your.voice

Your Voice
2025

yourtown POWERING kids helpline

Bupa Foundation

Acknowledgement of Country

yourtown acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to the land and their waterways. We pay our respect to them, their culture, and their elders past, present and emerging.

We would also like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, and particularly Uncle Tony Garvey, for welcoming us to the land of the Wurundjeri people for our youth summit in Naarm/Melbourne.

yourtown Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the participation of over 4,000 children and young people who contributed their perspectives to the 2025 Your Voice Project. Their knowledge and insights highlight the great capacity of young people, and the importance of their voices being heard.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our Your Voice Youth Representatives, Maeson, Fiona and Nikoletta, for their dedication and enthusiasm throughout the year. Their efforts ensured authentic youth participation and representation from the outset of the project.

This initiative was made possible through the generous support of the Bupa Foundation, whose contribution enabled not only the delivery of the project but also the hosting of our Youth Summit in Naarm/Melbourne. We are grateful for their willingness to engage with the concerns and ideas of young people, reflecting their commitment to future generations.

We also wish to thank our **yourtown** Youth Network members for their valuable input and feedback during key stages of the project, our partners across the youth sector for encouraging participation and the **yourtown** team for their implementation and commitment.

To all who contributed, you have once again challenged us to hear your voices clearly and asked us to walk beside you and raise your voices at the highest levels. We are committed to making sure that you are seen, heard, and included.

–Your Voice Project Team

Your Voice is delivered by **yourtown** and made possible thanks to the Bupa Foundation

Bupa Foundation

Youth Representatives' Foreword

Over the past year, we've had the honour of working with **yourtown** to ensure this project stayed true to its name: that it was driven by the voices, experiences, resilience and ideas of young people across Australia.

From the very beginning, this was not just a consultation. It was a collaboration. We helped shape the survey questions, analyse responses, plan the forums and guide the Youth Summit – but more importantly, we listened as over 4,000 young people took the time to share their truths, their challenges and their hopes. We listened to those who told us that they felt unheard by the systems meant to support them and to those who, despite this, still believe in the power of change.

What we heard was clear: young people care deeply about their communities, their futures and each other. Across every state and territory, regardless of background, the same themes emerged – the need for mental health support, education and employment pathways that prepare us for tomorrow, safe and inclusive communities, and systems that are designed not just for us, but with us.

The final recommendations in this report reflect those priorities and we hope this report reminds everyone of what's possible when we're invited to the table.

This report is more than data on a page. It's a reflection of the lived realities of young people today and a call to action for those who have the power to shape policy, services and culture. This report is a message from young people to those in power. It says: we know what is needed, we are ready to lead change, and we expect action.

We are proud to have walked alongside so many passionate young people throughout this process. Our hope is that decision-makers read this report with the same respect and openness with which it was created – and that they act. Listening is not enough; what happens next matters.

To every young person who spoke up, thank you. Your voice is here. Your voice is powerful. And your voice will continue to shape the future.

- Maeson, Fiona and Nikoletta –
Your Voice Steering Committee Youth Representatives

> ""
>
> ## Thank you for listening to my voice.
>
> 12–17, female, Qld

Executive Summary

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*Young people are smart,
aware and insightful.
Give us a chance
and listen to us.*

18-25, female, WA

The 2025 Your Voice Project, led by yourtown and supported by the Bupa Foundation, engaged over 4,000 young Australians aged 12–25 to identify priority areas for reform across health, education, safety, and economic wellbeing. Through a national survey, online forums and a Youth Summit, young people articulated clear, actionable recommendations for government and service systems.

(L–R) **Christina Dickinson** - Chief of Staff to CEO, Bupa APAC Melbourne, VIC. **Iwan Walters MP,** Member for Greenvale. **Tracy Adams yourtown** CEO. **Roger Sharp** Chief Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Officer, Bupa Asia Pacific.

Key Findings:

- **Safety and Inclusion:** Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) was the most urgent issue, with **82%** rating it as important. Bullying, sextortion, and discrimination were also prevalent.

- **Mental Health: 70%** of respondents identified mental health as the top priority for government action, with **81%** highlighting mental wellbeing as an important issue.

- **Cost of Living: 75%** rated cost of living as a critical issue. Housing, income support and education costs were cited as major barriers to wellbeing.

- **Education and Employment: 65%** called for reform in the education system and **49%** called for reform related to employment. Young people want practical, inclusive learning that prepares them for their future and fair employment conditions for young people.

- **Confidence in Government: 73%** of participants have participated in community activism or the political process but only **15.8%** of young people expressed high or very high confidence in government decision-making.

Key Themes:

1. **Early Intervention and Prevention:** Young people want support before crisis through trauma-informed services, peer support and community programs that are holistic and co-ordinated.

2. **Youth-Led Systems Design:** Services must be co-designed with young people to ensure relevance, accessibility and effectiveness.

3. **Equity and Inclusion:** Policies must address systemic discrimination and ensure culturally safe, inclusive environments.

4. **Human Rights:** Decision makers must ensure that human rights are upheld as these are key to young people's long-term wellbeing and prosperity

5. **Safe Communities:** Stronger protections and education related to violence, bullying and online harm are essential.

Eight recommendations were developed by the young people as part of the youth summit to create positive, long term change.

Recommendations Summary

Participants in the project helped to develop eight recommendations focused on six key areas (system and service design, cost of living, early intervention, mental health support, preparation for the future and safe communities). Each of the recommendations provided benefits across these key areas, which is outlined in the diagrams below.

	Recommendation	Policy Focus
1	Specialist Youth Guides	Embed youth-trained staff in government services to simplify access and develop people's understanding of available support.
2	Early Intervention Hubs	Establish multidisciplinary hubs in every community that provide early intervention support and referral.
3	Enhanced Financial Assistance	Reform Youth Allowance, introduce a Youth Card, and expand youth housing options.
4	Safe and Supportive Communities	Launch national education campaigns and strengthen anti-discrimination policies to create safer physical and virtual communities.
5	Equitable Pay	Align wages with responsibilities, not age; mandate appropriate training and workplace inclusion.
6	Alternative Education Pathways	Normalise non-traditional models of education and make them available to all young people.
7	Improved School Environments	Reform the current school environment by training staff in inclusivity and embed real-world learning across all school sectors.
8	Improved Access to Mental Health Support	Increase investment in youth-led, culturally safe mental health services that are accessible and affordable.

Recommendations and Benefits

Key Area Benefits						
	System and service design	Cost of living	Early intervention	Mental health support	Preparation for the future	Safe communities
Specialist Youth Guides	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Early Intervention Hubs	✓		✓	✓		✓
Enhanced Financial Assistance		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe and Supportive Communities	✓		✓	✓		✓
Equitable Pay		✓		✓		✓
Alternative Education Pathways	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Improved School Environments	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Improved Access to Mental Health Support	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Project Overview

In 2021 **yourtown** first delivered the Your Voice Project, with the goal of hearing from young people aged between 15 and 24 on key issues and areas for policy reform. This year (2025) **yourtown** has delivered Your Voice for the second time with the goal of hearing from 5,000 young people aged between 12 and 25. In alignment with our commitment to youth engagement, we increased young people's involvement throughout the project. Three young people Maeson, Fiona and Nikoletta were appointed to the steering committee, and eight members of the **yourtown** Youth Network contributed actively to the analysis of results and planning of activities.

We prioritised topical issues affecting young people to gain deeper insight into their concerns and perspectives on areas requiring change. To deepen our understanding of their views on government decision-making processes and the extent of their influence, we expanded our questions to examine the significance of various issues and assess young peoples confidence in government.

To allow us to gather information from young people, and ensure that we unpacked and developed their ideas, the project was delivered over three distinct phases:

1. **Your Voice Survey** – questions exploring key issues, experiences of services and their participation in creating social change. We had responses from over **4,000** young people in this stage with almost **2,500** expressing their interest in being further involved in the project.

2. **Online Forums** – six forums exploring the views of participants on different issues raised in the survey, including mental and physical health, education and employment, cost of living, safety and inclusion and youth voice – with forums also exploring the views of different demographic groups. We had **86** young people involved, who participated in more than **300** sessions talking about the changes that were needed to improve outcomes for now and in the future.

3. **Youth Summit** – **42** young people aged 18 to 25 came together in Naarm/Melbourne from every state and territory to develop practical recommendations based on the survey and forum findings. These were then reviewed by project participants aged 12 to 17 to ensure they were relevant to their lives and experiences.

