This Report was finalised in December 2019 and represents a moment in time prior to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We acknowledge that the pandemic has had a significant impact on Australia’s young people who have perhaps been most adversely affected by COVID-19 due to the fact that they are over-represented in industries that have been heavily affected by the impact of the pandemic, including accommodation, food services and the retail industry. We also know that many young people were adversely impacted by the bushfires in New South Wales and Victoria in the summer of 2019-20.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted the intended approach of the Youth Taskforce and the finalisation of this document. Throughout the document reference is made to the development of a Final Report in March 2020, the reprioritisation of work has meant that focus has been placed instead on the development of the National Youth Policy Framework (the Framework) due for submission to the Minister for Youth by the end of 2020. The Framework is being developed with the impact of these crises in mind and the knowledge that they will impact young people in the years ahead. It is anticipated that the Framework will provide an appropriate platform for addressing some of the issues being faced by young Australians as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and bushfires. Young people, organisations that represent young people and relevant Government agencies will be consulted on the development of the Framework in the coming months.
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Executive summary

The Youth Taskforce was established for an initial period of six months to report to the Minister for Youth, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck by December 2019, on options for:

- Whole of government coordination of policies and programs impacting young people;
- How to address gaps and consider options through investigating the extent of existing policies and programs; and
- Ways to improve engagement and participation by young people in decision-making by government.

This report is an interim report to the Minister, with the Minister intending to conduct his own consultations early in 2020.

The Taskforce has taken a strength based approach to the project, identifying first what is needed to keep young people strong, hopeful and engaged, acknowledging there are over 100 youth initiatives across the Australian government focussed on supporting young people in some aspect of their lives (see Appendix 4).

Noting the Minister is particularly interested in areas that could better support marginalised young people, the consultations conducted by the Taskforce had a specific focus on services for these young people. The ten consultation stops included a mix of capital cities and rural and regional areas with known unemployment hotspots.

The Taskforce team members are grateful to all the participants who shared their stories with us, including their stories of frustration and hopelessness. However, there were also many ideas for improving services and making a genuine difference in the lives of disadvantaged young people. While it might be assumed that there are differences in the experiences of those living in cities compared to life in rural or remote areas, there were recurring themes that turned up at every consultation:

- Mental health concerns and rates of youth suicide;
- Difficulty navigating the system and finding programs/services that could help them;
- Transport as a barrier to employment and accessing education and health services.

There are current Government initiatives identified in this report that address the mental health issues and a wide range of work underway to reconfigure government services to be more user oriented. However, the Taskforce has not been able to identify any work underway at either the Australian government or State and Territory level to address the transport issue. Transport seems to be addressed to varying degrees by individual service providers and yet it would benefit from a more concerted and coordinated effort.

Through this process, the Taskforce has identified a diverse stakeholder list to assist with future consultations, many of whom have offered to host a meeting between their clients and the Minister.

We have also established a Youth Affairs Coordination Network across interested portfolios and we are grateful for the assistance and advice provided by this group. There is a great willingness in this group to provide better communication and coordination between portfolios for both policy and program development and to support the Minister.

We hope the information and evidence collated in this report provides a good basis for further consultation and the development of a Youth Policy Framework.
Report overview

The Youth Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established under the auspices of the Secretaries Committee on Social Policy (SPC) to support the newly appointed Minister for Youth by undertaking a joint whole-of-government project, to scope and develop options on:

- whole of government coordination of policies and programs impacting young people
- how to address gaps and consider options through investigating the extent of existing policies and programs currently in place, and
- ways to improve engagement and participation by young people by decision-making by government.

To support this process and test ideas, the Taskforce has convened a fortnightly meeting with officials from the Attorney Generals Department, Departments’ of Education; Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business; Finance; Health; Prime Minister and Cabinet; Social Services; Veterans’ Affairs and the National Indigenous Australian’s Agency.

This Interim Report (the Report) provides a snapshot profile of young Australians by looking at relevant data, surveys, research and feedback from consultation process conducted by the Youth Taskforce. While the Report canvasses a number of issues, it has strong focus on education, employment and health, noting that positive outcomes across these domains are integral to a young person’s successful transition to adulthood. The Report also considers how young people are engaged with government and participate in decision making processes, looking at options on how to improve youth engagement and identifying what makes a service or program work well for young people (particularly for those who are marginalised or experience disadvantage).

A Final Report will be provided in March 2020.

To prepare this Report, the Taskforce conducted an extensive information gathering exercise, comprising of:
• developing of Issue Papers on marginalised young people, Australia’s international obligations, state and territory roles and responsibilities in youth matters, and data gaps;
• one-on-one visits with service providers and consultations with young people who use those services;
• meetings with experts / specialists, including as guest at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Youth conferences;
• a desktop audit of the youth affairs policy, program and service delivery landscape (both within Australia and internationally) and research on existing surveys, papers, research; and,
• a series of consultations in capital cities, regional and remote locations, held over a six-week period.

This Report is focused on information gathered by the Taskforce and only briefly touches on different programs and services funded or delivered by the Australian Government, given the depth and breadth of policies, programs and services delivered to young people by the Commonwealth.

It is important to acknowledge there are a range of policies and programs across Commonwealth portfolios that address a number of the challenges represented in this paper and these will be examined more fully in the Final Report.

Consultations

Figure 2: A drawing from a participant at the Alice Springs consultation

Consultations were held across Australia throughout October to November 2019 across a mix of capital cities and regional locations (identified as youth unemployment hotspots) in Alice Springs, Bendigo, Cairns, Canberra, Devonport, Hobart, Melbourne, Mount Isa and Perth and Sydney.

Organisations invited to attend were encouraged to send or bring along a representative young person as part of the consultation process at a number of the sessions held. As noted above, the Taskforce also met with a number of young people. These meetings were facilitated by service providers with trusted relationships on the organisation’s premises, which helped to ensure the young people we spoke with felt comfortable and supported to share their views with us.

The objective of the consultations was to gather information on gaps and challenges across the policy, program and service delivery landscape, to understand how young people engage with government and participate in decision making, with a view to identifying opportunities, models of good practice, and what works well for young people. While key issues identified through the consultation process are captured in the Report, further analysis of the consultation feedback will continue to inform the final report due March 2020.
Defining ‘Youth’

It is important to acknowledge there is no set or agreed definition of who constitutes ‘youth’ or ‘young person’ - each young person faces their own unique challenges and pathways.

However, for the purpose of the report, the terms ‘young people’ and ‘youth’ are used to refer to people aged 15-24 years old in accordance with the United Nations definition of youth. This age range is a guide only and varies depending on the objectives of the policy, program, or area. For example, some youth programs often provide services to 12-25 year olds, while education services may differentiate between young people up to the age of 18 still in secondary education and 18 years and older in vocational training or tertiary education.

Marginalised young people

The report has a particular focus on young people who may experience marginalisation, and need targeted investment and approaches to support them. Such groups of young people include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people, including refugees and other migrants
- Young people living in regional, rural or remote Australia
- School aged young people not engaged in education
- Young people with family, caring or parenting responsibilities
- Young people in the child protection or out-of-home-care systems
- Young people in juvenile detention
- Young people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness
- Young people with disability
- Young people with a chronic health condition
- Young people with a mental health condition
- Young people with alcohol and/or other drug dependencies
- Young people who identify as LGBTQIA+
- Young people from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds.
- Young people not engaged in education, training, or employment (NEET)

It is important to note that young people can experience multiple forms of marginalisation. This intersectionality shapes their experiences, including when engaging with systems and services, and can further compound the disadvantage they may experience.
Chapter 1 – Young people

Young Australian’s are our country’s greatest asset. Our wish for them is that they transition smoothly from adolescence to adulthood, be healthy and have a positive sense of wellbeing, in a safe environment with the support and encouragement of a family/kin group, through education systems that inspire and energise them to find meaningful employment, with a sense of inclusion and a willingness and openness for civic and community engagement. The vast majority of young Australians will enter employment and live a meaningful life.

For young Australians to be given the best chance to reach their potential, they will need to navigate a series of challenges and situations. A number of protective factors have been identified that help to ameliorate risks presented by these challenges. The table below outlines some of the various risk and protective factors across social, environmental and individual domains that Australia’s young people face.

Table 1: Social, environmental and individual protective and risk factors for young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>regular school attendance</td>
<td>academic challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive relationships with teachers, coaches and peers</td>
<td>truancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation and achievement in school activities</td>
<td>peer rejection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>access to personal, interactional and academic support</td>
<td>bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academic challenges</td>
<td>suspension and exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>truancy</td>
<td>perceived irrelevance of school lack of support for learning needs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peer rejection</td>
<td>ascertained learning difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>nurturing, supportive attachments to family and extended kinship networks</td>
<td>family conflict and violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parental supervision and interest in child’s growth and development</td>
<td>neglect or abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parent access to relevant resources and support</td>
<td>parental rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>family conflict and violence</td>
<td>lack of consistent nurturing and supervision</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neglect or abuse</td>
<td>family poverty and isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parental rejection</td>
<td>parental offending</td>
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<td></td>
<td>lack of consistent nurturing and supervision</td>
<td>alcohol and drug dependencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>family poverty and isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>associating with pro-social peers</td>
<td>associating with offending peers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participating in anti-social behaviour</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Environmental Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>stable and affordable housing</td>
<td>lack of support services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>access to services</td>
<td>socio-economic disadvantage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation in community activities, such as sport and recreation</td>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>involvement with supporting adults</td>
<td>lack of training or employment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>income security</td>
<td>non-participation in sport/recreational clubs and activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lack of income</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lack of housing security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Events</td>
<td>avoiding, surviving and recovering from harm caused by loss and trauma</td>
<td>death and loss</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>severe trauma</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>repeated out-of-home placements</td>
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<td>exiting care</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>early pregnancy</td>
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<td>homelessness</td>
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<th>Individual Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>pro-social attitudes</td>
<td>offending history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>competent social skills</td>
<td>poor social skills</td>
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</table>

Today’s young Australians (Millennials and Generation Z) are more visual than verbal. They prefer collaborative ways of working to hierarchical structures in the workplace and they will have on average 5 or 6 careers and 18 jobs. In today’s workforce, there is increasing employer demand for workers who possess a ‘portfolio of skills’ including specialised and high level skills, digital literacy and soft skills, while also expecting workers to be prepared with job-specific skills. And they are of course digital natives – they live in the virtual world as well as the real world. Their transition to adulthood is becoming increasingly complex. Generational change is happening at a more rapid pace now than ever before and often in ways that place greater demands on young people.

“In previous generations the path for most young adults were predictable: graduate from high school, enter college or the workforce, leave home, find a spouse, and start a family. While there were always exceptions, these established milestones provided structure and direction for young adults as they assumed adult responsibilities. Today, those pathways are considerably less predictable, often extended, and sometimes

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2 mccrindle.com.au/insights/publications/infographics/
3 Ibid above
4 Ibid above
significantly more challenging.” Navigating transitions during this period in the life course can set young people on a path that can shape their future trajectories. Young people may be engaging with a multitude of services during this time (often for the first time) and this can often be overwhelming to navigate. The need for appropriate targeted policies, programs and services that can effectively support young people during this time is critical.

While it is important we support all young people to access the services they need and the opportunities to live their best life, there are a number of young people who are marginalised and/or vulnerable and need targeted investment and approaches to support them to achieve this. These young people are often under-represented in data collections and are likely to experience additional challenges and barriers to inclusion and participation, which may mean they slip through existing support arrangements. It is important to understand the transition to adulthood is even more complex for these young people as they are more exposed to risk factors and less supported by protective factors, and as such are less likely to experience a positive transition to adulthood.

Figure 5: A snapshot of young Australians (data)


A note on data
There remain a number of gaps caused by challenges in linkage of administrative data or privacy considerations across states and territories, along with different agencies, average figures not accounting for regional variation, sample sizes not being large enough to allow adequate disaggregation (particularly for groups with intersectionality) attribution in and currency of longitudinal surveys, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification, and missing identity data such as birth certificates.

It can be difficult to compare between different datasets that report on outcomes across health, education, housing and employment. As such, data collation and analysis on young people also must consider variations in definitions. Furthermore, “there are still a number of indicators for which there is a lack of national data, data for relevant age groups or recent available data including sun protection, sexual and reproductive health, community participation, sexual assault, oral health and mental health. Some of these indicators require significant indicator and data development—family functioning, and school relationships and bullying—and there are other areas of emerging concern that may require future indicator development. These include sleep disorders, media and communications, and the effects of climate change.”7

The lack of available disaggregated data for young people in Australia has been criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Australian Children’s Commissioner. This is also an area of grievance by NGOs wishing to substantiate funding needs for services they provide to support young people. A more comprehensive analysis of these issues will be included in the Final Report.

### Snapshot of surveys:
What young people are saying is important to them?

The Youth Taskforce reviewed surveys and research into issues facing all Australia’s young people, produced by peak youth organisations. The two most frequently raised issues relating to their priorities are:

1. Climate change
2. Mental health and suicide.

The four most frequently raised issues relating to their current personal challenges are:

1. Mental health (i.e. access to services, coping with stress, feeling sad or anxious, suicide, bullying, depression).
2. Equity, equality and discrimination (i.e. gender equality, racism, misrepresentation of youth).
3. Financial constraints (i.e. housing affordability, more financial help to complete education, wanting more work hours).
4. Not being heard, taken seriously, a lack of trust in government.

Other key issues for Australia’s young people were identified as:
- Access and costs associated with transport (public or private)
- Education and employment options (including transitioning between the two, and the opportunities that are available)
- Family and relationship issues
- Living on a limited income (costs associated with housing, education, transport, access to support payments etc.).

While these third party studies vary in scope and sample size (especially when targeting priority groups), they are often conducted by organisations that have well-established relationships with young people. This places the organisation in an ideal and trusted position to accurately represent and capture the voice of young people.

Chapter 2 – Youth participation and engagement

KEY POINTS:

- Young people are experts in their own experience. Their opinions and experiences are critical to shaping the decisions that impact their lives now and into the future.
- Young people are increasingly disenfranchised with government. Those that spoke to the Taskforce want genuine, meaningful and ongoing engagement with governments.
- There are a number of models that can be adopted to support and promote this at a national level, but used on their own, cannot capture the diverse voices of all young people, particularly those who experience marginalisation.
- While engaging online can be a valuable tool, many young people we spoke to still want face-to-face interactions.

