

# Targeted Investment. System-Wide Efficiency. Better Outcomes for Young People.

Budget Priorities Statement 2026/27

Youth Network of Tasmania



# Summary of Investment Recommendations

In the 2026/27 Tasmanian State Budget YNOT is seeking an investment from the Tasmanian Government to:

## 1. Unlock System-Wide Efficiency Through Sustainable Funding

Strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of Government investment by increasing YNOT's recurrent peak-body funding to meet contemporary demand. Consolidating fragmented project funding into a stable base will reduce duplication, improve workforce stability, and ensure Government receives consistent, high-quality youth insights to support major reform agendas.

**Investment sought:** \$339,772 per annum (plus indexation).

## 2. Build a System-Wide Youth Participation Strategy

Invest in the development of a coordinated, cross-sector Youth Participation Strategy by resourcing DECYP and YNOT to collaborate on a whole-of-government approach. A unified strategy will reduce duplicated engagement activity, strengthen child-safety practice, and ensure consistent, evidence-informed youth participation across government, community and private sectors.

**Investment sought:** \$110,000 in 2026/27 (plus indexation).

## 3. Reduce Downstream Costs and Strengthen System Performance

Youth services are now operating beyond funded capacity, with rising costs, short-term contracts and workforce pressures increasing risks for young people and driving avoidable downstream expenditure. Implementing the Community Services Industry Partnership Agreement—five-year contracts, timely funding reviews, and indexation that reflects true delivery costs—will stabilise the sector and protect Government from escalating crisis-driven costs.

### Action sought:

- Introduce five-year contracts by 1 July 2027
- Commence funding reviews six months before contract expiry
- Adopt an indexation model aligned with the real cost of service delivery.

## 4. Sustain Key Initiatives for Young People and the Sector

Youth Week Tasmania and the Tasmanian Youth Sector Symposium deliver statewide benefits in participation, leadership and capability building, but lack ongoing funding. Embedding these initiatives in YNOT's base funding will improve efficiency, ensure continuity, and leverage existing infrastructure for stronger statewide outcomes.

### Investment sought:

- \$360,000 over four years (plus indexation) for Youth Week Tasmania
- \$150,000 over four years (plus indexation) for the Youth Sector Symposium.

## 1. Unlock System-Wide Efficiency Through Sustainable Funding

Tasmania's youth policy environment has become significantly more complex due to continuous systems reform, increasing the need for coordinated, high-quality youth participation across government and community. This has driven substantial demand for YNOT's specialist expertise as the State's trusted, independent Youth Peak Body.

Recurrent peak-body funding of \$157,255 per annum has eroded in real terms since 2010. Core functions are now delivered through short-term project grants and deficits—an inefficient model for work that is central to government reform. This contributes to workforce instability, administrative burden and system-wide inefficiencies.

In the absence of sustainable funding, agencies frequently commission separate youth consultations through YNOT or engage generalist organisations to deliver work consistent with youth peak body functions. This fragmented approach results in duplication, inconsistent insights, higher costs and engagement fatigue, reducing the value of government investment.

Short-term project funding for core youth peak body responsibilities—including statewide youth participation, the Tasmanian Youth Sector Symposium and Youth Week Tasmania—further inflates costs and limits long-term planning. Consolidating this work into YNOT's recurrent funding would reduce administrative overheads, improve coordination and deliver more consistent, effective engagement across Tasmania.

Underinvestment in YNOT poses risks to government, including reduced visibility of emerging youth issues, higher downstream expenditure on preventable crises, weakened sector coordination and diminished capacity for evidence-informed youth policy.

A sustainable funding model would allow Government to reduce fragmented, duplicative engagement activity and redirect resources toward core service delivery and system improvement. Investment will consolidate project funding, reduce administrative costs, enable whole-of-government coordination, eliminate duplication and strengthen youth-centred policy development.

Current funding no longer reflects the scale of reform, complexity of issues facing young people or the diversity of Tasmania's youth population. To meet demand, YNOT requires increased recurrent investment, including resourcing for a Policy Officer and Communications Officer.

Sustainable funding for YNOT is a low-cost, high-return strategy that strengthens the entire child and youth ecosystem and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of government decision-making.

**Investment sought:** \$339,772 per annum (plus indexation) to increase YNOT's recurrent funding, comprising:

- \$212,272 per annum for a full-time Policy Officer (1.0 FTE, SCHADS Level 7) and a part-time Communications Officer (0.6 FTE, SCHADS Level 5)
- \$127,500 per annum to consolidate short-term project funding (Youth Week Tasmania and the Tasmanian Youth Sector Symposium) into YNOT's Peak Body Grant Funding.

## 2. Build a System-Wide Youth Participation Strategy

YNOT acknowledges the Tasmanian Government's \$35,000 investment in 2025/26 toward developing a Youth Participation Strategy to support a coordinated, evidence informed approach to youth participation across government, community and private sectors in Tasmania. This submission seeks to build on this investment and leverage existing work to deliver a comprehensive, systems-wide strategy.

Tasmania's legislative and strategic frameworks place clear obligations on government, community, and private sectors to safeguard children and young people, uphold their rights, and support their wellbeing including active participation in policy and program design. Meeting these obligations requires a coordinated cross-sectoral approach, underpinned by strong interagency collaboration, shared accountability, meaningful stakeholder engagement and adequate investment.

