ynot
youth network of Tasmania

Annual Report

2025 - 2026

OUR VISION

A Tasmania where all young people are valued



YOUTH NETWORK OF TASMANIA

A message from the Chair and CEO

Young people, the youth sector and YNOT continued to create positive change in Tasmania throughout 2025-2026.

This year was one of significant progress for YNOT, characterised by the growing influence of young people in shaping decisions that affect their lives and the continued strengthening of our organisation. Across our work, we created new opportunities for youth participation, contributed to important policy and reform processes, strengthened our position as a trusted voice for young people and the youth sector, and invested in the governance and organisational capability needed to create lasting impact.

A standout achievement was the continued growth and influence of the Tasmanian Youth Voice Network. Through consultations, advisory opportunities and partnerships spanning government, community and private sectors, young people directly informed policy development, public appointments, programs and services. Their contributions helped shape decisions relating to employment, road safety, volunteering, libraries and youth engagement, demonstrating not only the value of youth participation but the powerful outcomes that can be achieved when young people are engaged as genuine partners in decision-making.

The success of the Network reinforces an important reality: meaningful youth participation requires sustained investment. Impactful participation does not happen by chance. It is built on trusted relationships, skilled facilitation and dedicated infrastructure that connects young people with decision-makers. As expectations continue to grow for young people to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives, ongoing investment in this participation infrastructure will be critical to sustaining and expanding its reach and impact.

Advocacy remained at the heart of YNOT's work throughout the year. We elevated the voices of young Tasmanians in policy discussions across key issues, including health and wellbeing, mental health, housing, homelessness, family violence and youth justice.

We acknowledge the Palawa Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners of Lutruwita Tasmania and recognise their continuing connection to the land, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community of today.

We were also proud to administer the Youth Week Tasmania Small Grants Program for the first time. Through this initiative, young people across the state were supported to lead projects, strengthen community connections and celebrate their contributions. The program reflected YNOT's commitment not only to amplifying young people's voices, but also to creating opportunities for leadership, creativity and community participation.

These achievements were underpinned by a strong organisational foundation and effective governance. Through its stewardship and strategic oversight, the Board continued to support YNOT's growth, sustainability and capacity to deliver positive outcomes for young Tasmanians.

A key governance priority during the year was the review and strengthening of YNOT's governance framework. This included updates to governance policies, Board processes and constitutional settings to ensure they remain fit for purpose, proportionate to the organisation's size and maturity, and aligned with contemporary best practice. This work positions YNOT well for future growth and continued impact.

Board renewal also strengthened the organisation during the year. We were pleased to welcome Sarah Loewy, Oscar Wadsley and Tanya Brooks-Cooper to the Board. Their skills, experience and perspectives further enhance YNOT's governance capability and strategic leadership. We also farewelled Toby Stoddart and extend our sincere thanks for his valued contribution and commitment to the organisation.

We thank the young people, members, partners, staff and Board members who have contributed to YNOT's work throughout the year. Their insight, dedication and collaboration continue to shape our direction and amplify our impact.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to creating a better future for young Tasmanians. We will continue working to ensure young Tasmanians are heard, respected and empowered to influence the decisions that affect their lives, while building the systems, partnerships and opportunities required to turn their voices into lasting change.

- Sally Thompson, Chair and Tania Hunt, CEO.



Youth Impact and Influence

Meaningful youth participation is central to YNOT's vision of a Tasmania where all young people are valued. During the year, young Tasmanians actively contributed to policy development, service design and decision-making across a range of sectors.

By creating opportunities to share their expertise, lived experience and ideas, YNOT strengthened youth-informed policy and practice while building confidence, leadership and influence across the state.

The Tasmanian Youth Voice Network (TYVN) continued to create practical pathways for young people to influence policy, services and programs. Through statewide consultations, advisory opportunities and partner projects, participants contributed to discussions on employment, road safety, libraries, volunteering and youth engagement. Their input informed the Youth Jobs Strategy – Tasmanian Life, Learning and Work Framework, contributed to the recruitment process for the Commissioner for Children and Young People, influenced the Tasmanian Community Fund's approach to youth engagement and saw young people co-facilitate a youth participation workshop for the volunteering sector.

These activities led to tangible commitments from partners including RACT's 12-month youth advisory group, Tasmanian Community Fund's 2026/27 Youth in Focus Grants Round and Libraries Tasmania's long-term planning to increase youth engagement. These outcomes demonstrate the value of meaningful youth participation and the leadership young people bring to decisions that affect their lives and communities.

YNOT also refined the Tasmanian Youth Forum model in response to feedback from participants, strengthening the focus on regional issues, improving accessibility for young people in regional and remote areas, and creating more opportunities for local youth advisory groups to help shape events. Regional roadshows were developed in partnership with local councils and the YNOT Youth Advisory Council, with young people contributing to planning, promotion, event delivery and presentations to decision-makers.

> **"When young people are part of the solution, we build stronger, more connected communities. Our input can lead to real, positive change and help government focus on the issues we want action on."**
>
> *- YNOT advisory group member, 18, North.*





2026 marked YNOT's first year administering the Youth Week Tasmania Small Grants Program on behalf of the Tasmanian Government. Through $30,000 in grant funding, YNOT supported 15 youth-focused events and projects across Tasmania, creating opportunities for young people to lead, participate, showcase their talents and celebrate their contributions to community life. Guided by the theme Our Voice. Our Vision. Our Future., the program strengthened participation, leadership and community connection across the state.