The United Nations notes that youth well-being, participation and empowerment are key drivers of sustainable development and peace around the world. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires strong and inclusive partnerships between young people and all stakeholders, so that the development challenges facing youth (such as unemployment, political exclusion, marginalization, problematic access to education and health etc.) are addressed and the positive role of youth as partners in promoting development and sustaining peace is recognised.

It was clear through our consultations young people are becoming increasingly disenfranchised with government. However, there was also an acknowledgment that it is critically important for young people to engage and participate in decision-making in a way that empowers them to shape their future.

Figure 6: Infographic - ‘The Hopes and Dreams of Young Australians’ by the Reach Foundation (2017)

Why is youth engagement important?
The Australian Government has a number of international obligations to uphold the rights of youth in Australia. These are codified in a number of international treaties which Australia has ratified. One key treaty is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 12 of the CRC requires that any young person who is

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The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended the Australian Government enhance the meaningful and empowered participation of children and young people within their families, communities and school, paying particular attention to girls, children with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Committee has also urged Australia to ‘ensure the meaningful participation of children in the design and implementation of policies and programs aimed at achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as far as they concern children’. The National Children’s Commissioner has recommended that the Australian Government provide resources to enable the Commissioner to conduct consultations with children on decisions that affect them at the national level on an ongoing basis.

But beyond these obligations and recommendations, youth engagement is vital to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of youth targeted programs, services and interventions.

- Working with young people in defining the problems and issues that affect them can lead to new understandings about the source of such problems as well as potential responses.
- Young people’s involvement also helps to build credibility and rapport for the project and ensure that their values and attitudes are accounted for … this approach helps develop interventions that are engaging to young people and therefore are more likely to be used, increasing the overall reach and impact of the intervention.
- Continuous engagement also helps keep pace with the fast-changing uses of technology, mitigating some of the impacts of the inherent time lag of translating research and evaluation findings into practice.³

Participants at a number of consultations spoke about growing sense of isolation and loneliness for young people and the importance of connectedness. Many people spoke of the need for young people to be engaged, connected and have strong relationships with their family, community and friends. For many young people who are marginalised, these relationships may be with youth workers and service providers (i.e. local youth or community services). To that end, a discussion at the Melbourne consultation highlighted risks of not promoting youth participation, including disengagement, mental health issues, increasing disenfranchisement and withdrawing from community, leading to young people seeking belonging or ‘to be heard’ in other ways.

Figure 7: Hart’s Ladder⁴⁰
The South Australian Government and Victorian youth peak body (YACVIC) use Hart’s Ladder as a model that underpins their approach to youth engagement. Hart’s Ladder sets out the various ways in which you can engage with audiences ordered by the levels (or rungs) of real participation. Hart is explicit about youth participation being a fundamental right of citizenship.11

What do young people want when engaging with government?
The 2019 UN Youth Australia representative Kareem El-Ansary said at the start of his year, “As young people, we will inherit the world of the future and by extension the ramifications of the decisions that are being made today. It is so important that we have an opportunity to weigh in on those decisions.”12 Kareem has spent the last twelve months on a ‘listening tour’ as the 2019 Representative, holding 233 consultations across the nation; about 60 towns and cities, in every state and territory, with a mix of urban, regional and remote communities.

Kareem, along with other young people we spoke with through this process, identified that young people want genuine engagement with governments and to be truly heard. It is important to them that engagement asking for their views is followed up so they can see change as a result of their involvement. They want to see transparency to build trust in governments. Conversely, young people we spoke to currently feel their views are ignored. Results from the latest Mission Australia survey show that less than one in 10 young people surveyed feel they have a voice when it comes to public affairs.13 “We continue to find compelling evidence of an increasing trust divide between government and citizens reflected in the decline of democratic satisfaction, receding trust in politicians, political parties and other key institutions (especially media) and lack of public confidence in the capacity of government to address public policy concerns.”14

There was also a high degree of cynicism about government consultations and the Taskforce found it difficult to encourage young people to attend our workshops and voice their views.

“We have 5 young people in our treatment facility. None of them wanted to come, none of them wanted a bar of it, because 12 times a year the Government comes and asks to talk to them. It’s always different people saying the same thing, with no outcomes, and no results shown.” – Alice Springs consultation participant

Critically a number of people at the consultations noted the importance of engagement mechanisms for young people involving and being led by young people, that is, young people need to be at the centre of the process in policies that affect them. A number of participants also spoke about valuing young people’s time, and if/when they are engaged, there is a growing expectation they should be renumerated for their time. This may mean providing vouchers or other incentives to engage young people e.g. to conduct a survey, interview, or engage in a service. However, a different model was highlighted at the WA consultation - YACWA Consulting (see text box).

How are youth currently engaged in policy development?
Youth parliaments are a common feature for OECD countries. All Australian state and territory governments with the exception of the ACT, convene a Youth Parliament, although these operate primarily as an educational opportunity for young people, not as a mechanism to incorporate their voices in policy development. However,

11 Ibid above
12 UN Youth Blog – Introducing Kareem – the 2019 Youth Representative unyouth.org.au/2019/01/introducing-kareem/
the ACT model convenes a Youth Advisory Committee which operates as a consultative body on major policies that can be accessed by every ACT Directorate. In 2012, a National Indigenous Youth Parliament, supported by the Australian Electoral Commission, in partnership with the YMCA, was held to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Indigenous Australia’s Right to Vote in a Federal Election. Two further National Indigenous Youth Parliaments were convened in 2014 and 2017.

The Australian Government has no standard protocols or mechanisms for consultation with young people. The commonly used public consultation processes rely on individuals monitoring government requests for submissions and being sufficiently motivated to respond. They are not specifically designed to attract submissions from young people. However, there are some examples of consultation specifically geared for young people. One example is the eSafety Commissioner online process to involve 14-17 year olds as part of its Safety by Design project, which is an initiative that places the safety and rights of users at the centre of the design, development and deployment of online products and services.

Role of technology
For most young people, technology is essential for keeping in contact with their peers and finding information. However, face to face meetings are still important for building rapport and trust. Whilst online based communications are one option to engage with youth, there are communities with telecommunications deficits, or the young people simply do not have access to smart phones and internet because of the cost involved.

“Both research and policy agendas need to integrate social media and related information technologies. Because young adults typically are more expert in social media than many researchers and policy makers, the incorporation of social media into these agendas would be an example of the broader value of giving young adults a voice in the process.”

Key opportunities
There are a range of mainstream ways to improve engagement with young people that are in use in comparable countries. They include:

- convening Youth Parliaments and/or Youth Advisory Groups / Youth Reference Group
- appointing Youth Ambassadors
- appointing a Young thinker in residence
- reconvening the National Indigenous Youth Parliament

While all of the above approaches will attract motivated young people who are likely already engaged in voluntary organisations or other forms of civic engagement, feedback from consultations on models that work to support marginalised young people identified the need to use existing networks and relationships (whether that be service providers, with youth workers, or through advocacy/peak bodies and their affiliates) and meeting in trusted environments. For example, CREATE Foundation develop young people who have experienced care to become CREATE Young Consultants. Young Consultants use their stories and experiences to represent CREATE at local, state or national events and forums. Young people with lived experienced can discuss and advocate on issues.

For the broader group of young people, particularly those who are marginalised, there is a need to build trust with the Government and show Government is genuinely listening to the views of young people. Through the consultation process it is clear there is a present level of cynicism and disengagement for disadvantaged young people, and this cannot be underestimated. For example, during the consultation process the Taskforce heard views that schools do not teach students about politics and the political process, which contributed to the lack of understanding of the political and policy making landscape. A number of participants, particularly those in highly disadvantaged areas, had a perception this was a deliberate strategy to disempower young people.

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The following table, developed at the Alice Springs consultation, highlights principles, models and mechanisms for consideration when engaging with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Central Australia.

### Table 2: A write up that captures the discussion at the consultation in Alice Springs on how to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Central Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>What works in Central Australia?</th>
<th>How could this work nationally?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Making connections</td>
<td>• Creating local content</td>
<td>• Consult and engage elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making it dynamic/fun</td>
<td>• Work with local influencers (engage people formally)</td>
<td>• Sharing stories of local champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create space for expression and engagement</td>
<td>• Promote things creatively and appropriately</td>
<td>• Educate young people on our history as well as engage them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building trust</td>
<td>• Value shared experience</td>
<td>• Regional conference or clans for young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sustainability</td>
<td>• Youth led consultation</td>
<td>• Voting age lowered / earlier engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Environment (friendly and safe)</td>
<td>• Local workshops – strengthen knowledge on the issue</td>
<td>• Promote how political processes worked – increased understanding leads to increased engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using technology</td>
<td>• Work with local events</td>
<td>• Social media strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Up to date information</td>
<td>• Work with trusted organisations (i.e. Clontarf)</td>
<td>• Send the right messages to young people – show respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being open about the process (where is the information going)</td>
<td>• Making messages specific to the audience</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being flexible and open minded</td>
<td>• Community leaders get together and understand what is happening in the community</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Going to young people (someone they have a relationship with)</td>
<td>• Engage organisations like Ninti One</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empower</td>
<td>• Social media strategy</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make it meaningful to them</td>
<td>• Promote awareness and provide education on ways / how to engage with government</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Models which are more likely to engage more marginalised youth, as well as the youth in general include:

- Utilising an online platform, such as social media supported by an online engagement strategy – this would help to engage the young people where they are using the feedback tools that they engage with, and support a diversity of voices being heard.
- Facilitating surveys/focus groups for representative samples of young people through research organisations.
- Using service providers to facilitate discussions (i.e. interviews, forums) with young people and officials in government departments involved in policies and programs being delivered by government, or with members of Government themselves) in a trusted environment
- Models that support ongoing engagement, or develop feedback loops with young people, to continue to seek their feedback not only to inform decisions but throughout the process, making it a two-way, iterative process.
- Models that are creative or allow for multiple/diverse expressions of input i.e. arts or creative programs
- Support youth peer consultation
- Promote awareness and provide education on ways / how to engage with government
Chapter 3 – Education, Employment and Health

KEY POINTS:

- Young adults’ successes or failures in education and employment are integrally linked to their health, particularly mental health, and vice versa. A holistic cross-portfolio approach is needed.

- Many participants said poverty is the underlying issue for many young people who are disadvantaged and disengaged from education and employment.
There are a number of challenges facing the current schooling system in meeting the needs of a young people at risk of, or already disengaging with education. However, there was a consensus throughout the consultations that flexible education and training approaches and supported individualised education pathways and opportunities for young people worked well.

What people identified as working well for young people were programs that provide an employment pathway. That is, training that leads to employment and is supported by good employment prospects. This works well when there is a trusted relationship between employment services, employers and young people in communities.

At every consultation mental health was raised as a priority issue facing young people.

Youth health services, including youth mental health services, play a critical role, however, feedback at our consultations notes there are gaps in these and other health services for young people.

Policies, programs and services across all sectors, which promote and support inclusionary practice for young people with disability, are critical.

At every consultation, concerns were raised with difficulties navigating the system or knowing what services may be available.

The following section of the report explores the key issues that were examined during the consultation, and focuses on the feedback we received about gaps, opportunities and what works well.

Education and training

It is important that all young people, especially vulnerable or marginalised young people, receive the education necessary to obtain the jobs of the future. Students will need to be able to apply their education in less clear and stable circumstances. Generally speaking, skills in innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship are likely to have greater importance in providing young people with opportunities to work.

Figure 9: Projected employment growth to May 2023 (’000) for skill level by occupation

Completing senior secondary education is more important than ever. Currently, an average of 79 per cent of young people across Australia achieve a senior secondary certificate of education or equivalent qualification.\footnote{Background Paper - Senior Secondary Pathways paper https://www.pathwaysreview.edu.au/} To be competitive in the job markets of the future, more students will need to both complete Year 12, and obtain additional qualifications through some form of post-school educational or training pathway. In 2010, the Australian Government introduced the Compact for Young Australians, requiring young Australians to participate in full time education, training or employment until they reach the age of 17. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) also set a target to lift the Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rate for 20-24 year olds to 90 per cent by 2020.

There are some unique challenges that marginalised or vulnerable young people may face in making decisions around their future pathways, and ultimately experiencing successful transitions. These include being less likely to recognise the value of education,\footnote{Nguyen, N. and Blomberg, D. (2014) The role of aspirations in the educational and occupational choices of young people, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Adelaide, p. 7.} differing parental expectations,\footnote{Ibid above.} lower aspirations than their peers,\footnote{James, R. (2002) Socioeconomic background and higher education participation: an analysis of school students’ aspirations and expectations, Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, cited from Nguyen, N. and Blomberg, D. (2014) The role of aspirations in the educational and occupational choices of young people, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Adelaide, p. 7.} and geographic barriers including distance from community and cultural supports.\footnote{Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (circa) (2016) National Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Student Transitions Project: Final Report, Department of Education and Training, Australia, p. 1.} It is important that senior secondary schooling supports the participation of all students including those who are marginalised and who tend to face poorer education and labour market outcomes.

Issues raised during consultations were focused on the challenges and capacity of the schooling system to meet the needs of a growing cohort of young people at risk of, or already, disengaging with education; the cost to young people and their families of education and supporting themselves to receive an education (including if undertaking any unpaid work experience to improve their employability prospects), issues when leaving school to enter post-school pathways, and the need for more career and transition support.

Comments regarding education at consultations varied widely depending on location. For example, at the Canberra consultations truancy and/or chronic non-attendance from school was identified as a ‘red flag’ which can be symptomatic of broader issues facing young people, or the community more broadly. In contrast, low
levels of attendance in schools in the Northern Territory were seen by consultation participants in Alice Springs to reflect issues of poverty and the ability of the education system to meet the needs of students.

The importance of local schooling options for people in regional, rural and remote communities was also noted, as many young people have to leave the support of their families and communities to receive an education. The value of culturally safe and appropriate schooling that recognises the strengths of young people, their backgrounds and their ability to navigate and walk ‘two worlds’ was also highlighted. Specifically, participants in Alice Springs raised a need for bilingual education provision and more culturally safe schools/schooling options in communities where there is currently limited provision. Attaining a competent level of English proficiency for refugee and CALD young people is a critical factor in their settlement outcomes.