This survey gave me a chance to reflect on the pressing challenges facing the country. The survey made me realise how interconnected many of these issues are and how important it is for policy solutions to address them holistically. It felt good to participate and contribute my views on what should be prioritised in Australia's future.

12-17, female, Tas
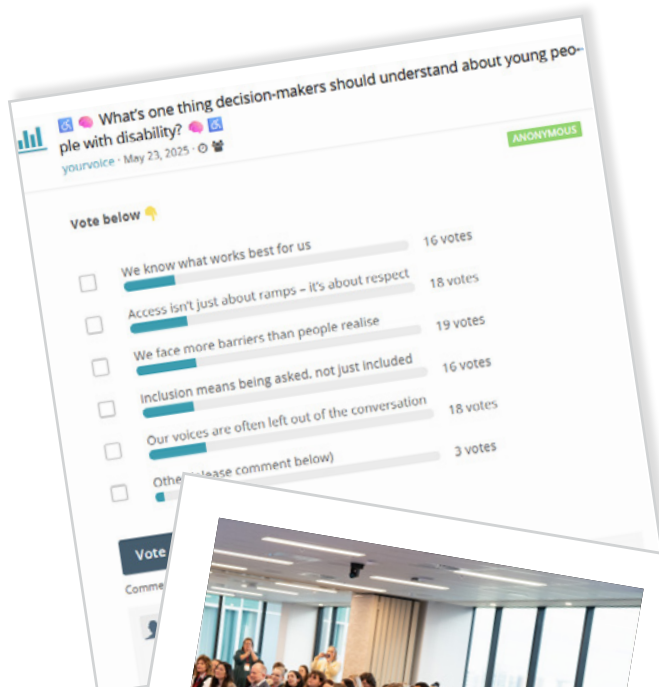
Your Voice Process

Stage 1

Survey

February – April 2025
4,212 participants

Key Issues:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence, mental wellbeing, cost of living, sextortion and bullying
- Areas needing change: mental health, education, housing, health, employment
- Young people told us that they don't feel heard or understood by government

Stage 4

Giving Voice

Delivering recommendations to Government:

1. Specialist Youth Guides
2. Early Intervention Hubs
3. Enhanced Financial Assistance
4. Safe and Supportive Communities
5. Equitable Pay
6. Alternative Education Pathways
7. Improved School Environments
8. Improved Access to Mental Health Support

Stage 2

Online Forums

June 2025
86 young people

Key Sessions:

- Mental and physical health
- Education and employment
- Cost of living
- Safety and inclusion
- Youth voice

Stage 3

Youth Summits

July 2025
42 participants
18–25 year olds Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria
Hosted by Bupa

20 participants
12–17 year olds online

Recommendations in six areas:

1. Design systems / services that meet the needs and lives of children and young people
2. Support children and young people with the cost of living
3. Provide early intervention support for children, young people and families
4. Provide appropriate, accessible and timely Mental Health support
5. Prepare children and young people for the future (education and employment systems and supports)
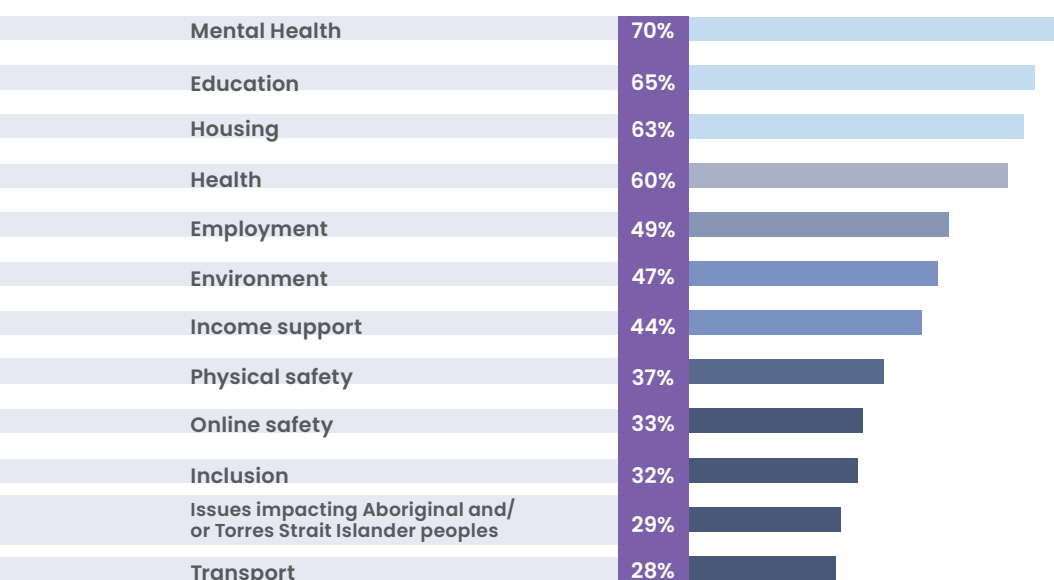6. Provide safe communities for children and young people

Survey Findings

4,212 young people participated in the Your Voice Survey, with over 3,000 comments included as part of the analysis. The survey asked about how important action was on key issues that young people are facing today, areas that they want to see better action from the government, their experiences of their ability to access services and their quality, their involvement in advocacy activities and their level of confidence in the government.

Participants were asked to rate the importance of key issues and identify the areas where they wanted government action. These questions identified several key concerns for young people, including mental health, education, employment, cost of living, safety and domestic, family and sexual violence.

Level of importance - key issues

Issue	Not at all important	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Domestic, family and sexual violence	6%	4%	8%	15%	67%
Mental wellbeing	4%	5%	10%	25%	56%
Sextortion (Blackmail involving sending sexual images)	7%	6%	11%	19%	55%
Cost of living	6%	6%	13%	21%	54%
Bullying	6%	8%	16%	24%	46%
Youth justice / crime / offending	6%	9%	17%	26%	42%
Trans and gender diverse rights	14%	10%	15%	19%	42%
Physical wellbeing	5%	8%	18%	29%	39%
Online safety	7%	9%	19%	26%	38%
Environmental action	7%	10%	20%	25%	38%
Loneliness	5%	11%	25%	27%	32%
Social media age restrictions	17%	19%	26%	17%	21%

Legend:
- Very important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not important
- Not at all important

Areas for better decision making by the government

| Area	Percentage
Mental Health	70%
Education	65%
Housing	63%
Health	60%
Employment	49%
Environment	47%
Income support	44%
Physical safety	37%
Online safety	33%
Inclusion	32%
Issues impacting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples	29%
Transport	28%

> You should listen to young people's voices more, we have a lot to say and think deeper than you realise.
>
> 12–17, gender diverse, NSW

your. voice

Most of the survey participants expressed having experience with accessing or using services across areas such as mental health and education, with smaller groups accessing disability and financial support. Overall, their level of satisfaction in relation to access and quality was comparable, but less than **40%** were satisfied with the services in both areas.
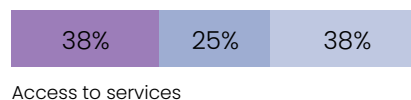
Service quality - all responses

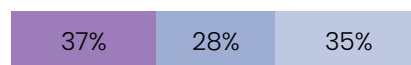| 36%	27%	37%

Access to services

35%	29%	36%
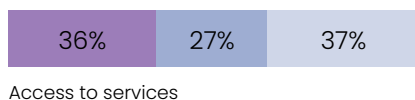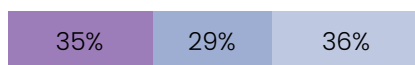
Quality of services

- ■ Dissatisfied
- ■ Neutral
- ■ Satisfied

Service quality - mental health

38%	25%	38%

Access to services

37%	28%	35%

Quality of services

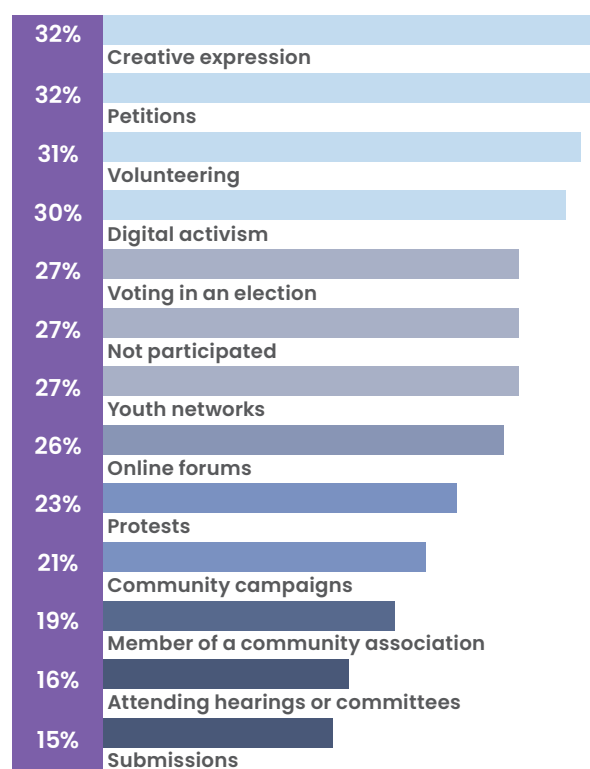- ■ Dissatisfied
- ■ Neutral
- ■ Satisfied

Approximately **60%** of respondents had accessed a specialist mental health service, including Kids Helpline, and their experiences of these services was similar to the experiences described of other services. Participants were generally dissatisfied with services related to physical health, income support, housing and homelessness and domestic and family violence. Those who accessed support as a young carer, or used education, or employment services were generally more satisfied.

