve the youth's voice in policy in a more involved manner rather than tokenistic."

Proposed Solutions:

- Involve young people early in the design of policies, programs and decisions.
- Co-design engagement approaches with young people to ensure they are accessible, inclusive, culturally safe and relevant.
- Provide different ways to participate, such as creative formats, online platforms, and small group and one-on-one discussions.
- Have decision-makers engage directly with young people, not just through reports or their youth workers.
- Address practical barriers like transport, accessibility, cost and time.



3. Feedback, accountability and closing the loop

A consistent frustration among young people is the lack of follow-up after they share their views. Many said they don't hear what happens with their feedback, whether it influenced any outcomes, or why certain decisions were made. This lack of communication undermines trust and reduces their motivation to participate in the future.

Young people know that every view they share may not be actioned. However, they want adults to give them feedback as to why something did or did not occur, and ways to reconnect with decision-makers over time.

“Youth are giving advice and feedback and we aren't getting information on how it's used and implemented. [It] demotivates youth in supplying information and knowledge, [while] hearing outcomes gives the youth validation... Not checking in and communicating can lead to a misunderstanding and broken connections.”

Proposed Solutions:

- Establish consistent, transparent feedback loops so young people are informed about outcomes and how their input was considered.
- Be upfront about timelines, expectations, young people's level of influence on outcomes and decision-making processes.
- Offer follow-up options, including anonymous feedback channels, via email, phone/text and face-to-face, for young people to provide further feedback, correct or adjust their views, and follow up on outcomes.
- Credit young people for their contributions and share results widely.

4. A seat at the table on all issues

Young people want a say on all the issues that affect their lives - not just those typically labelled as 'youth topics'. Many are passionate about contributing to public dialogue and decision-making across a wide range of matters, from education and health to climate change and housing. They want systems that enable and encourage their participation, not ones that treat it as optional or symbolic.

Some of the topics young people want to engage with include:

- Health and wellbeing: Access to health and mental health support, public health and awareness campaigns.
- Gender equity and reproductive rights: Women's rights, abortion access.
- Climate and the environment: Logging, sustainability, climate change and salmon farming.
- Education, training and employment: School curriculum, student voice, post-school outcomes, and employment pathways.
- Housing and cost of living: Housing affordability, financial literacy, youth homelessness, income support, minimum wage and the economy.
- Crime and safety: Responses to youth crime, youth justice system reform, and public safety.
- Transport and public infrastructure: Accessibility, affordability and regional services.

"Most old people don't care about what young people want and that scares people off."

"Show us you care, help us speak up, reach out to schools, communicate our way, follow up, give us resources."

"[Make] surveys that are straight to the point - not long and daunting. This eliminates the factor of people skipping through the survey."

Proposed solutions

- Establish formal mechanisms for young people to participate in shaping public policy across all levels of government.
- Provide civic and political education to build understanding of how government works and young people's right to participate.
- Promote youth participation opportunities widely using diverse channels and youth-friendly platforms.
- Improve information and communication systems in Tasmania to ensure young people can find and access opportunities easily.
- Embed youth participation within government and organisational policy to ensure it is consistent and resourced, not ad hoc or tokenistic.

Recommendation 4. Invest in professional learning for adults who engage with young people.

Invest in a professional learning program for adults who work with or make decisions impacting young people, including government decision-makers, educators and community leaders. Focus areas should include young people's right to participate, ethical engagement, power-sharing, and respectful communication.

Recommendation 5. Develop a statewide youth participation framework.

Create a whole-of-government and community framework that outlines principles, standards and indicators for meaningful youth participation. Establish a publicly accessible resource library with tools, templates, case studies and training materials. Include mechanisms to track and report how young people's input is used to strengthen transparency and accountability.

Recommendation 6. Embed youth participation into government policy and decision-making structures.

Establish formal, systemic mechanisms that enable young people to contribute to all areas of public policy – not just youth-specific matters. This could include:

- Ongoing investment in the Tasmanian Youth Voice Network to support engagement across government and community sectors to engage with young people on issues that impact them.
- Establishing youth reference groups across departments and agencies to inform policy and service design.
- A dedicated and resourced Minister for Youth to ensure policy continuity across government and to uphold young people's participation.
- Embedding requirements for youth participation in policy development and reform processes.
- Developing frameworks to track and publicly report youth engagement activity and outcomes.

Youth Participation in Schools and the Education System

Young people want to be meaningfully engaged in shaping their education, not just in their personal learning, but also in how their schools and the broader education system operate. While some participation mechanisms exist, these are often seen as tokenistic, short-term, or accessible only to a small number of highly engaged students.

“Letting students have more control especially in leadership teams, youth empowerment needed in youth leadership activities.”

Young people are calling for a more inclusive and impactful approach to participation that recognises their rights, experiences and aspirations. They want to be empowered as learners, decision-makers and partners in shaping what and how they learn, how their schools operate, and how education policy is made.