What people identified at consultations as working well in education and training was flexible, individualised education pathways and opportunities for young people – particularly those at risk of, or already, disengaging with school. This may be through the provision of alternative learning environments (including online education options) and/or approaches based on the needs of students, or a greater focus on what the student would like to pursue and supporting them to achieve this (e.g. engaging in vocational education and training). Young people engaged in secondary education who do not plan to enter university need to have opportunities to access higher qualifications through VET or equivalent training providers and support to complete these qualifications, in order to stay engaged. Connecting young people with projected growth industries in their region at a skill level commensurate with anticipated employment demand will be important in ensuring young people have the opportunity to achieve strong employment outcomes.

To that end, each state and territory has a range of individual approaches and strategies addressing student engagement and wellbeing ranging from frameworks, strategies, support services, school resources, and pastoral care. A common approach to improving engagement has been to integrate VET subjects into upper-secondary curriculum. Understanding the outcomes of these programs and how they vary across different models of provision is important in designing effective youth transition policies. Respondents to a 2018, national survey of Australian youth aged 15-24 felt that schools could better set them up for future success by educating them in finances (91%), life skills (79%), and employment (64%).

Schools who engage well with students have flexible models that look at the needs and interests of individual students. Flexible models can work to engage all students, with some focused specifically on students at risk of disengagement. States and territories offer various programs with flexible delivery options to improve student engagement and transition arrangements in some areas. These range from vocationally intense programs to programs specifically aimed at inspiring disadvantaged communities.

Feedback from consultation participants noted schools that had strong and collaborative relationships with a range of services and systems (i.e. health, youth, justice etc.), or where services were co-located, were helpful in preventing disengagement of young people from schools. As noted in the recently released draft Productivity Commission Report on Mental Health: “the introduction of senior school leader positions for student wellbeing could go a long way toward: improving the early identification and treatment of mental ill-health in young people; helping to maintain a continued engagement of those with mental ill-health in their own education; helping create workable linkages between schools and healthcare pathways; and raising awareness of mental wellbeing in the community... Schools are already funded to provide social and emotional wellbeing programs.

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However, they face a confusing and disjointed proliferation of poorly evaluated programs and services on child wellbeing.  

Refugee youth who have experienced displacement because of conflicts and persecution may have significant gaps in their education. Skilled refugee and CALD youth may face difficulties having their qualifications recognised in Australia due to differences in regulatory systems. This may affect their ability to attain meaningful employment relevant to their qualifications. Refugee youth may struggle to access tertiary education where their parents lack knowledge or understanding of the university sector and how to navigate this. They may also struggle to access adequate public transport from the areas where they live to attend educational institutions, particularly universities.

Current Government action

The COAG Education Council has commissioned a review of senior secondary pathways to examine how students can be supported to choose the best pathway into work, further education or training. The review will be led by Professor Peter Shergold AC, and will provide advice and recommendations to the Education Council on the skills and knowledge young people need to thrive beyond school. The Review is one of eight national policy initiatives under the National School Reform Agreement. The Review is informed by a recommendation from the 2018 report, *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Education Excellence in Australian Schools*.

The Review will report to the COAG Education Council in June 2020.

Employment

The transition to adulthood is, for many young people, aligned with the transition to employment and financial independence. The vast majority of young people make this transition successfully. There were 1,955,500 young people working as at October 2019. Work plays an important part in many people’s lives, offering them social connection and the opportunity to contribute to their community; helping them to achieve a meaningful and fulfilled life.

On average, young people are taking longer to transition from education to work, and to become financially independent.  

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were staying in education longer and becoming more qualified in 2017 compared to 2007. For example, more were studying (30% in 2017 compared to 24% in 2007); a higher proportion had obtained a bachelor degree or higher level qualification and the numbers in full-time work decreased significantly and the proportion of those employed casually was increasing.

Employment was a key issue discussed at all consultations with a wide range of issues being canvassed. Some service providers looking to assist young people with gaining and retaining employment spoke about limited opportunities or employment prospects for young people in their communities, and the impact of intergenerational unemployment on families and communities, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas. This is supported by data, including in the 2016 Census, which identified young people (aged 15-24) living in small towns were comparatively less engaged in work, study or training than their city peers, with almost two thirds (62%) of people aged 15-24 fully engaged in work, study, or training in small towns, compared with three quarters (75%) of people of the same age in major cities. The youth unemployment rate tends to be higher in regions outside the capital cities. In October 2019, the youth unemployment rate in the Capital Cities was 11.3 per cent, compared with 12.4 per cent in the Rest of State areas. However, it should be noted that Capital Cities in Australia historically tend to exhibit stronger overall labour market conditions than their non-metropolitan counterparts.

Young people the Taskforce engaged with highlighted the need for more support from employment services and flagged the limitation of strict eligibility criteria as a barrier to accessing some services. A number of representatives from the youth sector more broadly spoke about the need for programs that support pre-employment skills, that is, skills to enable the young person to be job ready. The lack of employability skills (communication and teamwork skills, interpersonal and people skills, creativity and problem solving, adaptability and resilience, reliability and motivation, critical thinking and digital literacy) has a significant impact on a young persons’ employability.

The importance of employability skills has been highlighted by research on employers’ recruitment experiences that found 72 per cent of employers place as much emphasis, if not more, on employability skills than they do on technical skills. When specifically asked about attitudes to hiring youth, 36 per cent of employers surveyed said that young people can best enhance their employment prospects by improving their attitude to work.

A number of people, including young people who had completed higher education, spoke at the consultations about the role of work experience when applying for positions and the unrealistic expectations of some employers in relation to this. For unemployed young people (aged 15-24) ‘insufficient work experience’ is seen as the most common difficulty in finding work (20 per cent) followed by ‘too many applicants for available jobs’ (15 per cent). For employers, a lack of work experience is commonly cited as a barrier to young people getting jobs, with many employers saying that work experience or volunteer work, particularly while still at school, is an effective means for young people to improve their employment prospects.

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27 Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Survey of Employers’ Recruitment Experiences
28 Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Improving the employment prospects of young Australians, 2015
29 ABS cat no. 6226.0, Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia, Feb 2019
30 Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Improving the employment prospects of young Australians, 2015
The world of work is changing and some young people are finding it harder to enter the workforce. Evidence suggests competition for entry-level jobs and jobs traditionally taken up by young Australians aged 15-24 years is intensifying.31

In August 2019, there were 106,900 young people who had never worked before (well below the peak of 122,200 reached in November 2013).32 While the circumstances of some of these young people are likely not concerning, others will go on to experience difficulty gaining and maintaining attachment to the labour market. Furthermore, as work becomes more skilled, and more young people participate in tertiary education, young people without post school qualifications are also finding it harder to gain full-time work.33 Not having work impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of young people, and a lack of money makes it harder to connect with friends and family and to participate in the community. Many unemployed young people report that their ‘world gets smaller’ as they lose the ability to connect with others.34

A key issue raised was the need for greater understanding by employment providers on the significant issues/life circumstances a young person may be experiencing, which is impacting on their ability and capacity to seek and retain a job (housing stability, poor mental health etc.). Refugee and CALD youth, especially those who arrive as young adults, may face disadvantages when trying to obtain employment due to an inability to obtain strong levels of English proficiency (which is a critical factor in settlement outcomes more broadly); a lack of Australian work experience and limited awareness about Australian workplace culture; difficulty in getting overseas skills and qualifications recognised; negative media coverage and stereotypes; limited access to digital technology; and lack of social capital and networks difficulty obtaining a driver’s licence or accessing adequate public transport.

Many participants emphasised the need for employers to be more realistic with their expectations of young people. For young people who have experienced negative life events such as trauma, relationships breakdowns or homelessness the pathway to employment can be extremely difficult. The research shows young people who are marginalised, including those who experience interconnected or multifaceted issues are more likely to experience long term unemployment.35 The issue of intergenerational unemployment was a strong discussion point at the Devonport consultations.

31 Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Improving the employment prospects of young Australians, 2015
Service providers and young people alike all confirmed that in order for an employment program to work well it needs to provide young people with a clear employment pathway. Services must offer young people training and skill development opportunities which directly link to good employment prospects. While Transition to Work was positively referred to by existing providers, the services were rarely mentioned across the youth sector generally. An employment option that was mentioned frequently, as a positive pathway from education into employment, was an apprenticeship. While this was still seen as a viable and positive avenue for some young people service providers also highlighted significant barriers to securing and maintaining these roles. One provider felt that there were too many barriers preventing disadvantaged young people from gaining an apprenticeship, stating that young people should be able to leave school early and take up an apprenticeship if that was in their best interests, the same provider also raised concerns about the cost of TAFE training particularly for young people who are from disadvantaged families.

Anecdotally, young people appear to have better outcomes when employment providers/services work collaboratively with employers and the young people they employ to create a supportive and safe workplace environment which helps to manage expectations for both the employer and the young person. One organisation we spoke to highlighted the value in working collaboratively with a training provider to broaden the remit of their business administration course to incorporate aspects of medical administration – noting that with additional training a number of the young people accessing the course would be able to find employment in the community controlled health sector. The same service also spoke about the importance of working with employers and had set up a community of practice – a knowledge / yarning circle for employers on how to create a culturally safe environment for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people placed into their organisation. This works to bridge the gap between employers and young people.

Many participants said that poverty is the underlying issue for many young people who are disadvantaged, and was a key driver of disadvantage. Young people need their basic needs to be met before there can be progress towards achieving employment or employment-related outcomes. One young person the Taskforce consulted with in Cairns, spoke of the importance of having access to food to avoid getting “the fuzzies” and how the provision of food through their Transition to Work provider helped them to more effectively participate in their job search activities. There were also reports of individuals who provided food to the community in Mount Isa on their own initiative.

These stories underscore the fact that a young person who is not getting basic needs met such as a stable home and three meals a day will not be able to focus on their employment prospects.

**Current Government action**

The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business delivers a range of programs and services to support disadvantaged young people to move from welfare to work, including Youth Jobs PaTH which provides young Australians the assistance and encouragement to learn new skills which will help them become job ready and enter the workforce. PaTH Internships in particular, provide a valuable and voluntary work trial opportunity and support young people gain experience of the workplace and provide an important mechanism for young people to get a foot in the door. Employment outcomes for internships are strong.

In addition, the Transition to Work service, which provides intensive pre-employment assistance to young people who have disengaged from work and study and are at risk of long-term welfare dependence, is being evaluated by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
The Transition to Work Interim Evaluation Report was published on 8 November 2019 on the department’s website: https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/transition-work-interim-evaluation-report and the second stage of the evaluation is well progressed. The final report is currently in the production phase. The Transition to Work evaluation focuses on supporting continuous improvement of the service by assessing how effectively and efficiently the service is meeting its objectives.

More broadly, the Australian Government employment services are being transformed to provide better services for all job seekers and employers and a better system for providers. The new system is being trialled in two regions from July 2019 before being rolled out nationally from July 2022.

- Job seekers who are job-ready and digitally literate will enter Digital Services and self-manage online.
- Job seekers who need some extra support will be able to self-manage online through Digital Services and receive some additional support from an employment service or training provider.
- The most disadvantaged job seekers will receive Enhanced Services delivered through employment services providers. Providers will deliver a professional, individually tailored service to help prepare and support job seekers into work. Providers will help address a job seeker’s barriers to work through services such as career guidance, mentoring, vocational training, assistance in accessing non-vocational services such as counselling, work experience, job placements and post-placement support.

In addition, the National Careers Institute (NCI) aims to simplify and strengthen Australia’s career development system so Australians can get the career support they need. The NCI is currently engaged in a national conversation to co-design its role, priorities and projects through a range of interactions, including a series of 11 face to face workshops and an online Engagement Hub (e-Hub).

Health and wellbeing, mental health and disability

Young adults’ successes or failures in education and employment are integrally linked to their health, and vice versa. Many young people experience challenges when it comes to their health and wellbeing and the data suggests this is especially true for marginalised young people. Such challenges can include but are not limited to:

- experiencing poorer health due to limited access to or issues navigating healthcare services
- navigating the transition between paediatric and mainstream adult healthcare service
- engaging in risk-taking behaviours such as misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances; engaging in unsafe sexual practices; suicide and self-harm (particularly young people with chronic illness)
- suffering from long term or chronic health conditions
- difficulties engaging with maternal and postnatal health service for younger mothers
- higher risk of living with co-morbidities
- disability
- disengagement from work or study, poverty, discrimination and isolation due to poor health or mental health
- experiencing mental health issues (the causes of which are broad, multi-variable and complex, with causes ranging from genetic predisposition, trauma, financial/ family/ life stressors and social factors such as anxieties and fears related to climate change issues and bullying).

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Feedback from the consultations in relation to young people’s health focused primarily on mental health (which is discussed below), the challenges when transitioning from paediatric to adult health services, the barriers to safely accessing services, the importance of prevention and early intervention (i.e. equipping young people to support their own good health) and critically the value of youth, or youth orientated health services (particularly mental health and sexual health services). The issue of postnatal / parenting support for young mothers was raised as a positive, but one young participant, reflecting on his own experiences, noted a lack of parenting support for young fathers.

### Mental Health

Children and young people bear the major burden for onset and impact of mental illness across the whole lifespan with 1 in 4 Australians aged 16 to 24 years’ experiencing mental illness in any given year (ABS 2007). Half of all mental health issues emerge by age 14 and three quarters of mental illness occur by age 25.\(^ {39} \)

At every consultation mental health and suicide were raised as key challenges facing young people. This is supported by findings from the UN Youth Representative who was quoted in an article on the ABC as saying “Almost everywhere I went in consultations, mental health came up. It’s impacting young people across the board.”\(^ {40} \)

Although it was acknowledged the Government is making significant investments in mental health and suicide prevention, participants indicated there is need for more accessible youth-specific services mental health services. Mental health stakeholders have advocated for more specialised, intensive and extended care than is currently available through headspace to support the estimated 12 per cent of young people with moderate to severe and complex mental health issues. These young people have more severe or complex mental health concerns than can appropriately be treated at headspace, but are generally not unwell enough to access state-funded acute services. One participant in the Devonport consultation noted that “In Launceston and Devonport, adolescent mental health services are until 18, then the young people are dropped, and not picked up by any other service. CAHMS (Child and adolescent mental health services) will literally say to young people: ‘when you turn 18 you’ll have no service, so brace yourself for that’”. Another noted that “young people with mental

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health issues are often ‘sent out of the door’ because they are not allowed in adult ward, and there is nothing between paediatrics and adult wards (and the hospitals don’t want young people in either of those).”