Three quarters of participants in the survey said they were involved in political processes through voting, community activism or a form of political activity; however, all groups felt a general lack of confidence in government.

From the responses 18 to 25 year olds are more likely to have been politically active with **88%** of 18 to 25 year olds are enrolled to vote. **43%** of 12 to 17 year olds have not participated in any form of political activity. Of those who have been involved, creative expression, volunteering and digital activism were the most common.

Females were the least likely to participate in any form of political activity and males were generally more confident that the government listened to and understood their needs. Gender diverse young people were the most likely to be involved and had the lowest level of confidence that they were heard and understood.

Level of participation in the community activism or political processes

%	Category
32%	Creative expression
32%	Petitions
31%	Volunteering
30%	Digital activism
27%	Voting in an election
27%	Not participated
27%	Youth networks
26%	Online forums
23%	Protests
21%	Community campaigns
19%	Member of a community association
16%	Attending hearings or committees
15%	Submissions

Confidence in Government

understands your needs
- 7%
- 9%
- 19%
- 31%
- 34%

ability to engage & influence
- 8%
- 10%
- 20%
- 28%
- 36%

takes your voice & opinion seriously
- 7%
- 9%
- 16%
- 24%
- 44%

Level of confidence that the government understands the needs of children and young people
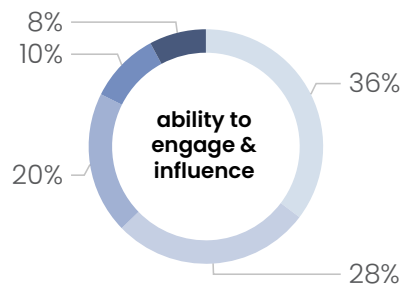
Level of confidence related to ability to engage and influence government decision making

Level of confidence that the government takes your voice and opinion seriously

- ■ Very high confidence
- ■ High confidence
- ■ Moderately confident
- ■ A little confident
- ■ Not at all confident

> "Politicians claim to act in the interest of young people yet rarely consult with us… We do everything right, we do everything we're told to do to have our voices heard and we are consistently ignored and dismissed."
>
> **18-25, female, WA**

> "Please listen to the youth. We are scared and angry about the world we are growing up in."
>
> **12-17, female, Qld**

> "These are serious issues that many young children and teens face daily, there is little to no support for these topics and that is not acceptable. Young people deserve a voice and a better future, this is our future and our life and we deserve a say in how it goes."
>
> **12-17, female, NSW**

The changing environment:

Environmental and climate change concerns are strongly and repeatedly voiced by young people; however, it was just outside the top five issues for young people in areas for government action, being seen as important by **63%** of respondents.
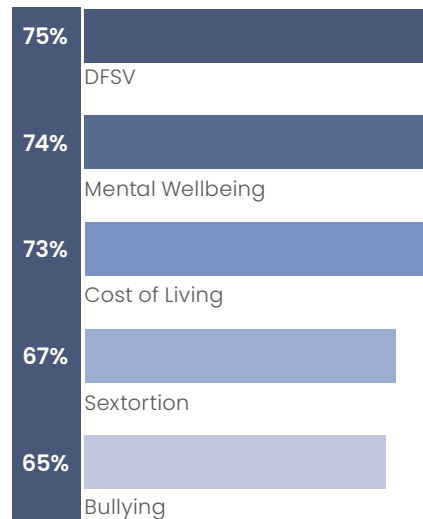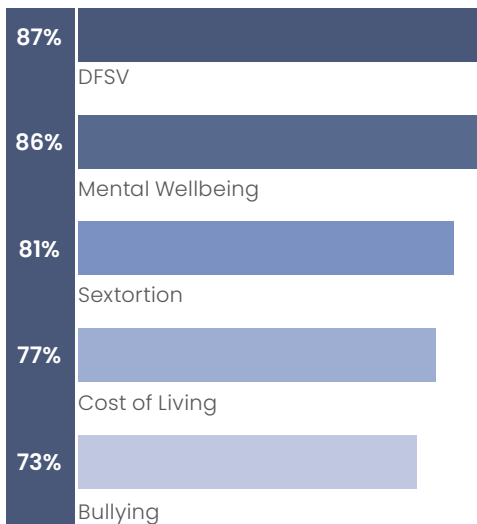
While it was not further explored specifically, respondents expressed deep anxiety about the future, criticising government inaction and the prioritisation of economic interests—such as coal and fossil fuels—over meaningful climate action. There were urgent calls for investment in renewable energy, stronger policies to reduce carbon emissions and plastic waste, and a shift towards sustainability and conservation, including walkable cities and increased public transport concessions. Many highlight the interconnectedness of environmental issues with mental health and social justice, arguing that climate change threatens not only ecosystems but also the wellbeing and security of current and future generations.

Young people want leaders to listen, act boldly, and make the environment a priority, warning that without decisive action, the consequences for both people and planet will be severe.

your voice

12-17
year olds

59%
of participants

18-25
year olds

41%
of participants

Key Issues *

12-17 year olds

Issue	%
DFSV	87%
Mental Wellbeing	86%
Sextortion	81%
Cost of Living	77%
Bullying	73%

18-25 year olds

Issue	%
DFSV	75%
Mental Wellbeing	74%
Cost of Living	73%
Sextortion	67%
Bullying	65%

Top 5 areas for government decision making

12-17 year olds
1. Mental Health
2. Education
3. Health
4. Housing
5. Employment

18-25 year olds
1. Housing
2. Mental Health
3. Education
4. Health
5. Employment

NSW
43%

QLD
20%

VIC
17%

Key Issues *

NSW
1. DFSV — **69%**
2. Mental Wellbeing — **68%**
3. Sextortion — **64%**
4. Cost of Living — **63%**
5. Bullying — **61%**

QLD
1. DFSV — **91%**
2. Mental Wellbeing — **91%**
3. Cost of Living — **88%**
4. Bullying — **76%**
5. Youth Justice — **76%**

VIC
1. DFSV — **92%**
2. Mental Wellbeing — **88%**
3. Cost of Living — **81%**
4. Sextortion — **80%**
5. Bullying — **73%**

Top 5 areas for government decision making

NSW
1. Mental Health
2. Education
3. Health
4. Housing
5. Employment

QLD
1. Mental Health
2. Housing
3. Education
4. Health
5. Employment

VIC
1. Mental Health
2. Education
3. Housing
4. Health
5. Employment

Female

60% of participants

Male

29% of participants

Gender Diverse

11% of participants

Key Issues *

Female

- 84% DFSV
- 82% Mental Wellbeing
- 76% Sextortion
- 75% Cost of Living
- 72% Bullying

Male

- 70% DFSV
- 69% Cost of Living
- 68% Mental Wellbeing
- 64% Physical Wellbeing
- 63% Sextortion

Gender Diverse

- 95% DFSV
- 95% Trans and Gender Diverse Rights
- 93% Mental Wellbeing
- 89% Cost of Living
- 82% Sextortion