“Students are told we can speak up and have a voice but we are still being shut down. We need to know teachers and staff have to follow guidelines, not just try to listen to our voices. We need reassurance that we are being heard. Every student in our group has had an idea or issue shut down by a member of staff that has promised to hear us. As a solution, we would like to advocate for mandatory guidelines for staff to follow. By doing this, we will know we can speak up, take action and feel safe. We will work with representatives from the Department for Education, like Sonya (Pringle-Jones) to advocate for these changes.”



1. Empowering students as individual learners

Young people want education that reflects their goals, interests and needs. Many feel disengaged when learning is limited to traditional academic content or disconnected from real-world skills and outcomes. They want choice in their learning pathways and better access to life skills, vocational education, and mental health and wellbeing support in schools. Young people also want education to be inclusive of diverse learning styles and needs.

“The end result [of our schooling] should be our decision made by us, not by DECYP leadership.”

“...students are unlikely to engage in a system that doesn’t engage with them.”

“We’ve been shut down by teachers or told we’re too young and immature to understand.”

Proposed solutions:

- Make life skills and financial literacy part of the core curriculum (e.g. budgeting, taxes, job readiness, housing, accessing services).
- Provide more flexible learning options, including vocational training and alternative education models such as Big Picture Schools.
- Improve access to early intervention and preventative mental health and wellbeing supports within schools and the community.
- Offer tailored support for individual learning needs, including accommodations for neurodivergent students.
- Strengthen pathways to employment and further education through career guidance, apprenticeships and university access.

2. Empowering students in their school communities

Young people want to help shape their school communities, not just participate in symbolic leadership roles. They described current student voice structures as limited in scope, adult-controlled, or reserved for select students. To feel heard, students want inclusive, structured opportunities to influence decisions, lead initiatives, and give feedback that is taken seriously.

They also want school environments to be welcoming, inclusive, and respectful - places where students are safe to speak up and differences are valued.

“We know what’s going on in our schools better than anyone else.”

“Allow the opportunities to all students, not just the ones that might be interested or are student leaders.”

Proposed solutions:

- Create feedback mechanisms accessible to all students, including anonymous options.
- Ensure participation opportunities extend beyond school representative councils (SRCs) or leadership groups.
- Establish regular student-led forums, working groups or school improvement sessions.
- Embed shared decision-making between teachers and students in school governance.
- Co-design inclusive, accessible learning environments and school policies.
- Provide staff training in youth participation, listening and respectful communication.

Recommendation 7. Enhance student feedback mechanisms in all school communities.

Support Tasmanian school to implement accessible and inclusive feedback systems that allow all students to contribute ideas, raise concerns, and influence school decision-making in their school community.

These mechanisms should be co-designed with current students, offer anonymous and multi-format options, and include transparent feedback loops that show how student input is considered and acted on.

Provide staff with training in ethical youth participation, shared decision-making and inclusive practice to ensure structures are meaningful and equitable.

3. Empowering students to influence systemic change in the education system

Young people are frustrated about being excluded from DECYP policy decisions that directly affect their learning, such as curriculum design and subject offerings. Young people want meaningful roles in shaping departmental-wide policy and initiatives, clearer communication from decision-makers, and transparency in how changes are made and who is consulted.

“The system is not open to our ideas around learning!”

“This isn't an attack on teachers or the department, but we wish to see change in how they listen to our feedback and how they adapt to our learning needs and styles.”

Proposed solutions:

- Establish ongoing, representative structures for students to input into system-level decisions, not just in their school community.
- Include students in school associations, advisory groups and departmental working groups.
- Support student-led advocacy and reform efforts, including campaigns and policy input.
- Communicate system changes in youth-friendly language and formats.
- Report on how student views were considered and what impact they had.

Recommendation 8. Create a statewide participation mechanism to embed youth and student voice in education system reform.

Establish a formal mechanism within DECYP that enables all students to share their views, influence policies and initiatives, and contribute towards education system reform. The mechanism should ensure diverse student representation and support peer-led engagement to reflect the views of the broader school community.

Empowering Young People Through Youth-Led Opportunities

Young people want to lead, not just be invited to participate. Across Tasmania, young people are already leading projects, sharing ideas, and driving change in their communities. But to build on this momentum, young people need greater support, trust, and access to the tools and resources that make youth-led action possible.

Young people are calling for visible, well-supported opportunities to drive initiatives that matter to them. When youth-led projects are resourced and recognised, they not only build individual skills and confidence, but also shift perceptions and show communities what young people are capable of achieving.

“...the lack of involvement in youth-led initiatives by young people. Adults seem to take control (can't give up control). Young people feel they need experience. Unawareness in the problems they care about. Young people are not being listened to.”



1. Supporting youth leadership and action

Young people want to take initiative, lead projects, and put their ideas into practice but often don't know where to start or how to access support. They are calling for opportunities to develop their skills, connect with peers, and learn by doing. While youth groups, student councils and advisory forums can be valuable entry points, these spaces need to be better resourced, more inclusive, and supported by trusted adults – not dominated by them.