Holistic, wrap around services can provide a comprehensive approach to support for young people experiencing mental health issues, particularly for those who are marginalised, may have co-morbidities, or require additional support in other aspects of their life. Consistent feedback received during the consultations was that wraparound case management approaches have better outcomes than individual service delivery models for young people with intersecting issues.

There were also calls for greater education and awareness raising in relation to mental health issues, and while people felt society had come some way in reducing stigma many acknowledged there was still a way to go. Initial indications from the Draft Productivity Commission draft report on Mental Health identify that some 40% of those with mental ill-health have never accessed mental health services nor seen their GP about their condition, with young people particularly unlikely to seek help41. Participants also spoke of the need for a greater focus on prevention and early intervention in supporting young people and their mental health.

Language is important in mental health. A young person at the Perth consultation spoke about framing conversations in a way that is culturally appropriate and safe for young people, noting social and emotional wellbeing is a more culturally appropriate context to view health/mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Young people from CALD/refugee backgrounds with limited or low English language proficiency in accessing mental health and other support services. This is particularly important as refugee youth may have complex physical and mental health and well-being issues due to traumatic pre-migration experiences, including persecution, loss of family, family separation, disability, displacement and living under difficult conditions in refugee camps. Long health service waiting times can have serious implications on settlement and well-being outcomes. Addressing mental health needs will help mitigate the risks of youth being socially isolated and disengaged, and getting involved in anti-social behaviours.

Bullying and Mental Health
Mission Australia and Black Dog Institute’s Youth mental health report – Youth Survey 2012-16 found that one third of young people with a probable serious mental illness were highly concerned about both bullying/emotional abuse (34.3%) and suicide (32.3%), compared to around one in ten young people without a probable serious mental illness (11.3% and 7.6% respectively).3

A significant part of the discussion on mental health at a number of consultations focused on the impact of poor mental health on other areas of a young person’s life, including access to safe and stable housing and when engaging (or disengaging) in education and employment. According to the Draft Productivity Commission Interim report on Mental Health notes around 12 per cent of Australia’s 15 to 24 years olds seeking help for mental health problems were not engaged in employment, education or training.

For those young adults disengaged from both education and work, the Productivity Commission notes in its draft report that the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program may be effective in re-engaging young people with either education or work. The IPS Trial is part of the Australian Government’s Youth Employment Strategy aimed at tackling the problem of high youth unemployment. The model integrates employment and vocational services with clinical mental health and non-vocational support, and focuses on the individual needs of people with mental illness who are seeking to enter, or remain in, education and/or employment. The IPS Trial is being delivered from selected headspace locations across Australia.

41 Productivity Commission 2019 Draft Report into Mental Health
Disability

While, the majority of young people do not report having a disability and are generally in good physical and mental health, in 2015, just under 8 per cent of young people aged 15-24 had some form of disability.\(^{42}\) However, significant data gaps and under-reporting mean that the total number of young people with a disability is not clear.\(^{43}\) Based on 2015 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare information the most common disability groups reported for the 15-24 age group were:

- intellectual (42%)
- physical restriction (41%)
- psychological (30%).

Issues identified at the consultations for young people with a disability were about the ignorance of others to “invisible” disability, the value of peer support services, the importance of family, parental or support networks being trained to help identify the needs of the young person, where to access / source support, the prevalence of co-existing disorders - especially mental health challenges, as well as issues of access, equity, poverty and isolation. Almost one in five (18.9%) people with disability aged 15-24 years experienced discrimination.\(^{44}\)

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\(^{42}\) ABS (2018) Disability, Ageing and Carers Australia Summary of Findings


One young person with a disability at the Melbourne consultation identified that many young people with a disability want to participate but can’t participate on their own – they need an advocate. Another participant spoke about the need to support more inclusive practices for young people with a disability, taking action to address where a young person has been secluded or separated (including in the class room). These, and other issues relating to people with disability (including young people) are currently being examined by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, due to provide an interim report by 30 October 2020 and a final report by 29 April 2022.

Young Carers

Issues identified at the consultation for young carers were around homelessness, potential early exiting from schooling due to caring requirements, the issue of self-recognition – that is, identifying themselves in the caring role, the importance of respite services, community engagement, peer support networks and network support with other family members of support groups. In the time available, the Youth Taskforce acknowledges that is has not been able to talk to many young carers – their caring duties mean that they were not available at consultation times.

Current Government action

There is a large body of work underway as part of the Mental Health for All Australians budget initiative. The Australian Government is prioritising better mental health for all Australians, focusing on our young and Indigenous Australians. On 14 August 2019, Minister Hunt announced the development of a National Children’s Mental Health Strategy. The new strategy will be developed by the National Mental Health Commission and will focus on improving supports for early childhood, parenting and early education.

The $509 million Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan is the largest suicide prevention strategy in Australia’s history, prioritising three key areas including: strengthening the headspace network by investing an additional $375 million to establish an additional 30 new services (10 centres and 20 satellites), reduce waiting times at existing services, continue the Early Psychosis Youth Services program, and expand the Young Ambassadors programs, strengthening Indigenous suicide prevention by investing $14.5 million in tailored initiatives such as a national plan for culturally appropriate care; and strengthening early childhood and parenting support, by investing $11.8 million in initiatives such as Kids Helpline and batyr. The Government will also establish a range of innovative youth mental services through the $1.25 billion Community Health and Hospitals Program, such as youth health hubs and ‘Flying headspace’, to provide access to services regardless of where young Australians live.

In addition to headspace services, the Australian Government also provides funding to Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to plan and commission early intervention services for young people in their region with, or at risk of, severe mental illness. PHNs are commissioning a range of innovative approaches to address the needs of their communities including; psychological interventions, assertive outreach, care coordination, case management, and family and group counselling.

The Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission provides funding to support new research into causes of mental illness, innovative interventions and treatments. The Mission has prioritised child and youth mental health and suicide prevention as areas of key importance to national health and wellbeing and funding to address Indigenous youth suicide. The Prime Minister’s National Suicide Prevention Advisor, with the support of the National Suicide Prevention Taskforce is currently undertaking consultation on strategies to reduce suicide and will report in 2020.

Funding through the Community Health and Hospitals Program (CHHP) has been announced to establish Integrated Youth Health Hubs in areas with limited existing services available such as Lilydale and Ocean Grove. The Hubs will deliver a range of services based on a prevention and early intervention model of care such as counselling; support for mental health; GP and physical health; support for family and carers and sexual and
reproductive health. The hubs will improve service coordination integration in these areas improving the health outcomes for young people.

The Productivity Commission has an inquiry underway into mental health. This inquiry will examine the effect of mental health on people’s ability to participate in and prosper in the community and workplace, and the effects it has more generally on our economy and productivity. It will look at how governments across Australia, employers, professional and community groups in healthcare, education, employment, social services, housing and justice can contribute to improving mental health for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

A Royal Commission was announced in April 2019 into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with a disability. The Commissioners have been directed to inquire into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

The Royal Commission’s Terms of Reference cover what should be done to:

- prevent, and better protect, people with disability from experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- achieve best practice in reporting and investigating of, and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- promote a more inclusive society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The inquiry will cover all forms of violence against, and abuse, neglect and exploitation of, people with disability, in all settings and contexts.
Chapter 4 – Housing, Transport and Income Support as enablers

KEY POINTS:

- Youth Homelessness remains a significant social issue in Australia.
- Safe and stable housing is of fundamental importance to young people. Those who participated in our consultations identified a number of programs and services working well to support homeless youth. These programs were successful because they were holistic in their approach and centred on the experiences of young people.
- During the consultations process, access to transport was raised as a major barrier for young people to attend school, access further education, gain and keep employment and access other services (including health care). Issues identified include:
  - costs associated with public transport
  - the lack of available public transport (including to get to employment)
  - the (spiralling) impact fines associated with fare evasion or driving infringements
  - the challenges in obtaining a driver’s licence (including having a person who can support them to get the hours they need to meet the requirements for the ‘P’s.
- Driver mentor programs were identified by a number of participants to work well in supporting young people to get their licence.
- Poverty impacts a young person’s ability to access education and employment opportunities, including their ability to access youth services.
- Many young people have difficulty navigating Centrelink and other Government services.

This chapter explores some of the foundational issues that impact on a young person’s overall wellbeing: housing, transport and poverty.

Safe and stable housing

Housing and homelessness was a critical issue discussed at all consultations. There were approximately 27,700 homeless youth aged 12–24 years in 2016, representing 24% of the total estimated homeless population; up from 25,200 people in 2011 and 21,900 in 2006. Of the approximate 27,700 homeless youth in 2016, 59% (or 16,400) were living in ‘severely’ crowded dwellings, and 18% (or 5,000) were in supported accommodation for the homeless. Additionally, 10% (or 2,900) were staying temporarily with other households, and 9% (or 2,600) were living in boarding houses.

Participants noted how safe, stable accommodation is central to a young person’s education, employment, health and wellbeing. Many participants at the consultations noted this is not only an issue for the young person but also their family. These issues are often compounded for young people experiencing marginalisation.

Both service providers and young people the Taskforce spoke with, identified the difficulties for young people in accessing social housing, crisis and emergency accommodation, including difficulty navigating services, long wait times, and a lack of service availability to meet demand. Although young people are over-represented in the homeless population, homeless estimates for youth are likely to have been underestimated in the Census. For example, a usual address may be reported for ‘couch surfers’ because the young person is staying in a

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household on Census night. Their homelessness is masked as their characteristics look no different to other youth who are not homeless, but visiting another household on Census night.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}}

Youth homelessness remains a significant social issue in Australia. When young people are forced to leave home early, they can find it very difficult to navigate the homelessness services, access government support and gain sufficient income to live independently. Family support is crucial for young people during the transition to an independent adulthood and a sustainable livelihood. When family support is weak or non-existent, young people are much more likely to experience homelessness and long-term disadvantage. According to AIHW data on young people presenting alone to specialist homelessness services, in 2017–18, the main reason young people presenting alone sought assistance included: housing crises (22% or 9,600 clients), domestic and family violence (18% or 7,800 clients), inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (11% or 4,800 clients), and relationship/family breakdown (11% or 4,600 clients).

Feedback during the consultations also identified the need for more preventive measures to tackle homelessness as well as delivering more appropriate, holistic support for young people who are already homeless. For example, the relationship between mental health and homelessness was identified and discussed at a number of the consultations. Mission Australia’s Youth Mental Health and Homelessness Report found that the link between homelessness and mental health is bi-directional. That is, those with mental illness are at increased risk of homelessness and those who are homeless are at increased risk of mental illness. The report also found that young people who had a probable serious mental illness were more likely to experience couch surfing and on more occasions than those without a probable serious mental illness. Additionally, those who reported having poor family functioning were more likely to have a probable serious mental illness, as well as being more likely to report coach surfing.\footnote{\textit{Mission Australia} (2017), 'Youth mental health and homelessness report', available at: \url{www.missionaustralia.com.au/news-blog/news-media/youth-mental-health-homelessness-report}.}

At the Alice Springs consultation, the importance of approaches to improve environmental health were identified along with ensuring living conditions meet basic standards in remote areas of Australia.

Other challenges raised at the consultations included difficulties for young people in accessing the private rental market (including lack of available housing and cost), and lack of education and awareness of housing and tenancy rights and responsibilities. Housing inequality and unaffordability is a well-covered documented issue in Australia. Property ownership rates for young people and those up to the age of 35 is decreasing as house prices and rents have increased dramatically over the past two decades. The Committee for Economic Development in Australia (CEDA) found ‘a growing divide between generations in terms of access to housing market opportunity … as young people’s access to both home ownership and property investment opportunities has lagged further and further behind the opportunities available to older age groups.’
Current Government action

The Department of Social Services is undertaking research and analysis to determine how housing and homelessness policy integrates with other social policy issues, such as health, education and employment, to support social policy outcomes. Please note that the review is not public and should not be referenced in any publicly available information without their clearance.

The Department of Social Services also funds the Reconnect program – a community based early intervention and prevention program for young people aged 12 to 18 years (or 12 to 21 years in the case of newly arrived youth) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families. The aim of Reconnect is to prevent homelessness by intervening early with families and young people to stabilise and improve their housing situation and improve their level of engagement with family, education, training, employment and their local community.

Accessibility to Transport

During the consultations process, access to transport was raised as a major barrier for young people to attend school, access further education, gain and keep employment and access other services (including health care).

Transport disadvantage for young people is not limited to rural and remote areas or poor public transport infrastructure. In outer-urban areas transport disadvantage is the result of a range of intersecting factors including poor public transport infrastructure, a higher proportion of low-income households and the increasing need to travel further distances in order to get to places of employment, services and activities which is associated with higher transport costs.

For young people who have limited family supports or those who are from low-income households, the ability to obtain a driver’s licence is often extremely difficult. Not having a driver’s licence not only restricts young people from travelling to where the jobs are, in some cases it is preventing them from being considered for the job vacancies in the first place, even if driving is not a requirement of the position itself, to give the employer assurance about the employee’s attendance and reliability. In addition to licence and purchase cost of car, there are significant running costs such as registration, insurance, fuel and maintenance.

While some services in the youth sector attempt to fill the transport void, through the provision of bus services which ferry participants to and from services, this is often a stop gap measure which is often unfunded and unsustainable. For example, during consultations in Mt Isa, the Taskforce was told about a privately operated bus service that ceased when the owner passed away.

The impact of fines (i.e. issued for public transport or driving infringements) was raised as a significant issue at the consultations. It was identified as often the start of a downward spiral for the young person and started their engagement with the justice system - where they didn’t pay fines and then didn’t attend court.