Top 5 areas for government decision making

Female
1. Mental Health
2. Education
3. Housing
4. Health
5. Employment
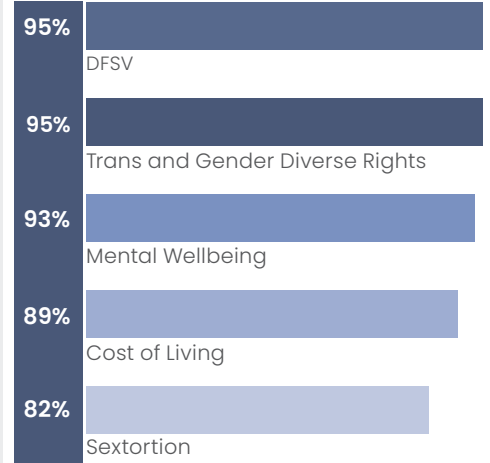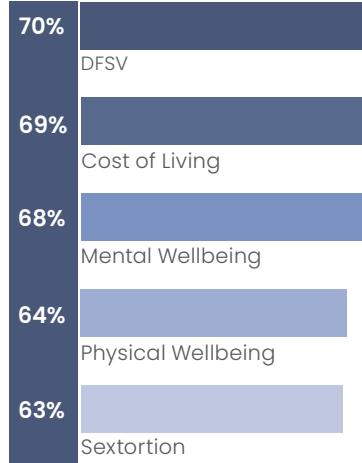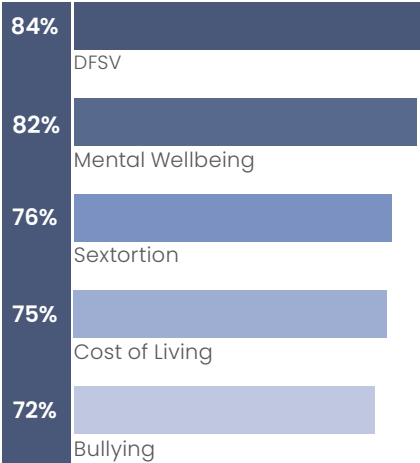
Male
1. Education
2. Housing
3. Mental Health
4. Employment
5. Health

Gender Diverse
1. Mental Health
2. Housing
3. Education
4. Health
5. Environment

Other States & Territories

20%

CALD

13%

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders

30%

Key Issues*

Other States & Territories
1. DFSV — **88%**
2. Mental Wellbeing — **84%**
3. Cost of Living — **81%**
4. Sextortion — **75%**
5. Physical Wellbeing — **71%**

CALD
1. DFSV — **91%**
2. Mental Wellbeing — **84%**
3. Sextortion — **82%**
4. Cost of Living — **82%**
5. Youth Justice — **74%**

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders
1. Mental Wellbeing — **57%**
2. Youth Justice — **55%**
3. DFSV — **53%**
4. Physical Wellbeing — **53%**
5. Bullying — **52%**

Top 5 areas for government decision making

Other States & Territories
1. Mental Health
2. Education
3. Housing
4. Health
5. Employment

CALD
1. Education
2. Mental Health
3. Housing
4. Health
5. Employment

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders
1. Education
2. Mental Health
3. Health
4. Housing
5. Employment

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Domestic, family and sexual violence emerged as a deeply concerning and recurring theme in young people's responses, with frequent references to abuse, sexual violence, harassment, and the urgent need for support and safety. Many describe experiences of being victims of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; often feeling ignored or failed by the systems meant to protect them, such as schools, police, and child protection services. Others commented on their lack of knowledge meaning that they were unaware that they were being abused and were left in unsafe situations.

There is a strong sense of injustice and frustration, as young people report barriers to accessing help, long wait times, and eligibility hurdles, particularly when seeking restraining orders or support for trauma. Respondents also spoke of having to stay in abusive or dangerous situations because of financial constraints and lack of housing options. Stigma, fear, and a lack of understanding from adults and professionals further compound these challenges, leaving many feeling unsafe, unheard, and unsupported.

The data highlights a pressing call for more effective, accessible, and compassionate responses to domestic, family and sexual violence, with young people emphasising the need for social and systemic change, better training for professionals, and a greater focus on prevention, early intervention, and genuine care for those affected.

Key Information:

○ **67%** of respondents said that action on DFSV was very important and **82%** said it was important.

○ Sextortion was rated as very important by **55%** and important by **74%** in total.

○ **49%** of those that had accessed Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) support were dissatisfied with the quality of support, and **26%** expressed that they were satisfied.

○ **44%** of those that accessed DFV support said they were dissatisfied with their access to services, and **29%** were satisfied.

Key Areas for Change:

1. Community education on abuse, relationships and sexual violence.

2. Service accessibility and safety.

3. Safe school environments.

4. Improved service delivery for those experiencing sexual violence and abuse.
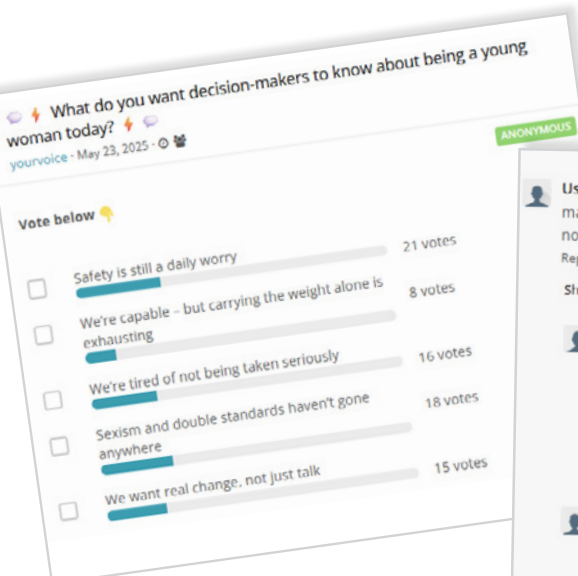
Q2. Where do young women feel most unsafe or excluded – and why?

Comment (15) · Like

Show previous 10 comments

User109 · Jun 6, 2025
Everywhere, but I feel the most unsafe on public transport, especially as I sometimes have to come home very late and walk a bit to my house. This is when I genuinely fear for my life basically every second day. I feel like every woman just feels on edge all the time when in public where we need to be hypervigilant incase something happens.

I feel excluded during group work and meetings sometimes, men tend to not take me that seriously and don't consider me as capable as I am. I have learnt to asset myself but sometimes this is not enough and really depends on the group if the men respect the women there or not to respect and not ignore our words.
Reply · Like

User77 · Jun 6, 2025
I find myself feeling unsafe at night, being by myself in a more secluded place and being by myself around certain groups of men.

...due to the lack of visibility and numbers of people around ...what's going on at night, but I'm talking about a ...routine).

...reas by myself due to the lack of presence of other ...what could happen that goes under the radar.

...ain groups of men (not all), because i don't always ...actions and if it is safe for me.

⚡ What do you want decision-makers to know about being a young, woman today? ⚡ 🗣
yourvoice · May 23, 2025 · ⊙ 🐾

ANONYMOUS

Vote below 👇

☐ Safety is still a daily worry — 21 votes

☐ We're capable – but carrying the weight alone is exhausting — 8 votes

☐ We're tired of not being taken seriously — 16 votes

☐ Sexism and double standards haven't gone anywhere — 18 votes

☐ We want real change, not just talk — 15 votes

User68 · Jun 6, 2025
make a bigger consequence for daily harassment and catcalling, it shouldnt be normalised like it is. or treated like a harmless joke
Reply (5) · Like (6)

Show previous 3 comments

User84 · Jun 6, 2025
@User77 in school i witnessed a boy shame another girl from another school for wearing short shorts at an interschool sports torunment. The male teacher walking passed heard and told him off. I dont know if anything else happened. It is so sad for girls to be shamed in school enviroments
Reply · Like

User109 · Jun 6, 2025
@User84 This behaviour starts at home too, I was constantly shamed for what I wore in my own home! Told to always change and wear a jumper when male guests and family members were coming over. My

your voice

> There needs to be education of abusive behaviours so people like my mother and I can identify abuse and take action. We can't leave if we don't know we need to.

18-25, female, Vic

> The sexual assault team was amazing when I accessed them myself – very kind and considerate and supported me in whatever I wanted to do to get justice. I am still in contact with them... That gives me a lot of peace of mind and takes a lot of pressure off.

12-17, gender diverse, NSW

> When I was dealing with mental health issues and in a psych ward, I faced a lot of discrimination due to being LGBTQIA+... they didn't address my mental health issues and the reason I was there in the first place which was being sexually assaulted, but more focused on my sexuality and gender.