Young people stressed the need for adults to provide the right level of support by encouraging and enabling them to take the lead, while also covering administrative tasks, offering guidance on good practice, and holding oversight and responsibility where needed. Adults should step back to allow autonomy, but remain available to guide, troubleshoot, and mentor.

Support should strike a balance between guidance and independence - ensuring young people can access practical tools and mentoring, without navigating adult systems on their own.

“More trust with event planning, but also support without overstepping.”

Proposed Solutions:

- Provide training and mentorship in areas such as advocacy, public speaking, project planning, budgeting, and leadership.
- Create youth-friendly online hubs with step-by-step information on how to start initiatives, who to contact, and how to access funding.
- Fund local and state-level youth groups to develop campaigns, run events, and collaborate with others.
- Facilitate access to venues, materials, templates and other practical supports.
- Encourage local councils and organisations to proactively connect with young people, where and how young people want to be engaged with.
- Support adults to take on enabling roles - providing structure, handling safeguarding and duty of care, administration and oversight, while giving young people space to lead.

“Change the amount of influence adults have in youth events.”

Recommendation 9. Provide ongoing and adequate investment in Youth Week Tasmania to support youth-led initiatives.

Adequately fund and grow the Youth Week Tasmania small grants program to enable young people to design, lead and deliver events and projects that matter to them.

Recommendation 10. Continue to invest in the Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF).

Provide ongoing investment for TYF to ensure young people can share their views, experiences and solutions on topics that affect them, and influence youth affairs across Tasmania.

2. Scaling up youth-led initiatives

Young people are already driving change through local initiatives, advisory groups and grassroots campaigns. To strengthen young people's impact, they need consistent investment, recognition, and opportunities to connect with their peers across Tasmania. Youth-led work is too often under-resourced or reliant on adult-led structures, limiting what young people can achieve independently.

Young people are calling for dedicated funding, access to trusted youth workers, and stronger peer networks to collaborate across and between communities. They want their efforts to be visible, supported and valued - not treated as side projects or extracurricular add-ons. Young people need opportunities to work together across regions, build collective advocacy efforts, and lead campaigns on issues that matter to them.

“Creating more opportunities for children to speak up such as the youth forum.”

“Make grants available to smaller youth groups—not just the big ones.”

Proposed Solutions:

- Provide grant funding for youth groups and individuals to deliver youth-led projects and events, with support from trusted adults.
- Establish a statewide network of youth advisory group representatives to meet regularly, share ideas and drive collective advocacy and projects.
- Facilitate youth-led opportunities such as advisory group summits, student conferences, and issues-based workshops to inform government and community.
- Showcase young people's leadership and ideas through public platforms and events to shift public perceptions and help drive cultural change.
- Ensure adequate time and resources are allocated to organisations and workers supporting youth-led initiatives.
- Support adults to take a facilitative role, providing governance, administration and oversight without taking over leadership.

Recommendation 11. Invest in the All Youth Advisory Summit to build skills and strengthen collective advocacy.

Invest in an annual, youth-led leadership summit that provides training in advocacy, communication and leadership. The event should create opportunities for young people to connect, collaborate and strengthen collective advocacy statewide.

Recommendation 12. Establish a Youth Participation Support Fund.

Provide flexible, low-barrier funding for youth-led projects, campaigns and initiatives throughout the year. Offer access to mentoring, templates and planning support to help build young people's skills, confidence and impact.

Conclusion: It's Time to Act

The 2025 Tasmanian Youth Forum has shown that young people are ready and willing to help shape public policy. They have valuable insights and solutions to share, but too often feel dismissed, silenced or excluded from decision-making processes.

Young people keep making their priorities clear, but inaction from Tasmania's leaders is only deepening their frustration.

Young people are seeking genuine, respectful and sustained participation that values their lived experience, diverse perspectives, and right to be heard. Opportunities that are safe, inclusive and youth-friendly, and most importantly, backed by action.

Young people expect to be informed of any outcomes, and how their input has influenced decisions - or why it has not. For participation to be meaningful, it must be embedded across government, schools and community, not left to chance or driven by individual champions.

This report outlines clear solutions to address barriers and build stronger, more inclusive participatory systems.

These include co-designing effective communication platforms, strengthening young people's voices in schools, government and communities, and investing in youth-led initiatives that build skills, confidence and leadership.

Meaningful and sustained participation by young people in decision-making and policy design requires commitment, coordination and collaboration to create genuine change.

It requires a shift in policy settings and cultural transformation within workplaces, and the wider community, to challenge negative attitudes and beliefs towards young people's right to express their views and participate in decision-making.

Young people want to be involved early, have their contributions taken seriously, and see outcomes that reflect their input.

It is now up to decision-makers to take action and work alongside young Tasmanians to create lasting change.





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