48 Ibid above.
There are a number of programs that go towards addressing these issues. Non-government agencies, local service providers and local councils across the country deliver a range of small scale driving school programs which support young people to obtain their driver’s licence. For example:

- Weave Youth and Community Services in Sydney delivers a Driving Change Program which provides young people with professional lessons at a discounted rate and the Maroondah City Council delivers a Youth Service TAC L2P Program which provides eligible learners with up to seven fee professional driving lessons.
- In Devonport, the Salvation Army coordinates a driver mentor program but the wait list is many months.

The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business’ previously funded two pilot programs under the Empowering YOUth Initiative (ceased in June 2019):

- Fraser Coast Training Employment Support Service Driving School Social Enterprise, and
- Apprentices Trainees Employment Ltd Road2Wheels.

These localised programs aimed to address the transport disadvantage young people experience, however funding for these projects is often intermittent, piecemeal and inadequate at addressing the magnitude of the problem.

Transport issues such as those described above were raised with the Youth Taskforce universally and to begin to address them would require a coordinated and focused effort between the Australian Government, state and territory and local government.

**Current Government action**

The Youth Taskforce did not identify any current initiatives to address transport as a barrier for young people on low incomes.

**Poverty and Income support**

The amount of income a young person has access to can be affected by whether they are old enough to access social security payments, themselves, if they are not employed. If they are younger it may depend on whether their parents or carers are employed or on social security payments, and the number of other siblings the family has to support. Youth and aggregate unemployment rates are higher in certain regional and remote areas, and we noted these issues were keenly felt by young people in the regional and remote areas we visited.

Participants from the Alice Springs consultation spoke about the significant issue of individuals, families and communities living in poverty with many not engaged with, or receiving, income support due to the extensive obligations.

In Devonport, the discussion revolved around intergenerational unemployment and poverty.

Many participants provided feedback that current income support arrangements are insufficient and/or punitive, and can lead to young people disengaging from support systems altogether. At each session, and particularly when speaking directly to young people through service providers, we heard a number of people’s experiences when engaging with Centrelink, noting that the income support system was exceptionally difficult to access, hard to navigate and overly and unnecessarily complicated. A youth worker at the Canberra consultation noted that “if I can’t navigate the system, what hope do these young people have?” Feedback from consultation participants highlighted they felt the system is automated and does not take into consideration the circumstances of the young
persons’ life and many young people and those working with young people said they “felt like we are just a number”. This left many young people (not just those who are marginalised) feeling unsupported or even choosing to disengage from the income support system all together, and turning to other means for financial support (including working cash in hand).

What works for young people was when they had support to navigate the system and an advocate to help them to understand what support was available and what needs to happen to access it.

Current Government action

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in consultation across the APS and with the Youth Taskforce, is commissioning research to understand paths young people take into adulthood and their first touch points across Australian public services. Results will assist refinement of service-delivery across the APS to make sure young people can get what they need when they need it, early, simply and easily.

Feedback from young people at a Western Sydney youth led youth service on their experiences engaging with Centrelink

The Youth Taskforce spoke to a forum of young people who access a youth service in Western Sydney. When asked about services and how they work for young people, a number spoke about Centrelink. Some of the young people we met during the consultation felt the assessment tools and processes the government uses (i.e. online completion of the Centrelink classification tools) were inadequate at capturing their life circumstances. The young people we spoke to explained that, they did not always fully understand the meaning of the questions they were required to answer when applying for income support and the process was too long, complicated, and didn’t help them when they actually needed help. While poor levels of literacy are likely to be a contributing factor. A young person speaking about their difficulties in engaging in the system said “I can’t engage them [Centrelink], I might as well do nothing. Me trying is detrimental to my wellbeing”
Chapter 5: Policies, programs and services for young people

KEY POINTS

What works well?

- Engaging young people in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services in an ongoing way
- Trust and respectful collaborative relationships with service providers, achieved through the provision of consistent, reliable support.
- Services that work with the community and programs that are place based
- Organisations and services that are culturally safe, recognise and promote culture and identity
- Funding models that support and enable providers to meet the needs of young people in a collaborative, wrap-around way.
- Understanding how young people engage with technology
- Understanding what young people have said is important to them
- Embracing young people’s creativity and diverse forms of expression
- Grassroots programs and services for young people being led by young people

The following chapter identifies principles to inform the work of researchers, policy makers, program designers and managers and service delivery organisations about opportunities to better support young people through their policies, programs and services, to manage change and minimise uncertainty as they navigate pathways and transitions during this period. The chapter focuses on what the Taskforce heard was important when designing and delivering programs for young people and explores a number of these issues in more detail (where they have not been covered previously in this report).

Programs and services that are responsive

Services work well when they respond to the young person as they are. This means working with them to identify their needs, wants, aspirations, and is responsive to their values. For many people at the consultations this also meant services that took a person-centred, strengths based and trauma informed approach to engage young people in decision making, goal setting and the evaluation of their care and wellbeing. Feedback from all consultations noted that to provide support that is responsive, many services go above and beyond their funding remit and are driven by the commitment of staff. Programs and services work well when flexibility is inbuilt to the program design and implementation process for organisations. Outreach work is also critical, noting it is important to go to where the young people are.

Feedback from the consultation process has highlighted issues on the conditions placed on program eligibility and how requirements may exclude young people. Specifically, gaps in eligibility criteria have been identified as having a negative effect on a young person’s ability to access the services they need. Young people who narrowly ‘fall through the gaps’ of services due to restrictions on eligibility can find themselves ineligible for services which they need. As such, these young people engage with a small number of services who do not have...
strict eligibility criteria and can either support them directly, or advocate on their behalf, to identify and access pathways into / for the services they need.

The Taskforce acknowledges there are processes across a number of Commonwealth portfolios which are working to support a more user-centred approach, which will enable services to provide a more flexible approach to meet the needs of people engaging with their programs.

Support to identify, access and navigate services
Helping young people navigate the services and systems they need to access, when they need to access them, with help them get the right support at the right time. Feedback through the consultations highlighted the fragmentation of services and the unnecessary complexity of systems, making it difficult for young people to access and engage, and that young people had better outcomes as they seek to navigate systems when they had support to do so, or a clear straightforward pathway (both within and across different systems and pathways i.e. health system, education system, income support, social support, employment).

Feedback from the consultation process, raised that young people are often not aware of the services they may indeed be eligible for, especially those in crisis. i.e. income support payments, financial assistance at universities / schools / VET providers such as free textbooks, equipment, subsidised student fees, headspace and other mental health services, Medicare rebates, bulk billing at some GPs, transport assistance, youth refuges and other housing options/support.

Programs that provide clear pathways and support at times of transition
Young people, particularly vulnerable young people, need pathways to help guide their transitions – whether they transitioning from school to employment, from transitioning from out of home care to independent living, transitioning from paediatrics care to adult services etc. The Alice Springs consultation highlighted successful

A number of service providers we spoke to, particularly those working with vulnerable and/or marginalised young people, was the need for trauma-informed practice across all services in all fields.

Trauma-Informed Practice is a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. Trauma-informed services:
- ‘are informed about, and sensitive to, trauma-related issues’
- are attuned to the possibility of trauma in the lives of all clients
- commit to and act on the core principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment
- have reconsidered and evaluated all elements in light of the role and impacts of trauma
- apply this understanding to design systems which accommodate the vulnerabilities of trauma survivors, and enable services which minimise the risk of re-traumatisation
- emphasise physical and emotional safety for all – clients, practitioners and service providers
- recognise symptoms as adaptive rather than pathological
- collaborate with clients, and affirm their strengths and resources
- recognise the importance of respect, information, hope and possibilities for connection

A key feature of trauma-informed practice is the way in which a service is offered - i.e. the whole context in which it is provided - not just ‘what’ it entails. As healing from interpersonal trauma occurs in relationship, the wider relational context in which healing takes place is critical. www.blueknot.org.au/Workers-Practitioners/For-Health-Professionals/Resources-for-Health-Professionals/Trauma-Informed-Care-and-practice
ranger programs, which provided young people with the opportunity to build their experience and capacity, and ensure they had the technical and leadership skills to engage in employment at the end of the program.

Transition from out of home care to independence
Research shows that that young people leaving care in Australia are more likely to:

- have poor education including early school leaving
- be unemployed, underemployed and earning lower wages
- be homeless or living in unstable housing arrangements
- have had children at a young age
- be involved in the criminal justice system
- have physical health, mental health and substance abuse problems
- lack informal social support from family and friends.  

For example, the 2009 Create Foundation survey, found that:

- 35% of the young people leaving care were homeless in the first year of leaving care
- 46% of young men and 22% of young women with a care experience had been involved in the juvenile justice system
- 65% of young people did not complete year 12
- 29% were unemployed (compared to the national average of 9.75%)
- 28% were already parents themselves.  

Furthermore, a study by the Care Leavers Australia Network (2008) reported that:

- 41% were pregnant during their adolescence
- 43% – 65% of care leavers have poor mental health outcomes (including depression, Anxiety, PTSD, panic attacks and sleep disorders)  

Research suggest three key reforms can be implemented to improve outcomes for care leavers: improving the quality of care, providing a more gradual and flexible transition from care (e.g. wraparound case management), and having more specialised after-care supports (Stein, 2004, 2008). These studies suggest an association between good preparation for leaving care and positive post-care experiences.  

One approach is the ‘Home Stretch’ campaign (An Anglicare Initiative), which was formed to seek change to the current leaving care arrangements for young people in state care. In brief, to extend the leaving care age from 18 until 21 years. The Victorian Government has invested $11.6 million to roll out Home Stretch, which started this year. “Through the Home Stretch program:

- Young people and their kinship and foster carers will have the option of the young person remaining with their carer up to the age of 21 years, supported by an allowance.

• Young people leaving residential care will be eligible for an allowance to support housing costs up to 21 years of age.

In addition to an accommodation allowance, the program includes case work support and brokerage provided by a key worker, to facilitate the young person’s access to education, employment and health and wellbeing supports. The Home Stretch program is based on international and Australian evidence that extending the age of support for young people in care contributes to improved life chances and outcomes. 54

The Home Stretch policy approach is being trialled in a number of jurisdictions across Australia now, however none have made legislative amendments as yet to formally commit to this as an ongoing change.

### Eligibility

The following examples raised during the Canberra consultation, highlight how eligibility can create a barrier to accessing services:

- Living just across the border. For example, at the Canberra consultation we heard examples of living in NSW (such as Queanbeyan) and not being eligible for ACT services (even if they are geographically the closest ones).
- Young people being told their mental health conditions are too ‘severe’ for Headspace and then being turned away. There are often no available free services for young people that fill the gap between Headspace (mild-moderate), and hospital admission (life-threatening), i.e. no free mental health care available for severe and/or complex mental health issues.
- Young people being told they are not eligible for financial assistance/low income when they are only marginally above the threshold.
- Young people not being considered ‘homeless enough’ for youth housing (e.g. they are couch-surfing).

### Services that are coordinated and collaborative

Many services described the importance of collaborating with other organisations and working collectively with other agencies in the community to ensure the young person can access the right door at the right time. This includes working with other service providers to limit duplication and ensure the best use of limited resources, working with research organisations to improve practice and evaluation, working with private organisations through philanthropic endeavours etc.

However, they also identified they are not supported to do this due to the competitive nature of funding rounds and the changing priorities and requirements of government with each funding cycle. In order to achieve a seamless, well-coordinated support, actions to support improved integration and collaboration need to occur at a number of levels. "Fragmentation and lack of coordination happens vertically (between national and local government), horizontally (between different agencies), by age (such as antenatal and postnatal, preschool, school age, tertiary), and by different groups or areas of focus (such as parenting support, family violence, job seeker)." 55

### Working with the community and place based approaches

Feedback from a number of consultations identified the importance of working with the community to develop locally owned and driven solutions to address issues for young people. This includes using local elders to inform and guide policy, program and service design, consulting with those working in community, training people in communities to work with young people ensuring relationships and trust is built etc. At the consultation in Perth one organisation that supported young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with their education journeys spoke about the importance or peer networks, going back to community as a mentor once they had finished the program, and the value of those relationships in community.

55 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet New Zealand 2019 ‘Children and Youth Wellbeing Strategy’
A place-based approach is implemented at the local level and focuses on addressing the collective issues of community members through interventions aimed at the social and physical environment rather than individuals or families. Feedback at the consultations emphasized the need for place based approaches noting 'one size fits all models' do not work in the diverse range of communities across the country. This is supported by research from The Centre for Community Child Health that suggests that outcomes for children will be improved if providers of place-based initiatives work collaboratively with stakeholders and local communities to identify goals and to undertake actions that improve the conditions under which families and communities live, work and raise children.

Local availability
Feedback from consultations noted that services delivered in rural and remote locations work well when they responsive to the needs of community and developed with the community, and train and engage local people to be the workforce for these services. There are a number of challenges facing young people, particularly those who are marginalised (such as CALD/refugee young people, or those who identify as LGBTIQA+), in regional, rural and remote areas, and these issues are compounded by a lack of services available to them that can cater to their specific needs.

Aside from service availability, other geographic barriers can include issues such as access to services during wet and dry seasons or attracting qualified staff to work in remote areas. Young people have indicated that online services should not replace all face to face contact, but there is a role for technology in bridging the divide.

Cost, waitlists and wait times
Throughout the consultation process many people raised the issue of cost as a barrier to young people participating and engaging with programs and services.

Issues raised include those associated, particularly in relation to health and mental health and when transitioning from paediatric to adult care. For example, there is often an economic disincentive to move services from paediatric to adult care because of increased costs families can face in the adult sector. The cost of mental health services varies enormously, depending on where you live and what service you are getting (healthdirect, 2019). Costs may be incurred due to a number of reasons, including through mental health related prescriptions, if the young person is not eligible for a subsidised prescription, when transitioning out of parent’s private health cover, or when further treatment options are required beyond those that are available at no cost. Feedback from consultations also indicated where services are free or affordable, they are often oversubscribed with long waiting lists.