Currently, child and youth participation activity is fragmented across multiple government agencies and community services, causing duplication, inconsistent practice, unnecessary costs and consultation fatigue. In some cases, well-intentioned participation efforts have led to unintended consequences such as power imbalances, safety risks and ethical concerns—the very outcomes that Tasmania's policy settings seek to prevent.

There is a clear opportunity to strengthen and streamline child and youth participation across government and the community by consolidating existing initiatives, aligning practices and building on DECYP's Child and Youth Participation and Empowerment Strategy. Leveraging YNOT's expertise and statewide networks across the community sector, private sector and local government will enable the cross-sector collaboration needed to deliver a coherent, meaningful Strategy that maximises existing investment, reduces duplication and delivers system wide benefits.

Critically, additional government investment is required to progress this work and unlock its full value. This includes appropriate resourcing for DECYP to coordinate engagement across government agencies and for YNOT to lead a comprehensive statewide consultation process with young people, community and private sectors to inform the Strategy's development.

Without further investment, government risks perpetuating inefficiencies, increasing costs, failing to meet statutory child-safety obligations and undermining policy and program effectiveness.

A system-wide, evidence-informed approach offers a clear and cost-effective pathway for government to operate more efficiently while ensuring the rights, needs and safety of children and young people are upheld.

In 2026/27, YNOT seeks to undertake a statewide consultation with community service providers, local government, clubs and associations, sport and recreation organisations and peak bodies. Insights from this consultation will directly inform the development of the Strategy.

**Investment sought:** \$110,000 (plus indexation).

### 3. Reduce Downstream Costs and Strengthen System Performance

Tasmania's youth services system is under significant pressure. Demand continues to rise, service complexity has increased, and operating costs have grown sharply. Despite this, community organisations have already exhausted efficiency measures—streamlining operations, reducing overheads and maximising service reach within existing resources.

Current funding settings are now generating direct cost and safety risks for Government and funded organisations. Insufficient service capacity leads to preventable escalation of need and higher downstream expenditure in acute and crisis services. Young people unable to access timely support experience poorer outcomes, while workforce pressure contributes to psychological injury, burnout and staff turnover—further increasing recruitment and training costs.

Short-term contracting cycles and inadequate recurrent funding undermine service continuity, weaken workforce stability and create unnecessary administrative burden for both Government and funded organisations. These inefficiencies limit the sector's ability to plan effectively, innovate and respond to emerging demand at the scale required.

A sustainable community services industry is essential to achieving system efficiencies and reducing long-term government expenditure. Strengthening the Government–industry partnership will support more coordinated service delivery, reduce duplication across agencies, improve integration and enable smarter investment aligned with key reform priorities.

As a member of the Tasmanian Coalition of Community Services Industry Peaks, YNOT urges the Tasmanian Government to progress the Community Services Industry Partnership Agreement as a priority and to implement the following measures:

- Accelerate the introduction of five-year funding contracts by 1 July 2027 to reduce administrative burden, improve service continuity and support workforce stability.
- Commence funding reviews at least six months before contract expiry to avoid service disruption and reduce the costs associated with short-term extensions.
- Adopt an indexation formula that reflects the real cost of service delivery, ensuring government-funded organisations remain viable and capable of meeting current and future demand efficiently.

These actions will deliver long-term value for money by strengthening service sustainability, increasing coordination, reducing duplication and lowering future expenditure. Investment in a stable, capable youth services system will support safer, more effective and more efficient outcomes for young Tasmanians and the broader community.

## 4. Sustain Key Initiatives for Young People and Sector

Integrating funding for Youth Week Tasmania and the Tasmanian Youth Sector Symposium into YNOT's Peak Body Funding is the most cost-efficient and sustainable option, as outlined above. If this approach is not adopted, YNOT seeks a standalone commitment to ensure these statewide initiatives continue delivering impact for young people and the youth sector.

### Youth Week Tasmania (YWT)

Since 2018, the Tasmanian Government has invested in Youth Week Tasmania (YWT) to celebrate young people's contributions to our community while fostering leadership, skills development and participation.

In 2025-26, YNOT received \$90,000 to deliver YWT with no confirmation of ongoing funding.

YWT is Tasmania's largest annual youth celebration, engaging young people, the youth sector and local communities statewide. The program provides critical opportunities for skills development, community connection and social inclusion whilst providing a platform for young people to share their views on matters important to them.

Previously delivered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, in partnership with YNOT, the YWT small grants program would be delivered more efficiently and cost effectively by YNOT. By leveraging our extensive networks and sector partnerships, YNOT can streamline coordination, reduce administrative overheads and broaden community reach ensuring a high quality, inclusive program, at lower cost to government.

**Investment sought:** \$360,000 over four years (plus indexation) to deliver four events.

### Tasmanian Youth Sector Symposium

The Youth Sector Symposium is Tasmania's only dedicated professional development and networking event for the youth sector workforce. It builds capability, drives consistent practice, and ensures services are equipped to meet the increasingly complex needs of young Tasmanians.

Despite its demonstrated value, the Symposium received a one-off \$25,000 allocation in 2025—well below what is required to deliver an event of this scale, and with no commitment to ongoing funding.

The 2025 Symposium sold out, attracting 150+ delegates from community, government and service sectors. This strong demand highlights the sector's urgent need for contemporary, high-quality workforce development to deliver evidence-informed, safe and effective services for young people.

Secure bi-annual funding will enable coordinated workforce development across the sector, strengthen service capability and support consistent, high-quality practice statewide.

**Investment sought:** \$150,000 over four years (plus indexation) to deliver two Youth Sector Symposium events.