12-17, gender diverse, NSW

> LGBTQ sex ed!! especially in religious schools

Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

> Housing and FV/DV services can often seem eager to move on to the next client, rather than investing in someone's story, addressing all their needs, or even believing them. Victims don't need to be blamed or criticised. As a survivor of family violence, I have been denied housing support, and the police misidentified the perpetrator as the victim, attempting to label my mother as abusive. Services need more funding so they don't have to turn victims back to abusive households, and education for those like police officers who so often misidentify victims as offenders in DV cases, despite being the one service who are meant to protect us.

18-25, female, Vic

> I have had nothing but a horrible experience trying to get support with DV, when trying to get police assistance they claimed our case was to complex and could not assist. We need a mental health taskforce that focuses on complex mental health issues in families and individuals as abuse is only continuing in our communities to the point women are getting murdered regularly even when DVO's etc are in place.

18-25, female, Qld

> how to say 'no' if you are feeling uncomfortable (touching, conversation, staring)

12-17, female, Vic

> I understand that services and schools have a duty of care but it is so much trickier when it comes to DFSV. This scared and stopped me from speaking up about the abuse I was facing until I was 14. The fear of speaking up and then it being reported immediately especially when I was still living with my abuser.

15-17, gender diverse, NSW

> PLEASE JUST LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.
>
> when I was going through sexual violence all I wanted was for someone to listen to me without judgement, and thank god I had a good support system that was actually willing to listen to my story and what I had to say, comforting me instead of judging me for something out of my control or spreading it as a rumour.

Anonymous online forum participant, 15-17

Wellbeing, Mental Health and Health

Health

Barriers to access and equity in healthcare for young people are complex, with practical obstacles such as high costs, lack of bulk billing, long wait times, strict eligibility criteria, mandatory transition points and geographic location making it difficult to obtain timely and appropriate care.

These challenges are compounded by cultural and psychological barriers, including stigma, discrimination, and a lack of understanding from adults and professionals, which often lead to young people feeling dismissed or not taken seriously. Concerningly, those who are facing abuse or familial-based discrimination particularly felt that they could not access appropriate support due to controlling behaviours from parents or carers.

Mental health is particularly impacted by a lack of health focussed support, as many report only receiving help when it is critical, if at all, and those in rural areas, with disabilities, or from minority backgrounds face even greater inequities. Their comments reveal a strong call for systemic reform, including increased funding, simpler and more transparent processes, better training for healthcare professionals, and a shift towards prevention and early intervention to ensure that support is accessible, effective, and equitable for all.

Mental Health

Mental health stands out as the most pressing concern among young people, with frequent references to anxiety, depression, suicide, and an urgent call for more accessible and less stigmatised support. A dominant theme is the widespread dissatisfaction with the current mental health system, including underfunding, understaffing, and disconnection between services.

Many feel frustrated by barriers to care, including long waitlists, high costs, limited bulk billing, and services that only intervene during crises. They also saw the processes to access support as confusing or focussed on adults, meaning that they felt unheard, discouraged or lost in the mental health system.

Schools are viewed both as stressors and possible havens for wellbeing. Yet they're often seen as falling short in addressing bullying, mental health challenges, and the need for safe spaces. Additionally, stigma and a lack of empathy or understanding from adults, professionals, and broader systems continue to compound these struggles.

Key Information:

- O **60%** of respondents to the survey have had experience with a mental health service and over **2,500** responses to the survey came through Kids Helpline.

- O Mental health was the main area that young people wanted to see better decisions from the government, **70%** of respondents.

- O **81%** rated action on mental wellbeing as important (**56%** very important, **25%** important), with only **9%** rating it as not important.

- O **68%** rated action on physical wellbeing as important, with **60%** of respondents indicated they wanted better decisions in relation to Health by the government.

- O Across all major demographics mental wellbeing was in the top three issues, with mental health and Health in the top five issues for action by government.

Key Areas for Change:

1. Reduced costs to access support.
2. More accessible supports and services.
3. Availability of holistic and early intervention supports.
4. Ensuring that services feel safe.
5. Reduced stigma related to help seeking.

User111 · Jun 2, 2025
One key way to improve mental and physical health support for young people is by making it more accessible. This means providing free or low-cost services that are easy to reach, both in person and online. Many young people feel more comfortable opening up through digital platforms, so offering support through apps, chat services, or telehealth can make a big difference. Services should also be youth-friendly, meaning they are non-judgmental, confidential and welcoming. Flexible hours outside of school or work are also important so that support fits into young people's schedules. Most importantly, involving young people in designing these services ensures they actually meet the needs of the people they're meant to help.

User32 · Jun 2, 2025
If mental health services really worked for young people, they would be easy to access, free or affordable, and available without long wait times. They'd be designed with young people in mind—offering safe, welcoming spaces (both in-person and online), staffed by relatable, empathetic professionals who understand youth experiences. Support would be flexible, with options like text/chat therapy, peer-led groups, and drop-in sessions. Most importantly, these services would treat young people with respect, listen without judgment, and empower them to take charge of their mental well being in ways that feel comfortable and real.

> Mental health has always been something I've struggled with, and I know I'm not alone. Too many young people are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, and depressed, but there aren't enough resources for us. Mental health services should be just as important as physical health services. We need more funding for mental health support in schools and communities, and the stigma around mental health needs to end. No one should feel ashamed of needing help. We need more open conversations and real action to make sure mental health is treated properly.

12-17, NSW

> Accessing mental health support is a major challenge. For families that cannot afford private psychotherapy or counselling, CYMHS/CAHMS is the only option... So many young people have had to be on their death bed (suicide attempts) to finally get access from public mental health services and still sometimes still don't get support. Overall, there needs to be more funding for public mental health systems to take more young people on and there needs to be more government funds towards mental health treatment plans for private psychotherapy as it is too expensive.

12-17, female, Qld

> I find that there is a lot of limitations with access to services overall. More often than not you are required to meet over specific sets of circumstances to be eligible for these services. It is either that you meet these overly specific circumstances or you pay a lot of money to access a service. It's not realistic and often leaves the people that could really benefit from services with no support at all. I have also been turned away from multiple services time and time again based on "not being bad enough". You have to be in the worst state possible to receive help. As a result I got worse and worse and worse until eventually I was put on life-support due to an emergency admission because my condition had gotten so bad. I shouldn't have to be on death's door to receive even a smidge of assistance. I've also been rejected because I simply don't make enough to pay for a service. A single 30 minute psychiatrist appoint costs me over $400 and they often require regular visitation. I constantly seeking help and never getting it. I will continue to suffer unless someone takes action about these issues.

18-25, female, NSW

> Being a teenager trying to get support for my mental health has been horrible. I've been dismissed by multiple psychologists and when I can barely function normally. My GP has done more for me in regards to my mental health than any psych has.

12-17, female, NSW

> As a young person, it can be daunting trying to access services. Having to re-tell the story can become exhausting and disheartening. Furthermore, finding a service with the appropriate worker can be difficult.

18-25, female, Qld

> It is extremely difficult to get access to a psychiatrist. Most practices have closed their books and even then are not bulk billed. This is ignoring the difficulty of finding a bulk billed or affordable GP that can get you a referral. It is also difficult, and expensive, to get access to lower tier supports such as counsellors. In my personal circumstances, I live in an area with poor public transport which would make it difficult for me to physically get to services.

18-25, male, Qld

> The mental health supports available are extremely limited and something needs to change. For example, if you have an eating disorder and present to an emergency department in Australia then you must meet the 'very sick' criteria to either be admitted or get support and this often means many people have to reach a critically unwell point to get the support they need, leading to negative patient outcomes. Access to basic health care in Australia can be somewhat affordable however access to specialists (including psychiatrists/psychologists etc.) is absolutely inaccessible due to the cost, which is ultimately a much larger impact on health & wellbeing.

18-25, female, Qld

Cost of Living

The soaring cost of living is creating deep stress for young people and families, many of whom are struggling to afford essentials like rent, food, and basic needs. Support systems such as Centrelink, NDIS, and Medicare are widely perceived as slow, confusing, and insufficient, with eligibility restrictions and parental and partner income tests leaving many feeling excluded.