Long wait lists, wait times or even to process of registering for services and opportunities can have significantly negative impacts on young people. By the time young people reach out for a service/ask for help, they are often in urgent need of the service. Further, having long wait lists for services like mental health care, can reduce patient engagement. Some of the services mentioned include:

- Headspace
- Centrelink (Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY, Newstart)
- Housing and homelessness such as, youth refuges, homelessness services, government/social housing
- Education courses such as, university and Vocational Education and Training (VET) or work.
According to the *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015 report*: 

- The proportion of very remote students who meet the requirements at each milestone is between 19 and 48 percentage points lower than for the Australian population as a whole.
- Students living further from cities are less likely to catch up once they are off track at milestones.
- Rural, regional and remote students have reduced access to education and employment services compared to metropolitan students. These students attend school less frequently, are less likely to go to university and are more likely to drop out if they enrol.
- Remote students have less positive dispositions towards school on every measure (belonging, self-confidence, purpose and perseverance) than their regional and metropolitan peers.
- VET is an important pathway for regional and remote students, though very remote participation is low.
- Remote communities are home to one-quarter of Australia’s Indigenous population. As a consequence, the educational challenges faced in remote areas have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous Australians.

Organisations and services that are culturally safe

Feedback from the consultation process has highlighted the detrimental effects that experiences of racism and discrimination are to young people and the negative impact it has on their health, education and employment outcomes. This also includes the gender discrimination many young women can experience. This was identified as a key issue specifically in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and LGBTIQA+.

**Figure 12 Steps of culturally safe practice**

The Taskforce heard that connectedness to community, family, community and connection to culture is of great importance to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as young people who come from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities including those of refugee and migrant backgrounds, and young people would more readily engage with services that acknowledged and worked with this understanding.

Listening to young people; ensuring services are developed with cultural safety in mind; employing, retaining and appropriately training the right staff; implementing practices that support trauma-informed practices; and cultivating and supporting relevant networks and relationships to support young people. It is clear to the Taskforce from consultations these principles would better support young people if translated or adopted by services working with young people.

**Funding models to support and enable providers**

At every consultation the issue of funding and funding cycles for service providers was raised. Organisations noted in order to address the entrenched disadvantage being experienced by young people using their services, 

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60 Ibid above.
funding cycles were often too short (often only 1-3 years in length) given issues they are working with the young people to address take consistency, relationships and time. The preference was for 10 year funding programs.

Service providers have noted that what would work well is simplified requirements in agreements, funding models that support more collaborative approaches and a level of flexibility in these models to enable them to support the young person in the way that the young person’s needs and has identified. “The contemporary policy context of youth services is fraught with contradictions … they are expected to collaborate, while at the same time are forced to compete for their existence; expected to be innovative, while promising specific program outputs and outcomes; and encouraged to be local, while economies of scale privilege state-wide or national, corporatised agencies.”

Data and Evidence based practice
Participants spoke about the need for a strong evidence base, and for it to be an integral part of any approach that is taken to improve outcomes for young people.

Improvements to data sharing and collection also formed substantial components of the recommendations of the 2017 Royal Commissions into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory, and Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Specifically, Recommendation 8.6 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse calls for nationally consistent legislative and administrative arrangements across the Australian Government and state and territory governments to allow agencies to share information regarding the safety and wellbeing of children. Recommendation 8.7 was to develop minimum nationally consistent provisions to enable direct exchange of relevant information between a range of prescribed bodies; and a further recommendation 8.8 recommends that governments and prescribed bodies work together to ensure that the implementation of the information exchange scheme is supported with education, training and guidelines. Recommendation 8.16 recommends a review of the Interstate Data Transfer Note (ISDTN).

Current Government action
As a response to the recommendations of the 2017 Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Australian Government, with all state and territory governments, developed the National Child Protection Information Sharing Solution (the Solution). The Solution is a digital platform, which enables state and territory child protection agencies to improve the sharing of child protection information between jurisdictions. The Solution is scheduled to be operational in mid-2020.

COAG Education Council’s Data Strategy Group is reviewing the ISDTN with a view to identifying where gaps exist in how data is currently exchanged between jurisdictions and between agencies within and across jurisdictions. This work is being undertaken in the context of other initiatives to deliver similar improvements in data sharing including the work of the National Office for Child Safety overseeing the implementation of Recommendations 8.6 to 8.8. Key examples include work on implementing a unique student identifier, which aims to provide more effective and efficient means of retrieving and exchanging student information nationally. Also, work is being undertaken to develop a national child protection data exchange system to automate information sharing across jurisdictions for the wellbeing of children in the child protection system.

Appropriate identity documentation is necessary for young people to be able to access basic services such as social security payments, banking and tax file numbers and to enrol in school. While most Australians register a child’s birth, there is a proportion of, predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who are without birth registration or certificates. For example, in Victoria, in 2008, there were 1,841 or 2.5 per cent of all births that have never been registered.\(^{66}\) The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children without a birth certificate is as high as 17% in Queensland, and one in five Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in Western Australia.\(^{67}\) The proportion of people without birth certificates is also higher for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.\(^{68}\)

As a result, many of these children and young people are not included in planning data, and are not connected with schooling or welfare. Lack of birth registration can also result in unlicensed driving, which can contribute to incarceration rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Youth Taskforce heard that youth services, such as Cairns Transition to Work provider, vocational partnership group, is assisting young people to obtain sufficient ID to access services through the 100 Points to Success ID program.

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**Experiences of violence**

In 2018 the number of victims recorded for sexual assault increased for the seventh consecutive year to 26,312 victims nationally. For victims of Sexual assault in 2018:

- The majority were female (84% or 22,097 victims)
- Around half were aged between 10 and 19 years (45% or 11,911 victims)
- A quarter of all Sexual assault victims were aged between 15 and 19 years (26% or 6,783 victims)
- Women aged 15-24 years were 10 times more likely to be the victims of sexual assault than their male counterparts (ABS 4510.0 Recorded Crime Victims, Australia, 2018)

In our conversations at consultations about marginalised young people, participants discussed the impacts of experiences of violence and/or sexual abuse/assault particularly for young women, and witnessing family, interpersonal or sexual violence. Many identified a lack of prevention or early intervention support and services for young people, including for young people experiencing interpersonal violence or young men who may be perpetrating violence i.e. feedback identified a focus on postvention services, the difficulty in identifying, accessing and navigating services in this area.

**Youth friendly public spaces**

Feedback at the consultations noted there are a decreasing number of public (and to a lesser extent private) places for young people to go simply to spend time with their peers, without being monitored, or asked to move on. This is a particularly critical for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

**Understanding how young people engage with technology**

It was apparent from consultations the vast majority of young people are highly connected to technology, and in many instances consider it to be part of themselves. On many occasions, the use of social media platforms was offered as a simple solution to youth engagement. However, grass roots practitioners cautioned against relying on technology as the only form of engagement for a number of reasons.

On-line surveys were offered as an efficient means of collecting information, however service providers also reported that young people can tend to answer questions according to what they think the questioner wants to hear, particularly if they think that eligibility for support may be linked to their responses. In Cairns, more...

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creative approaches to youth engagement using technology were suggested, such providing platforms for young people to post videos of dancing and rapping. Service providers also noted the importance of maintaining a form of face-to-face contact, for example at drop-in centres, so that service providers can identify potential issues that may not be the primary reason for the contact.

On a more practical level, it was noted that many young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds and in remote communities still do not have access to technology. In some cases, mobile phones are basic and pre-paid. Consultations also uncovered innovative examples of technology being used communities, such as through the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence’s Indigenous Digital Excellence program, which goes into communities and identifies areas of need for technological support, providing the required wraparound services such as hardware, software, training and ongoing support.

“As young Indigenous people we walk in three worlds…the white world, the Indigenous world and now the world online” –
Participant at the NACCHO Youth Conference

Understanding what young people say is important to them
Surveys of young people continue to show that climate change is a major concern for them. In face to face consultations, climate change was raised as an example of the Government not listening to their views on this issue. The consultations also noted a difference between climate change being a general issue for young people and the immediate, pressing concerns of disadvantaged young people who are more likely to focus on their needs for stable housing, mental health support and meaningful employment. In other words, once basic needs are fulfilled, young people are able to focus on the future and the state of the planet.

Importance of creativity, music and sport as avenues to encourage engagement and foster inclusion
The importance of creativity and artistic expression, and other avenues such as sport, for young people was highlighted a number of consultations. Two participants at the Alice Springs consultation spoke about their local football team and how being part of the team was important to them. The Blacktown Youth Association Service and the Gap Youth Service in Alice Springs provide access to a music room to encourage young people to express themselves and as a peer teaching and learning space for young people. There are models to learn from in Indigenous communities that have developed creative programs collaboratively with corporate partners.

Grassroots programs and services for young people being led by young people
Young people want to see initiatives run by their peers and it is important that they are made aware of peer success stories. You can’t be what you can’t see. As an example of a youth-led initiative, in the 2019-20 Budget, funding of $2.8 million was announced for batyr to expand their online presence and continue to reduce stigma,
and promote early intervention and informed self-care though positive storytelling. batyr is a preventative mental health organisation, created and driven by young people, for young people. batyr’s programs address “the elephant in the room” in a unique and relatable way for young audiences, utilising trained speakers with a lived experience of mental ill health
## APPENDIX 1: Stakeholder List

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- Women with Disabilities Victoria
- World Vision Australia
- Youth Disability Advocacy Service - Youth Affairs Council Victoria
- Youth Law
- Youth Support & Advocacy Service
- Youth Development Australia
- YMCA Victoria Youth Leadership & Development Unit
- YWCA Australia
APPENDIX 3: Policy frameworks

APPENDIX 3.1: Commonwealth youth policy frameworks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency/Department</th>
<th>Policy framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Government</strong> Department of Education</td>
<td>The National School Reform Agreement is an agreement between the Australian Government and all states and territories that sets out the long-term national goals for school education in Australia. To achieve these goals, the Agreement sets out eight important reforms to be implemented over the next five years. Reform 1: Enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth; Reform 2: Opt-in online learning assessment tools to assist teachers; Reform 3: Review senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training; Reform 4: Review teacher workforce needs of the future; Reform 5: Strengthening the initial teacher education accreditation system; Reform 6: A national unique student identifier; Reform 7: An independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development and Reform 8: Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development. By signing up to the Agreement, governments commit to a sustained reform effort that will drive improved student outcomes and excellence in our classrooms. Bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and each state and territory sit alongside the Agreement and set out state-specific reform actions to improve student outcomes. They also include state and territory funding contributions to support schooling in their government and non-government schools. The National School Reform Agreement commenced on 1 January 2019. Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (currently under review). This document sets out the agreed national purposes and role of schooling in order to deliver high-quality education regardless of cultural, linguistic and economic background. It also aims to ensure schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that continues to strengthen Australia as a democracy. The Melbourne Declaration is an important document nationally because it provides the basis of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (the Wellbeing Framework) is a foundational document that will provide Australian schools with a vision and a set of guiding principles to support school communities to build positive learning environments, and to consider reviewing their current safety and wellbeing policies and support requirements. The Wellbeing Framework provides school communities with best-practice advice on developing and implementing policies and support mechanisms to help all students from the first year of school to year 12. The Australian Curriculum provides schools, teachers, parents, students, and the community with a clear understanding of what students should learn, regardless of where they live or what school system they are in. The Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum provides: * curriculum content * an achievement standard in each subject that all students should be meeting * flexibility for teachers to personalise student learning and respond to student need and interest. State, territory and non-government education authorities are responsible for delivering the Australian Curriculum, including decisions about implementation timeframes, classroom practices and resources that complement teaching of the Australian Curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Government</td>
<td>Preparing Secondary Students for Work is a framework for vocational learning and vocational education and training (VET) delivered to secondary students. The framework’s vision is for vocational learning programs and VET to be seamlessly integrated into secondary schooling and valued as a pathway into a career. It provides a pathway for students who are interested in articulating into further training or university, doing an</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Department of Employment

apprenticeship or traineeship, or getting a job after completing year 12. A dedicated website, pssfw.myskills.gov.au, hosts a series of practical tools and resources to support the provision of high quality career education and VET programs for school students.

**Future Ready: A student focused National Career Education Strategy** was endorsed by the COAG Education Council in February 2019. To prepare students for their future careers, Future Ready focuses on the importance of building the skills and general capabilities they will need in the workplace; strengthening school and employer collaboration; and developing students’ career management and navigation skills. The vision of Future Ready is that every student in every school has access to high quality career education to help them make a successful transition from school to further education, training, work or a combination of these.

### Australian Government Department of Health

**Healthy, Safe and Thriving: National Strategic Framework for Child and Youth Health** (COAG Health Council, Australia, 2015), is a comprehensive document which sets a national direction for child and youth health in Australia. Government and non-government sectors can use this Framework to guide their work which will help to ensure that all Australian children are given the opportunity to be healthy, safe and thriving.


The Action Plan aims to drive improvement in the health of all children and young people in Australia across the life course, noting challenges of disparity and inequity in health outcomes between individuals, areas, and different sections of the population.

The Action Plan is both a call to action and a tool for action - guiding collaborative and cohesive approaches to ensure that Australian children and young people are healthy, safe and thriving.

**National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023** and its implementation plan were developed to provide an overarching framework which builds links with other major Commonwealth health activities and identifies areas of focus to guide future investment and effort in relation to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

On 30 May 2014, Senator the Hon Fiona Nash, Assistant Minister for Health, announced that an Implementation plan would be developed outlining the Commonwealth’s coordinated efforts to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes.

### Australian Government Department of Social Services

**The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement** recognises the Commonwealth and the states’ mutual interest in improving housing outcomes across the housing spectrum, including outcomes for Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and need to work together to achieve those outcomes.

From 1 July 2018, the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment was replaced by National Housing and Homelessness Agreement funding and maintains the funding associated with the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement also replaces the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

**The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020** (National Framework) is a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed long-term national approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australia’s children. The National Framework provides the critical foundation for governments and non-government organisations to work together to achieve our shared vision that Australia’s children and young people are safe and well.
The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022 represents a commitment by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to reduce violence against women and their children. The plan aims to make a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children. It is a 12-year strategy delivered through four three-year Action Plans.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) provide a nationally consistent approach to creating cultures in organisations that foster child safety and wellbeing across all sectors in Australia. The scope of the National Principles goes beyond child sexual abuse to cover all forms of potential harm to children and young people.