A coordinated statewide campaign promoted 22 events, generating more than 64,000 social media views, reaching over 27,500 people online and an estimated 50,800 people through radio advertising. Through a partnership with Metro Tasmania, Youth Week messaging was also displayed across the Metro bus fleet, further increasing community awareness and visibility.

The successful delivery of Youth Week Tasmania strengthened partnerships across local government, community organisations and the youth sector while elevating the voices, achievements and leadership of young Tasmanians. It also provided a strong foundation for future growth, creating new opportunities for young people to connect, contribute and help shape the future of their communities.

There is a growing recognition across sectors that young people should be genuine partners in decision-making rather than passive consultees. YNOT will continue to champion approaches that embed young people's voices in policy, program design and service delivery, ensuring their lived experience informs the decisions that shape their futures.

"Forums like this are such an important way for young people to have their voices heard on issues that matter to them. It's exciting to see spaces being created where young Tasmanians can connect, collaborate, and influence meaningful change. "

- TYF participant, North West, 25.



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Driving Change Through Advocacy

YNOT's policy and advocacy work is grounded in the lived experience of young people and informed by the expertise of our members and evidence.

Throughout 2025-26, we engaged young people through consultations, interviews, submissions and advocacy campaigns, ensuring their voices shaped discussion and decision-making on issues including housing, homelessness, family violence, youth justice and preventive health.

This approach delivered tangible outcomes. YNOT's advocacy influenced the Tasmanian Government's Health Revolution strategy, securing recognition of youth wellbeing and supported pathways to adulthood as key priorities. We also successfully advocated for the establishment of a youth panel to support recruitment of Tasmania's new Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Advocate, ensuring young people had a direct voice in these significant public appointments.

YNOT also influenced statewide discussions on suicide prevention and mental health through active participation in the Premier's Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Advisory Group Roundtables. By bringing forward the perspectives and experiences of young people, we advocated for youth-specific actions and child and youth-centred approaches within draft Implementation Plan Three: Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027, helping ensure that the needs, wellbeing and voices of children and young people were reflected in Tasmania's future mental health and suicide prevention priorities.

> **"When young people are listened to, powerful things can happen. New ideas emerge, different perspectives are shared and communities become stronger. "**
>
> *- TYF participant, 18, North East.*



Drawing on the experiences of young renters and member organisations, YNOT contributed to debate on reform of Tasmania's Residential Tenancy Act and elevated youth homelessness as a critical policy issue. Through Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2026 and sustained advocacy efforts, we generated parliamentary attention, extensive media coverage and increased public awareness of the need for dedicated responses and greater investment in youth homelessness services.

Working alongside members and sector partners, YNOT also advocated for stronger outcomes for children and young people within the family violence and youth justice systems.

> **"...YNOT has provided me a lot of opportunities that have pushed me outside of my comfort zone...I never would have imagined talking to media or doing public speaking, I'm so glad to have had those opportunity's and to develop my confidence. "**
>
> *- Young Person, 23, South*

Through submissions, policy advice and collaborative partnerships, we championed reforms that promoted accountability, strengthened child-centred practice and upheld the rights of children and young people. By centring lived experience and amplifying the collective voice of Tasmania's youth sector, YNOT continues to drive policy change that improves outcomes for young people.

Recognising the importance of deepening engagement with diverse communities, we have invested in a dedicated policy resource for the year ahead. This investment will strengthen our capacity to engage young people from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences, ensuring our advocacy is informed by those whose voices are too often underrepresented in policies and decisions that affect their lives, and strengthening the evidence base that underpins our policy and advocacy work.

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Strengthening the Youth Sector

During the year, YNOT secured funding to deliver the Youth Week Tasmania (YWT) Small Grants Program in 2027. While funding for 2027 is welcome, YNOT will continue to advocate for longer-term investment in this important initiative to support youth participation, leadership and community connection.

YNOT continued to be an active member of the Tasmanian Coalition of Community Service Peaks, working alongside peak bodies to advocate for a stronger and more sustainable community services sector. Through this work, YNOT ensured the perspectives of young people and the youth sector were represented in broader discussions about community services reform and the future of Tasmania's community services industry.

The Coalition secured commitments from the Tasmanian Government to implement five-year funding agreements and is progressing a formal partnership agreement with government, representing a significant step towards greater sector sustainability and funding certainty. This work has the potential to reduce the instability created by short-term funding cycles, improve organisational planning, support workforce retention and enable a greater focus on delivering quality services and supports for young people. By ensuring youth sector perspectives are represented at decision-making tables, YNOT is helping shape reforms that will benefit our members and the young Tasmanians they support for years to come.

During the year, YNOT continued to partner with the Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) on the development of Tasmania's Child and Youth Participation and Empowerment Guide. Through youth participation and sector engagement activities, YNOT helped ensure the Guide reflects sector needs and best practice. The Guide will provide YNOT members and the broader youth sector with practical tools and guidance to strengthen youth participation and create more responsive services, programs and policies. The Guide is expected to be finalised in 2026/27.

Looking ahead, YNOT will continue to invest in the strength and sustainability of Tasmania's youth sector. Through more targeted engagement with members, we will expand opportunities for communities of practice, professional learning and sector development. These initiatives will deepen connections across the sector, support the sharing of knowledge and expertise, and build the capability and influence of organisations working with and for young people. By investing in capability, collaboration and sector leadership, we can build a more connected, resilient and influential youth sector that delivers better outcomes for young Tasmanians now and into the future.

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