Financial hardship is closely linked to mental health challenges, obstacles to education, and the threat of homelessness. There is a view that current supports and levels of payments are only available once you are in financial crisis resulting in an inability to financially recover. There's also a rising frustration around economic inequality, with policies often seen as skewed in favour of the wealthy and property investors.
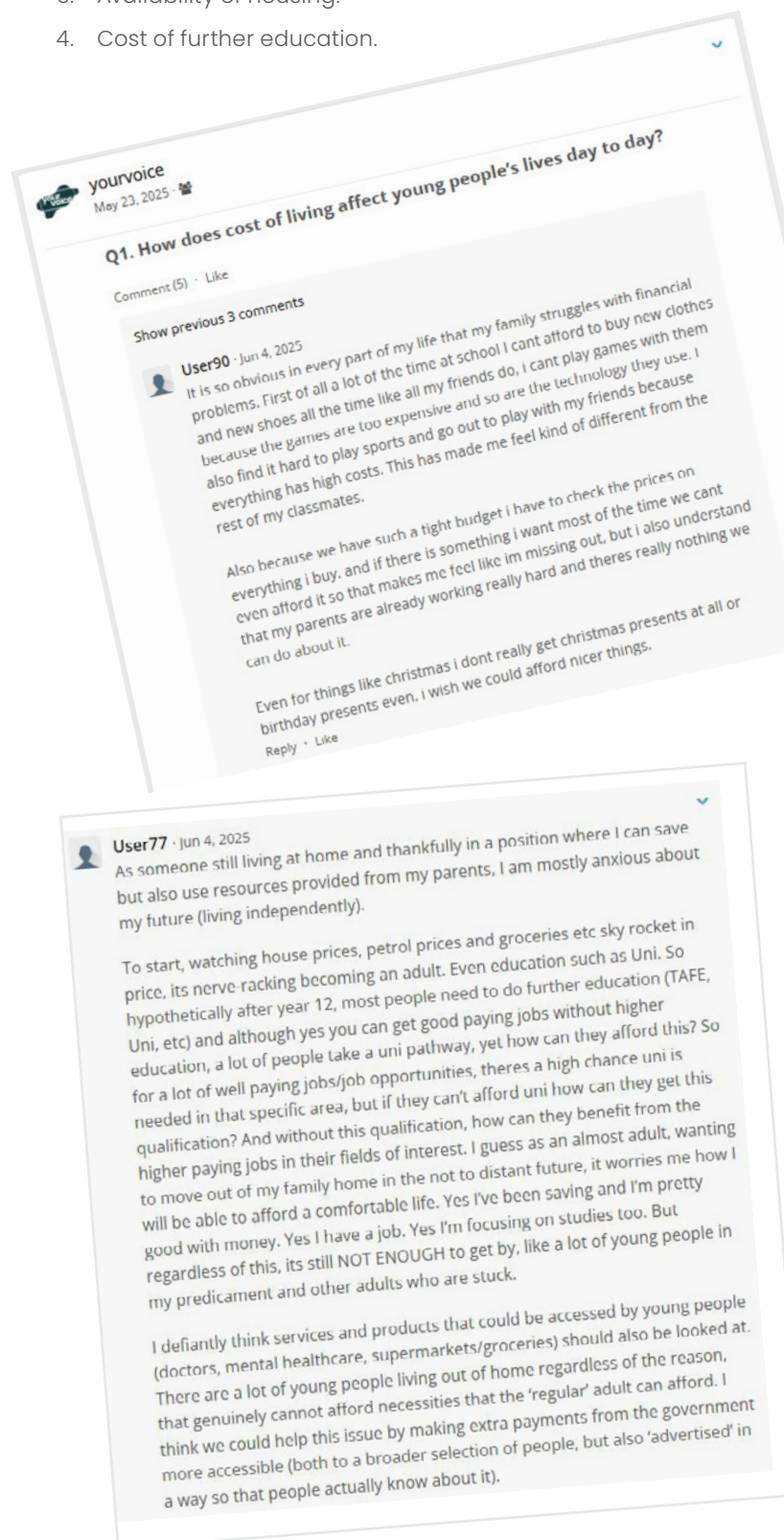
There is a clear view that cost of living is impacting on the educational experience for both those at school and in further education. Those at school are finding it harder for families to afford specialist classes and extracurricular activities that support achievement and connection with their peers. The expense of further education and the associated costs, including fees, travel and accommodation are causing people to reconsider their future study and career options, which reduces their earning capacity.

Key Information:

○ The cost of living was rated as an important issue by **75%** of respondents (**54%** very important, **21%** important) and was in the top fifth issues for all groups except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders where it was sixth with **31%** rating it as very important.

○ Action by the government on cost of living was split into several areas. Housing was the third highest rated area for government action at **63%** with income support at **44%** and transport at **28%**.

○ Cost of living issues were important across different age and demographic groups. Older respondents reflected on their ability to afford expenses, while younger participants commented on their parents working longer hours.

Key Areas for Change:

1. Affordability of essentials (rent, bills and food).
2. Ensure that affordable and bulk billed health services are available.
3. Availability of housing.
4. Cost of further education.

yourvoice
May 23, 2025

Q1. How does cost of living affect young people's lives day to day?

Comment (5) · Like

Show previous 3 comments

User90 · Jun 4, 2025
It is so obvious in every part of my life that my family struggles with financial problems. First of all a lot of the time at school I cant afford to buy new clothes and new shoes all the time like all my friends do, I cant play games with them because the games are too expensive and so are the technology they use. I also find it hard to play sports and go out to play with my friends because everything has high costs. This has made me feel kind of different from the rest of my classmates.

Also because we have such a tight budget i have to check the prices on everything i buy, and if there is something i want most of the time we cant even afford it so that makes me feel like im missing out, but i also understand that my parents are already working really hard and theres really nothing we can do about it.

Even for things like christmas i dont really get christmas presents at all or birthday presents even. i wish we could afford nicer things.

Reply · Like

User77 · Jun 4, 2025
As someone still living at home and thankfully in a position where I can save but also use resources provided from my parents, I am mostly anxious about my future (living independently).

To start, watching house prices, petrol prices and groceries etc sky rocket in price, its nerve-racking becoming an adult. Even education such as Uni. So hypothetically after year 12, most people need to do further education (TAFE, Uni, etc) and although yes you can get good paying jobs without higher education, a lot of people take a uni pathway, yet how can they afford this? So for a lot of well paying jobs/job opportunities, theres a high chance uni is needed in that specific area, but if they can't afford uni how can they get this qualification? And without this qualification, how can they benefit from the higher paying jobs in their fields of interest. I guess as an almost adult, wanting to move out of my family home in the not to distant future, it worries me how I will be able to afford a comfortable life. Yes I've been saving and I'm pretty good with money. Yes I have a job. Yes I'm focusing on studies too. But regardless of this, its still NOT ENOUGH to get by, like a lot of young people in my predicament and other adults who are stuck.

I defiantly think services and products that could be accessed by young people (doctors, mental healthcare, supermarkets/groceries) should also be looked at. There are a lot of young people living out of home regardless of the reason, that genuinely cannot afford necessities that the 'regular' adult can afford. I think we could help this issue by making extra payments from the government more accessible (both to a broader selection of people, but also 'advertised' in a way so that people actually know about it).

> **More needs to be done to support the middle and lower class, not the top 1%.The housing and cost of living crisis is leaving so many without a penny to their name, leading to an increase in mental health concerns and a rise in health concerns (which is its own issue due to the lack of bulk billing available in GPs)... The focus needs to be on the people, not the top 1% back pockets.**
>
> 18-25, female, Vic

> **The average Australian are unable to afford housing. Young Australians who are kicked out of their homes or have to move out for their safety are becoming homeless when they need support. The amount of private property and how much they are charging for rent is exorbitant and the average Australian just cannot afford it, especially with the costs of groceries and housing rising while employment income stagnates.**
>
> 18-25, gender diverse, Qld

> **Now that I do the shopping for myself, it is stressful to suddenly be aware of how expensive everything is.**
>
> 18-25, female

> **We are told to keep pushing forward, to keep taking life seriously, even when the system refuses to accommodate those who no longer fit its narrow definition of "normal".**
>
> 12-17, gender diverse, NSW

> **Housing is becoming a massive issue for so many people, especially young people. I know my future might be harder to plan for if I can't even afford a place to live when I'm older. The government needs to make sure that housing is affordable for all, not just the wealthy. The rising prices of rent and homes are unfair, and people like my parents are struggling because of it. We need better policies to make sure that everyone has a safe place to live, no matter their income... I might be young, but I believe the government needs to start listening to people like me, who experience these problems every day...Affordable housing [is] just one of the things that need to be fixed, and it's time for politicians to really take action to make life better for everyone. It's not just about policies, it's about people's lives.**
>
> 12-17, NSW

> **I also understand that my parents are already working really hard and there's really nothing we can do about it. Even for things like Christmas I don't really get Christmas presents at all or birthday presents even. I wish we could afford nicer things.**
>
> 12-14, male, NSW

> **Centrelink in particular makes it so difficult to apply, and figure out what they want. For example, I have had to go in every time I moved house (7 times in the last 2 years) because they would re-classify me as a dependent (because I'm under 22)... It is frustrating that I have to go in and convince them every time to change it back...Overall, access to most government services is a lot more complicated than it needs to be, which puts a lot of people off from even trying to get help.**
>
> 18-25, female, WA

> **The housing crisis is also a topic of anxiety and stress for many young people as well as the cost of living crisis- houses are both hard to find and almost impossible to find affordable ones which makes it tricky to even think about the future with hope**
>
> 18-25, female, NSW

> **If there's no path out, how are people meant to be able to improve their situation??**
>
> 15-17, WA

Education and Employment

Education

Education is a central concern for many young people, seen both as a source of stress, and a critical junction for support, particularly in relation to mental health and safety.