The Commonwealth Child Safe Framework provides a consistent and transparent approach for Australian Government entities to support the safety and wellbeing of children.

National Standards for Working With Children Checks (WWCC) Following the release of the Royal Commission’s WWCC Report, and the recommendation relating to the development of national standards to increase the consistency of approaches to WWCC screening across jurisdictions, the Commonwealth committed to working with states and territories to consider the recommendations. A Working Group of relevant Commonwealth, state and territory representatives responsible for the policy and operational aspects of WWCC was also established.

On 15 December 2017, Australia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT sets out the core obligations to prevent torture and other forms of mistreatment. In signing and ratifying OPCAT, the Australian Government has taken a significant step towards establishing enhanced oversight of Australian places of detention, and improvement in conditions.
### APPENDIX 3.2: State/territory youth policy frameworks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Agency/Department</th>
<th>Policy &amp; Legislation</th>
<th>Youth Representation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Minister for Children, Youth and Families</td>
<td>ACT Community Services Directorate</td>
<td>The <a href="#">Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT</a> provides the strategic direction for youth justice is set out in the <a href="#">Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012-22</a>. The Blueprint has a focus on early intervention, prevention and diversion with custody used as a measure of last resort. The Blueprint is supported by a three-year action plan containing 45 actions to be implemented through a whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach. The ACT Government has committed $5.5 million over four years to support the implementation of initiatives under the Blueprint.</td>
<td>The <a href="#">Youth Advisory Council</a> (YAC) provides advice on youth issues to the Minister, giving young people a voice in the ACT Government. The YAC is made up of 15 members who are all young people aged between 12 and 25 years (inclusive) at the time of their appointment. Membership of the YAC reflects the diversity of young people residing in the ACT, including a gender balance, disabilities and representation from Indigenous and culturally linguistically and diverse backgrounds. The members conduct a number of consultation processes including think tanks, open meetings, face-to-face consultation and youth surveys. Council members also participate on other committees, working parties, taskforce and other Government agencies. Canberra’s young people set their priorities and influence the future city at the <a href="#">ACT Youth Assembly</a>. Youth delegates took over the ACT Legislative Assembly chamber on 28 September for a deliberative democracy process. Members of the ACT’s Youth Advisory Council will facilitate the Youth Assembly that will also feature keynote speakers and involvement of elected members of the Legislative Assembly at a plenary session to discuss the recommendations arising from the Youth Assembly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Minister for Mental Health,</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>The <a href="#">NSW Youth Health Framework</a> sets out roles and requirements to facilitate the implementation of the NSW Youth Health Framework 2017-24. The Framework supports NSW Health to consider the</td>
<td>The <a href="#">NSW Youth Advisory Council</a> has a statutory role to advise the NSW Government on issues of importance to young people.</td>
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[Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT](#): The strategic direction for youth justice is set out in the [Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012-22](#). The Blueprint has a focus on early intervention, prevention and diversion with custody used as a measure of last resort. The Blueprint is supported by a three-year action plan containing 45 actions to be implemented through a whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach. The ACT Government has committed $5.5 million over four years to support the implementation of initiatives under the Blueprint.

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015-18](#): sets out the commitment of the ACT Government and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to work together to recognise and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT and surrounding region and their communities. A key community theme identified by the community for action through the Agreement was ‘Strong Families’ and this was supported by the final stakeholder consultations. The Agreement sets out the ACT Government’s commitment to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberra’s young people set their priorities and influence the future city at the [ACT Youth Assembly](#). Youth delegates took over the ACT Legislative Assembly chamber on 28 September for a deliberative democracy process. Members of the ACT’s Youth Advisory Council will facilitate the Youth Assembly that will also feature keynote speakers and involvement of elected members of the Legislative Assembly at a plenary session to discuss the recommendations arising from the Youth Assembly.

[A Step Up for Our Kids, formerly the Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020](#): is a plan to guide the delivery of services over a five-year period commencing 1 July 2015 for children and young people who cannot safely live with their birth parents.
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Sector</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Youth and Women</td>
<td>Regional Youth</td>
<td>Health and wellbeing of young people when planning services and programs. It outlines the need for healthcare that is responsive to the needs of young people, including targeted approaches for young people at higher risk of poor health. The Framework promotes young people’s engagement in health, youth-friendly services and better access for young people. It enhances workforce capacity to engage with and provide care to young people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW Police</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>The NSW Police Youth Strategy considers the risk factors and underlying causes behind young people offending and reoffending. It examines youth most adversely affected and prevention, intervention and partnership initiatives for police engagement to produce better outcomes for our young people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy</td>
<td>Family and Community Services</td>
<td>The NSW Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy is a prevention and early intervention strategy that aims to provide Aboriginal children with the best start in life. Research demonstrates the importance of supporting parents and children in the early years of a child’s development. This strategy focuses on Aboriginal families expecting a baby or with children aged up to 5 years.</td>
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<td>NSW Government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People</td>
<td>Office of the Advocate of Children and Young People</td>
<td>On 26 July 2016, the NSW Government officially launched the first-ever legislated whole-of-government Strategic Plan for Children and Young People which will help ensure children and young people in NSW have opportunities to thrive, get the services they need and have their voice heard.</td>
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<th>State</th>
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<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Minister for Youth</td>
<td>VicHealth</td>
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The council also has a responsibility in monitoring and evaluating youth-related policies and legislation which affects young people.

The 12 Council members are aged under 25 years and come from all over the State. They are broadly representative of the diversity of young people living in NSW.

YMCA NSW Youth Parliament is an empowerment and advocacy program that provides a platform for young people to have their voices heard through legislative debate and decision making.

Aimed at young people in years 10, 11 and 12 or equivalent age throughout the state, YMCA NSW Youth Parliament highlights the power of young people speaking on issues that are important to them.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Western Australia</th>
<th>Minister for Housing, Veterans Issues, Youth, Asian Engagement</th>
<th>Department of Communities</th>
<th>The Western Australian Youth Health Policy 2018-2023 was developed by the Child and Youth Health Network to demonstrate the WA health system’s commitment towards achieving the shared vision and strategic priorities of the Healthy, Safe and Thriving: National Strategic Framework for Child and Youth Health. The Policy aims to drive equitable, effective and coordinated health services that optimise the health and wellbeing of young people in WA.</th>
<th>Government on a wide range of issues relevant to young people’s lives.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women</td>
<td>Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women</td>
<td>The Queensland Youth Strategy (QYS) sets the vision for young people to actively contribute to Queensland’s economic, civic and cultural life.</td>
<td>The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) champions the voices of children and young people to provide youth perspectives and leadership to the QFCC. The YAC provides advice to the Commissioners on what is important to children and young people in Queensland. The YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament (QYP) is a unique opportunity for youth to create real change in Queensland. Youth Members are the voice of young people in their electorates, advising politicians and decision-makers across the state. They’re immersed in unique educational opportunities, experience parliamentary operation first hand, mingle with members of Government and Opposition, and have their say in fiery debates on topical issues.</td>
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<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Minister for Human Services (responsible for Youth)</td>
<td>South Australian Department of Humans Services</td>
<td>youthconnect is South Australia’s Youth Strategy 2010-2014. It represents the Government’s vision for South Australia’s young people aged 12-25.</td>
<td>YACSA began its life in 1980 after the working group of the then South Australian Youth Forum developed the first draft of the YACSA Constitution. Shortly thereafter YACSA became an incorporated body and in 1982 successfully secured funding to work as the peak organisation for the youth services sector in South Australia. The YMCA South Australia Youth Parliament is a non-partisan program providing a platform for young people aged 15-25 to have their say on important issues, build skills and parliamentary understanding. It focuses on personal development, empowerment and connecting politicians and decision makers with youth voices and opinions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Minister for Children and Minister for Territory Families</td>
<td>NT Territory Families</td>
<td>The Youth Justice Framework has been developed to guide a coordinated and comprehensive response to youth crime in the Northern Territory. The framework provides a five-year plan with seven key focus areas for change to reduce offending and re-offending by young people. The Office of Youth Affairs is located in Territory Families. The office provides a whole-of-government approach to policy priorities for young people aged 12 to 25 years and develops effective communication links between young people, Government and the wider community. The office supports initiatives that improve young Territorians' personal wellbeing, promotes their positive achievements and assists them to reach their goals. In addition, the office supports events and activities that provide positive recreational and developmental opportunities for young Territorians. Youth Parliament is an opportunity for grade 9 &amp; 10 students in the Northwest Territories to assume the role of an MLA at the Legislative Assembly in Yellowknife. This will include researching community concerns, meeting with your MLA to discuss issues, writing a Member’s or Minister’s statement, thinking about and writing questions for Question Period, learning the process of making a bill into a law, and having lots of fun!</td>
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<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>No Specific Ministry, Minister Health and Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>The Youth at Risk Strategy aligns and builds upon a number of reforms occurring across government including Strong Families, Safe Kids (Redesign of Child Safety Services), Safe Homes, Safe Families (the Family Violence Action Plan), Joined Up Human Services, Tasmania’s Affordable Housing Strategy and the Youth Suicide Prevention Plan. In Tasmania, the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 provides the framework and mandate for government and non-government services, community members and families to respond to situations where children may have experienced abuse or neglect or where it is considered they may be at risk of suffering harm within their family. The Tasmanian Youth Parliament Program is an event for Tasmanian students in grades 10-12, held annually in Hobart. The week-long residential camp provides students with an opportunity to develop their advocacy skills, their understanding of democratic processes, and their knowledge of local and global political issues. Participants work in teams to craft a bill on an issue they are passionate about, and debate those bills in the Tasmanian Parliament House during the week.</td>
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### APPENDIX 3.3 International youth policy frameworks