There's a strong demand for better funding, more robust support for students and teachers, and a curriculum that equips learners for real-life challenges. Many call for a shift toward more practical, relevant education that covers life skills including: financial literacy, mental health, education about rights, and essential social skills.

Barriers to higher education (such as cost, student debt, and limited access to university or TAFE) are widely viewed as unfair and anxiety-inducing, as are the negative perceptions of those looking at alternative educational or non-university focussed pathways. Young people are experiencing recurring issues like bullying, sexism, and gender discrimination. There are also inadequate supports for neurodiverse students and a lack of meaningful support for students who are falling behind, also leading to feelings of discrimination. These issues impact wellbeing, limit ability to access assistance, reduces the uptake and effectiveness of extracurricular activities and effects opportunities in the future.

Employment

Employment and unemployment are central concerns for young people, with frequent references to the challenges of finding stable work, affording basic living costs, and navigating complex support systems like Centrelink and Employment Services.

Many respondents highlight the pressure of balancing study, work, and financial responsibilities, often describing how the high cost of living, rent, low rates of pay for those under 21 and university fees make it difficult to achieve independence or plan for the future. There is widespread frustration with low wages, insecure jobs, and the inadequacy of income support, with some noting that even full-time work is not enough to cover essential expenses.

When accessing support, barriers such as strict eligibility criteria, long wait times, and bureaucratic hurdles further compound these issues, leaving many feeling unsupported and anxious. Young people call for systemic reforms, including better funding for employment programs, fairer wages, more accessible financial support, and policies that address the root causes of economic insecurity, so that everyone has a fair chance to build a stable and fulfilling life.

Key Information:

O Education was the second highest rated area that young people wanted to see better decisions from the government, **65%** of respondents. Males, culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander young people rated this as the top issue.

O Several issues that were closely related to education were seen as being important, particularly mental wellbeing, safety, discrimination and acceptance of difference. Specifically, bullying was the fifth most important issue, **46%** rated it as very important and **70%** in total rating it as important.

O **49%** of respondents highlighted employment as an area for better decision making, with preparation for employment being a key issue.

Key Areas for Change:

1. Access to flexible and alternative educative programs.

2. Modernise the curriculum and align learning with real life requirements.

3. Safe, respectful and supportive school environments.

4. Equitable pay rates and improved working conditions.

5. Improved awareness and advocacy for workers rights.

6. Job security.

User52 · Jun 6, 2025
Homophobia and transphobia and all the rest, especially from our parents and teachers. It's so disheartening to know that the people you're closest to will never accept you for who you are.

Casual homophobia and transphobia as well. I see lots of people at my high school calling people "gay" and "trans" and spitting those words they're slurs and like identifying with them is shameful.

"

School can be really tough for so many students, and I feel like mental health isn't given the attention it needs in schools. We need more resources and support for students struggling with their mental health, whether that's through better access to counsellors or mental health education. Teachers should be trained to recognise when someone needs help, and students shouldn't have to hide how they're feeling just to fit in. Every student should feel safe, heard, and supported at school.

12-17, NSW

"

Accessing income support is hard as even if I have a disability as I am not eligible for NDIS or youth allowance due to my parents income even if I am considered a legal adult and it has very hard for me to get employment due to my disability. A lot of employment agencies require that you receive government payments, barring me from the majority of services I need to gain employment.

18-25, male, Vic

"

I find that I don't know anything about what life looks like after 18.

Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

"

I work 50 hour weeks and can barely afford my mortgage along with other bills as the cost is far too high. I keep getting told to get a degree to be able to earn more. How will I manage study on top of an already tight schedule and budget?

18-25, gender diverse, NSW

"

I understand that services and schools have a duty of care but it is so much trickier when it comes to DFSV. This scared and stopped me from speaking up about the abuse I was facing until I was 14. The fear of speaking up and then it being reported immediately especially when I was still living with my abuser.

15-17, gender diverse, NSW

"

Jobs these days are not ideal for young people. We aren't traditional like generations before us and thus the working industry needs to change with us to allow us to find employment. We also need more of a voice and support. We can't afford things like generations before us and no one is saying anything. The stats are showing but there is nothing being implemented to give us a chance to be able to buy a house or rent a house, make enough money to support our families, find a place that cares about mental health, a job that priorities its employees. We just get the " they don't like hard work and they are lazy". Our environment is vastly different to our parents generation and yet the industry is still so traditional that our version of hard work is still seen as lacking. Young people are the future but there is no investment into young people. Mainstream school is not for everyone but other options cost more than mainstream. Jobs also require more qualifications than ever and with the cost of living more and more young people struggle with this.

18-25, female, Qld

"

Schools should be teaching us how to think, not just what to memorise. We need real-world skills—financial literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving—not just endless standardised tests. Why aren't politicians pushing for an education system that actually prepares us for life?

12-17

"

Income support is completely inadequate. It has not been appropriately adjusted for the cost of living crisis. I don't have the capacity to both work and study, so I expect my student allowance to cover my essential costs, however it does not cover my rent, let alone food, medical bills etc. There are strange and outdated policies preventing me from accessing the living away from home rate, despite me being 23 years old, classed as an independent, and having full financial responsibility for myself—because I'm renting a room from a family member. Income support is not liveable and needs to be addressed.

18-25, gender diverse, Vic

Safety and Inclusion

Issues related to safety and inclusion were expressed in relation to several different issues, and in several different areas of young people lives. They expressed concerns about their safety in all parts of their lives, reflecting the complexity of the issues.

Bullying is a dominant, distressing and complex theme throughout the responses, with young people frequently describing experiences of being bullied at school, online, in the community and even within their own homes. The responses reflect the widespread impact of both physical and verbal bullying, as well as cyberbullying, on mental health and wellbeing. Many students reported feeling unsupported or dismissed by teachers and school systems, with some noting that bullying is not taken seriously or is even normalised by harmful community attitudes. The impact of bullying can be profound, often leading to emotional distress such as anxiety, depression, self-injury, and thoughts of suicide.

Young people made frequent references to violence, abuse, assault, harassment, and youth crime. Many respondents describe feeling unsafe due to rising rates of violence in their communities and schools, and some link these issues to broader social problems such as discrimination, transphobia, poverty, homelessness, and lack of support for at-risk youth. There are also mentions of specific crimes like sexual assault and coercive control, with young people expressing frustration at the prevalence of these issues, the lack of early intervention and the lack of effective prevention.

Online safety emerged as a significant theme in young people's responses, often discussed in the context of both opportunity and risk. Frequently used terms such as "online", "social media", "internet", "cyberbullying", and "online safety" reflect widespread concern about the impact of digital platforms on mental health, wellbeing, and personal safety. Young people describe the pressure to present a perfect image, the prevalence of cyberbullying, and the risks posed by online predators, with some noting that social media can be both a source of support and a cause of anxiety or harm. Many respondents also highlighted the importance of social media for maintaining friendships and accessing help, especially for those who feel isolated in their offline lives, and warn that blanket bans or restrictions may do more harm than good.

Key Information:

○ Domestic family and sexual violence was the rated as the most important issue with **82%** rating it as important and **67%** rating it as very important.

○ Sextortion was rated as the third most important issue with **74%** rating it as important, **55%** rating it as very important.

○ Bullying was the fifth most important issue, with **70%** rating it as important, **46%** rated it as very important.

○ Physical wellbeing was rated as important by **68%**, with **39%** rating it as very important.

○ Online safety was rated as important by **64%,** with **28%** rating it as very important.