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Public institutions</th>
<th>Policy &amp; legislation</th>
<th>Budget &amp; spending</th>
<th>Youth representation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>There is a new Minister for Youth with responsibility for coordination of youth affairs at a Commonwealth level, but several agencies have responsibilities relating to youth affairs. Some departments and ministries relating to child and youth affairs exist within state and territory governments.</td>
<td>The Australian Government has convened a Youth Taskforce in the Department of Health to conduct national consultations and advise on options to include the voice of youth in policy development. The former 2010 National Strategy for Young Australians defined youth in general as 12-24 years of age. Youth was also split into categories for certain measurements. For example, youth economic productivity is measured in two age groups: 15-19 and 20-24.</td>
<td>The 2013-14 budget for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations allocates AUS 127.6 million (USD 117.5 million) to Youth Support (Program 2.8), which included the former Office for Youth. According to the World Bank, Australia spent 5.12% of its GDP on education in 2009, but does not calculate what this translates to in terms of percentage of government expenditure.</td>
<td>Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is a national umbrella association with members that include state, territory and national youth organisations, as well as networks and individuals. Founded in 2002, it is the successor to the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC). It is non-governmental and was funded by the federal government until 2014. Its activities include advocacy, research and policy development, youth sector development and youth engagement. There are formal Youth Parliaments in all states and territories with the exception of the ACT, which has a Youth Advisory Council. Local governments across Australia also have a range of Youth Advisory groups.</td>
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<td>Country</td>
<td>Public institutions</td>
<td>Policy &amp; legislation</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>No one national authority has a mandate for youth, but rather several agencies have well-defined youth responsibilities relating to justice and crime, employment and health. Departments and ministries relating specifically to youth exist at the provincial and municipal levels. For example, the province of Ontario has a Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Other provinces, such as Nova Scotia’s Youth Secretariat, have one agency responsible for coordinating youth interventions across different sectors.</td>
<td>A 2010 report from Policy Research Initiative states that very few federal policies have a direct impact on youth. Instead, policies at the provincial or municipal level address youth-related issues, including education, health, employment and participation. For example, the province of Québec has one of the only well-established youth policies in Canada. It has a Québec Youth Policy and a related Youth Action Strategy, which identifies measurements and indicators for success. Youth action strategies have been developed two times since the publication of the youth policy: in 2006 and 2009. A Youth Secretariat, reporting directly to the Premier, implements the strategy. According to a 2010 paper by United Way of Calgary and Area, the federal government uses several definitions of youth: Statistics Canada defines youth between 16-28 years, whereas for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada it is 15-24.</td>
<td>As most youth programming is either decentralised to the provincial or municipal level, or is the responsibility of NGOs and civil society, there is no exact number for how much money is spent on youth work or youth programmes in Canada. According to the World Bank, Canada spent 5.50% of its GDP on education in 2010, but does not calculate what this translates to in terms of percentage of government expenditure.</td>
<td>There are no national or regional youth councils in Canada. According to Innovations in Civic Participation, youth participation in civic life is primarily through civil society organisations. For example, the Boys &amp; Girls Clubs of Canada, one of the largest youth-serving agencies in the country, has youth councils where young people serve as ambassadors for other youth in local, provincial and national levels of the organisation. Youth councils also exist in the private sector, such as the Youth Committee of the Canadian Association of the World Petroleum Council, which seeks to bring a youth perspective to the petroleum industry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
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<td>Policy &amp; legislation</td>
<td>Budget &amp; spending</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>There was a Minister for Education and Youth, however Ministry lost its responsibility for children. The <a href="#">Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration</a> has responsibility for “disadvantaged children and young people” and those in care. According to the <a href="#">Danish National report: First cooperation cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012</a> (2012), there is no inter-ministerial working group on youth. According to an article written by the former Minister for Education and Youth in 2008 on <a href="#">Danish Youth Policy</a>, the Danish Government, “has not instituted a specific youth policy with a certain defined purpose. Every sector has its own field of responsibility regarding measures and policy for young people.” Instead, <strong>youth policy is integrated throughout government and across “relevant national, regional and local authorities.”</strong> However, the article notes that the range of programmes and activities forms “the framework of our Danish youth policy.” As such, <strong>it is an integrated part of the general policies that support Denmark as an enlightened and open, democratic welfare society that is based on social coherence and strives to give everybody equal opportunities to obtain an education, a job and social security, thus creating the basis for the participation of young people in society.</strong> The article does not specifically define youth, but refers to the incorporation of EU Youth Programmes where <strong>youth is defined as between 15-29 years.</strong></td>
<td>No documentation could be found online on youth spending in Denmark. According to the <a href="#">World Bank</a>, Denmark spent <strong>15.05% of its government expenditure</strong> and <strong>8.74% of its GDP on education</strong> provision in 2009.</td>
<td>The <a href="#">Danish Youth Council (DUF)</a> is an umbrella organisation representing 70 organisations that work with over 600,000 children and young people. The deliver a range of youth programmes including politics, scouting, religion, environment, youth clubs, theatre, exchange and international projects. The DUF distribute over DKK 100 million (USD 18.2 million) annually to youth projects and are members of the <a href="#">European Youth Forum</a>. Additionally, the <a href="#">Network of Youth Councils (NAU)</a> is the umbrella organisation for approximately 70 local youth councils across Denmark.</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
<td>The Youth Division within the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture is currently responsible for youth policy in Finland. In line with the Youth Act (2006) and the Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy (2006), the Ministry prepared the Youth Act (72/2006) seeks to: support young people’s growth and independence, to promote young people’s active citizenship and empowerment and to improve young people’s growth and living conditions. It assigns responsibility for youth work and youth policy to the Ministry of Education (currently named the Ministry of Education and Culture). The Act also mandates that the government adopt a youth policy development programme every four years, while the Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy (2006) sets the scope for the programme, as well as other responsibilities of the Ministry responsible for youth policy. The current Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012-2015 includes nine strategic goals relating to active citizenship, employment, non-discrimination, gender equality, education and health. Finland’s Youth Act (2006) and Youth decree (2006) define youth as those under 29 years of age.</td>
<td>According to the Administration website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in 2013 the Ministry spent EUR 74 million (USD 101 million) on youth work and EUR 12.5 million (USD 17.1 million) on supporting national youth organisations, for a total of approximately EUR 86.5 million (USD 118 million). According to the World Bank, Finland spent 12.26% of its government expenditure and 6.84% of its GDP on education provision in 2010.</td>
<td>The Finish Youth Cooperation (Allianssi) is the umbrella organisation for national youth organisations in Finland. Its purpose is: to encourage young people to become responsible members of society and help them participate in decision-making processes and international activities. It lobbies decision-makers, youth workers and youth organisations, and provides services directly to young people, such as the European Youth Card. It has an annual budget of EUR 3 million (USD 4.1 million), with 70% provided from the Ministry of Education and Culture.</td>
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<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>There is a Child Wellbeing Unit, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and The Ministry of Youth Development is an amalgamation of the former Ministry of Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development’s previous responsibility for youth policy. The Ministry supports young people in “using their knowledge, skills and experience to participate confidently in their communities.” It has three key functions: 1. Encouraging and supporting a youth development approach; 2. Supporting and facilitating youth involvement and input into decision-making processes, and; 3. Funding of youth development services.</td>
<td>The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy aims to remove barriers and support collaboration - from the Cabinet table to the kitchen table. It does this in three ways: 1. It provides a common direction and requires accountability across government so that broader social, environmental and economic policies work better together to drive change and enable collective effort, including more locally-driven solutions. 2. It places priority on addressing the significant inequities experienced by Māori children and young people and improving services and support for all those with greatest needs. 3. By committing to achieving wellbeing for all children and young people, and regularly reporting on progress, it creates an environment where informal networks and the family and whānau closest to the child can demand change and accountability.</td>
<td>The 2013/14 budget estimates provides, NZD 5.2 million (USD 4.3 million) for the provision of implementation of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, NZD 889,000 (USD 727,534) for the Youth Development Partnership Fund and NZD 2.9 million (USD 2.7 million) for leadership and service delivery to promote the interests of, and improve outcomes for, young people. According to the World Bank, New Zealand spent 16.08% of its government expenditure on education provision in 2008, and 7.26% of its GDP in 2011.</td>
<td>No independent national youth council could be located, however, a range of participation structures exist under the Ministry of Youth Development. The national Aotearoa Youth Voices network brings together “young people, government and community decision makers.” Members of the network can then be selected to the National Youth Advisory Group, which “provide[s] government and community agencies with timely advice on many different issues.” The annual Youth Parliament also offers a ‘mock’ Parliament session.</td>
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New Zealand’s national youth development strategy defines young people as between the ages of 12-24 years.
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) is the national ministry responsible for coordinating youth-related policies across sectors (ex. health, education and justice). As described in the country sheet on youth policy (2012), the Netherlands is a decentralised unitary state. Provincial and local authorities operate with a degree of autonomy, however cooperate on some initiatives. For example, an online portal for youth (Voor de jeugd) is a joint initiative of the VWS, the Ministry of Security and Justice and an association of Dutch municipalities. Youth Policy in the Netherlands (2007) by the Netherlands Youth Institute describes the multi-sectoral approach of youth policy in areas of family policy &amp; child protection, health, education &amp; leisure and employment. The Ministry for Youth and Families (now the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport) is responsible for the coordination of youth-related policies throughout different ministries and at various levels of government. According to a 2012 report by the same institute, Dutch youth policy is shifting from a problem-focused (negative) approach to one that is development-oriented and demand-led (positive). As described in a 2011 international review on Dutch youth policies, the aim is to “guide children, youth people and their parents in their opportunities and foster their empowerment”. According to the 2007 report Youth Policy in the Netherlands, the term youth is applied to children and young people from 0 to 24 years of age.</td>
<td>According to the 2014 State Budget, youth (as a policy item within the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport) has a budget of EUR 1.4 million (USD 1.9 million). According to the World Bank, the Netherlands spent 11.65% of its government expenditure and 5.96% of its GDP on education provision in 2010.</td>
<td>The Dutch National Youth Council (NJR) is a peer-led, umbrella organisation for national youth organisations in the Netherlands. Its target age is youth aged 12-30. According to the country sheet on youth policy (2012), the council is responsible for improving youth participation at local and national levels, as well as advocating for youth and youth organisations. It was formed in 2001 with financial support from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, and currently receives funding from a variety of departments and organisations. The NJR is a member of the European Youth Forum.</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education and Research has responsibility for coordinating youth policy, youth organisations and cooperation on youth issues. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is the government agency that ‘works to ensure that young people have access to influence and welfare’. The Agency produces reports, which inform the development of youth policy. These include an annual compilation of 80 indicators of youth development; an annual analysis of a priority topic; and a study of youth attitudes and values conducted every four years. The Swedish Government’s Youth Policy Fact Sheet (2009) notes that whilst no single youth policy document exists, “a youth perspective is mainstreamed in relevant policy areas”. Targeted areas include education, employment, culture &amp; leisure, participation, health &amp; security. Policy is supported by evidence with an annual review and analysis of “80 indicators of development”. The Youth Law (2004) reinforces the systems of coordination between policy areas to ensure the objectives of the national youth policy is achieved. A Youth Bill (2014) has been introduced that provides a new youth policy framework and action plan for 2014-2017. It is foreseen to enter into force on January 1, 2015. In a written response (2013) the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) welcomed the bill, but called for greater ambition and resources. The Youth Law (2004) of Sweden defines youth as between 13-25 years. The draft Youth Bill (2014) maintains that definition. The Youth Bill (2014) includes an action plan, for which SEK 10 million (USD 1.5 million) per year is expected to be allocated. According to the Government of Sweden, a proposed SEK 293 million (USD 45.6 million) has been “allocated to youth policy” in 2014. According to the World Bank, Sweden spent 13.37% of its government expenditure and 6.98% of its GDP on education provision in 2010. The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) is an umbrella organisation of 81 national youth organisations in Sweden that aims “to collectively improve the conditions for youths’ organisations”. Through their national and international programmes, LSU aims to “ensure that young people are involved in decision-making, in Sweden and the world.” LSU is a full member of the European Youth Forum. LSU’s main funders include the Swedish Inheritance Fund and Sida. They also receive a grant from the government and members pay an annual fee.</td>
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<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>The <a href="https://www.bswiss.ch/en/Service/insurance-and-pensions/youth">Family, Generations and Society Domain</a> of the Federal Social Insurance Office is responsible for youth affairs. Its main activities include coordination of the “Youth and Violence” prevention programme, provision of financial support to organisations working with young people, and as an organising partner of the annual Federal Youth Session. The Youth Policy Strategy (2008) highlights that while the federal government has a role to play in youth policy, primary responsibility for implementation lies with the cantons and municipalities. The Youth Policy Strategy (2008) identifies youth promotion measures in cantons as being aimed at youth aged 16-25 years.</td>
<td>The purpose of the <a href="https://www.bswiss.ch/en/Service/insurance-and-pensions/youth">Child and Youth Promotion Act</a> (2011) is to promote work with young people and help to ensure that they are encouraged in their physical and mental wellbeing and are able to develop into responsible adults who are integrated into the community. The law is described by the “<a href="https://www.bswiss.ch/en/Service/insurance-and-pensions/youth">Child and youth policy in Switzerland</a>” (2013) fact sheet as being a “policy of protection, promotion and participation.” According to the <a href="https://www.bswiss.ch/en/Service/insurance-and-pensions/youth">Youth Policy Strategy</a> (2008), eight cantons have independent youth laws and a further nine cantons have youth-specific provisions in other acts. The Strategy includes information on the development and challenges of youth policy, a situational analysis and measures for evaluation. Switzerland has several definitions of youth. The <a href="https://www.bswiss.ch/en/Service/insurance-and-pensions/youth">Youth Law</a> (2011) defines childhood and youth as kindergarten age to 30 years. The Youth Policy Strategy (2008) identifies youth promotion measures in cantons as being aimed at youth aged 16-25 years.</td>
<td>According to the <a href="https://www.bswiss.ch/en/Service/insurance-and-pensions/youth">Budget Figures for Administrative Units 2014</a>, CHF 2.2 million (USD 2.5 million) is allocated for Measures for the Protection of Youth, CHF 10.3 million (USD 11.8 million) for Encouragement for Children and Youth, and CHF 700,000 (USD 798,653) for Incentive Financing for Cantons for Children and Youth. Extensive devolution in Switzerland gives cantons control of tax revenues, and as such expenditure on youth in addition to federal funding varies by canton. According to the <a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education">World Bank</a>, Switzerland spent 15.94% of its government expenditure and 5.22% of its GDP on education provision in 2010.</td>
<td>The <a href="https://www.snyc.ch/en">Swiss National Youth Council</a> (SNYC) is an umbrella organisation of 65 youth organisations. Their mission is “to generate possibilities for young people to participate in society as a whole and to develop into socially conscious, active citizens.” The SNYC coordinates a series of projects including a training programme on physical and mental health, a project supporting migrant minors, and the “Youth Rep” scheme, which sends three young representatives to the UN. The SNYC also engages in political advocacy work on policy positions determined by members.</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>In a <a href="#">press release on 3 July 2013</a>, it was announced that responsibility for youth policy would be transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Cabinet Office - a cross-thematic Ministry which directly supports the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. However, no youth department exists. The Cabinet Office focuses on national programmes, such as the National Citizenship Service, while most youth provisions and services are provided at a local and city level of government. Scotland has a Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Youth Employment.</td>
<td>England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales all have recent youth policy and/or youth work strategies. Wales has developed a 2014 – 2018 <a href="#">National Youth Work Strategy</a>, and Scotland a 2014 – 2019 <a href="#">National Youth Work Strategy</a>. Both build on civil society consultations and have a transversal approach. Northern Ireland has a youth work policy <a href="#">Priorities for Youth</a>. <a href="#">Positive for Youth</a> (2011) contains a number of policies that apply across the UK. It is a cross-sector strategy, which encourages actors to work together to support positive youth development. The policy strategy features a decentralised approach, with youth centres, statutory provisions and services delivered by Local Authorities. A 2013 update suggests positive progress, however a number of concerns have been raised. The transversal youth policy framework <a href="#">Positive for Youth</a> (2011) targets young people 13 to 19 years old.</td>
<td>Since youth policies are cross-sectoral a specific amount allocated to youth cannot be identified. According to the <a href="#">World Bank</a>, the United Kingdom spent 13.32% of its government expenditure and 6.23% of its GDP on <a href="#">education</a> provision in 2010.</td>
<td>The <a href="#">British Youth Council</a> (BYC) is an umbrella organisation made up of over 230 national and local youth organisations, which supports young people “to influence and inform decisions that affect their lives.” Member organisations elect an annual board of young trustees (aged 16 to 25) and guide all policy and strategic decisions. BYC delivers campaigns such as <a href="#">Votes at 16</a>, and participation programmes such as <a href="#">UK Youth Parliament</a> and the international <a href="#">UK Young Ambassadors</a>. BYC is a full member of the <a href="#">European Youth Forum</a> and <a href="#">Commonwealth Youth Council</a>.</td>
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| United States | At the federal level, there are two offices dealing primarily with youth: the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs brings together 18 federal departments and agencies in an effort to collaborate and harmonise youth programs. The Office of Global Youth Issues is attached to the Department of State and works globally with agencies and embassies through more than 70 youth councils. | **Pathways for Youth** is a draft strategic plan for federal collaboration on youth issues. It was published in 2013 by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, which brings together 18 federal departments and agencies focusing on youth, and is currently in public consultation. The draft strategy formulates a strengths-based vision for youth and defines three goals: (1) Promote coordinated strategies to improve youth outcomes; (2) Promote evidence-based and innovative strategies; (3) Promote youth engagement and partnerships. It further introduces four cross-cutting initiatives:  
- Develop a shared language on youth topics  
- Assess and disseminate models of collaboration  
- Centralise and disseminate information  
- Promote data collection and evaluation.  
The draft youth policy framework Pathways for Youth from 2013 defines youth as those under 25 years old in three stages: early adolescence (under 14), middle adolescence (15-17), late adolescence and early adulthood (18-24). | While the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs has listed federal departments and agencies that support youth programs, the combined spending has not been calculated and cannot be easily deduced from the available public documents. According to the World Bank, the United States spent 13.07% of its government expenditure and 5.43% of its GDP on education provision in 2009. | While many cities and states have youth councils, some government-initiated, others youth-led, there is no active national youth council at federal level. A previously active organisation, the United States Youth Council, was disbanded in 1986. According to Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP), the United States is home to the largest number of youth civic participation organizations in the world. ICP lists a wide range of examples of organizations, movements and associations. |

(Source: [www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies/#nav-N](http://www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies/#nav-N))