○ Discrimination of those who are trans or gender diverse was raised as an issue. **61%** said that rights for gender diverse people were important (**42%** said it was very important), with **24%** saying it was not important. Males and those aged between 12-17 were most likely to rate this as not being important.

○ **37%** want action related to physical safety, **33%** want action on online safety, **32%** want action on inclusion.

○ Social media age restrictions were only rated as important by **38%**, with **36%** rating them as not being important. Those who will be impacted by the social media restrictions (under 16) were more concerned about sextortion and online safety than older respondents, but still rated social media restrictions as less important.

Key Areas for Change:

1. Whole of community education and training focussed on online safety.

2. Delivering safe online and community spaces.

3. Awareness and education related to domestic, family and sexual violence, gender diversity and acceptance of difference.

4. Improved reporting pathways and options for support.

> The internet can be a great place, but it's also where a lot of bad things happen. Cyberbullying, online predators, and the pressure to be perfect on social media are things that affect so many young people. The government needs to make sure that there are laws to protect us online, and that social media companies are held accountable for what happens on their platforms.

12-17, female, NSW

> How important it is to keep young children and teens safe online. The sky rocketing rate of bullying that takes place on social media is really disappointing and hurtful to see. Too many young people take their own life, attempt to or consider it because of online bullying. Although I know there have already been more restrictions put in place around young people using social media in 2025, there still isn't enough restriction, and unfortunately many parents and young people don't see the effects of social media and online bullying can do to a young person. There needs to be more action, more change. Do the right thing.

12-17, female, Qld

> Mental health is in a decline for our youth, and it's not just at home or online, but at school as well. Many teachers don't respect students boundaries, but also do not take troubled students seriously and that not only stops them from learning but also people around them.

12-17, gender diverse, Vic

> **More stuff like My Circle where it's moderated and mental health based.**

Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

> I have been frequently bullied as well, and no preventative measures actually stopped this, despite the large amount of people I have told.

12-17, gender diverse, Vic

> I was forced to leave school before finishing because of the bullying and harassment I faced at school every day with no support from the school, DOE (Department of Education), or police. This needs to be fixed so kids feel safe to have an education.

12-17, gender diverse, NSW

> I struggled most with not being able to keep up with the stress of it all. Teachers treated the kids with learning assistance so differently, it made us feel even more secluded. I wasn't learning because the classroom was so distracting, I knew I learnt better studying at home by myself anyway. I began only going to school to see my friends, and then I almost stopped going entirely, only holding on to just pass my external exams.

18-25, female

> Feeling safe, respected, and included as a young person means being able to express yourself without fear, having your opinions and boundaries valued, and being welcomed to fully participate and belong.

12-14, female, NSW

> Personally, I detest the term bullying as it feels like a cop-out. Let's call harassment and abuse what it is. Bullying feels patronising and infantilising - to me whenever I hear the term bullying it immediately feels as though the real issue is being swept under the rug.

18-25, female, WA

Youth Summit

For one day, 42 young people aged 18-25 came together to represent the voices of those (4200) that had participated in Your Voice at the Bupa Campus in Naarm/Melbourne.

Through reviewing the survey responses, exploring ideas from the forums and sharing their stories, they were able to work together to develop recommendations that could create meaningful change to the lives of children and young people.

A further 20 young people aged 12 to 17 then reviewed the recommendations through a virtual summit to share what was missing, and what mattered most for them, ensuring that these recommendations reflected the needs of all participants.

Being able to work with like minded young people from all around Australia has been such a liberating experience. I left the summit truly feeling like my voice and ideas matter and like the future of Australia is in good hands. Getting the opportunity to actually work on solutions for the big issues young people are facing right now has been inspiring. It has been too easy lately to feel disempowered and hopeless when we are surrounded by a constant stream of disheartening news so it was wonderful to actually collaborate and come up with some solutions.

Coming to this event truly feels like a full circle moment. Kids Helpline has been such an incredibly supportive part of my mental health journey and I feel very privileged to have been able to contribute my voice to help support the work yourtown is doing.

Youth Summit participant, 18-25, female
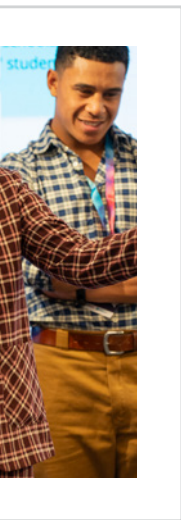
> It was great to meet and hear from young people all over Australia -
> I got a greater understanding of how these issues effect people differently based on location and local government.

Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

Your Voice youth summit
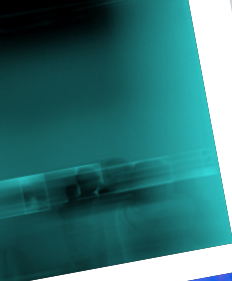
2025 youth summit

Nicole Werner MP Member
for Warrandyte

Forum Themes and Insights

From the survey findings there were several clear themes and ideas that required further exploration: Mental and Physical Health, Education and Employment, Cost of Living, Safety and Inclusion, and Youth Voice.

Forum participants were separated into three distinct age groups (12 to 14, 15 to 17 and 18 to 25) to discuss their experiences and ideas for change related to these issues. From these discussions six clear themes emerged which are summarised in this section:

1. Design systems / services that meet the needs and lives of children and young people.
2. Support children and young people with the cost of living.
3. Provide early intervention support.
4. Appropriate, accessible and timely mental health support.
5. Prepare young people for the future.
6. Provide safe communities.

While many ideas were expressed common messages included:

○ Working in silos compounds disadvantage and increases the risk of crisis. There needs to be improved access to support to respond prior to crisis occurring, and there needs to be greater co-ordination of support, with a no wrong door approach, to reduce duplication, and support needs to be holistic in nature, rather than just focussing on one area.

○ Support from, or through, their peers is very important. Young people want to be provided with support by those who understand their situation or have a lived experience of what they have faced, particularly when they are initially requesting support.

○ Upholding human rights is important for wellbeing. They are aware that they have rights in relation to housing, employment, education, inclusion, expression, safety and their voices being heard, but do not see there occurring in practice. There needs to be more inclusive policies that ensure that everyone benefits.

> Services should also be youth-friendly, meaning they are non-judgmental, confidential, and welcoming. Flexible hours outside of school or work are also important so that support fits into young people's schedules. Most importantly, involving young people in designing these services ensures they actually meet the needs and preferences of the people they're meant to help

12–14, female, NSW

○ Stigma is impacting people's ability to live productively and to access support. Stigma in relation to difference is creating significant issues in relation to people's wellbeing and is also stopping people from accessing help, either due to fear of what people will say or being denied access to support.

○ Decision makers need to listen to the views of young people in relation to key issues and service delivery. Young people see a need for systemic and societal reforms, with more transparent decision making, greater consideration of inequalities and equitable funding decisions. They identify that decisions made now will have the most impact on them, but they have the least say – believing that the government does not understand their views or current situation clearly.

○ The overwhelming message around wanting human experiences, stop making everything digital. Digital should enhance services and make them more efficient, not replace them.

1. Design Systems / Services that Meet the Needs and Lives of Children and Young People

Systems should be built with young people, not just for them.

Young people want services tailored to their needs, and situations, with clearer information and simpler processes for accessing support. They also want to see young people have genuine involvement in decisions with opportunities to shape policies and services to ensure that they are effective.

Design Solutions:

○ Ensure services are inclusive, trauma-informed and tailored to individual needs.

○ Involve young people in designing, delivering and improving services – moving beyond tokenism to genuine youth-led decision making.

○ Make access to support easier – simplify systems, promote awareness of available help and reduce barriers like cost, wait times and complex processes.

○ Provide flexible, youth-friendly pathways across housing, education, employment, health and justice – recognising the realities of young people's lives today.

○ Embed prevention, early intervention and rights-based approaches in all services that support children and young people.

2. Support Children and Young People with the Cost of Living

Young people are doing their best, but many are struggling to meet basic needs.

Young people want immediate and long term action on cost of living issues that will benefit younger generations, including greater support to prepare for when they transition to adulthood.

Cost of Living Solutions:

○ Raise Youth Allowance, reduce parent and partner income testing and index payments to inflation so support keeps up with the real cost of living.

○ Expand access to affordable housing, cap rents and improve awareness of housing support options.

○ Make everyday essentials more affordable – including public transport, food, haircuts, hygiene items and driving lessons.

○ Provide financial literacy education in schools to help young people manage their money and navigate adult life.

○ Increase access to low-cost healthcare – including bulk-billed GP's, Medicare funded dental care and affordable specialist services.
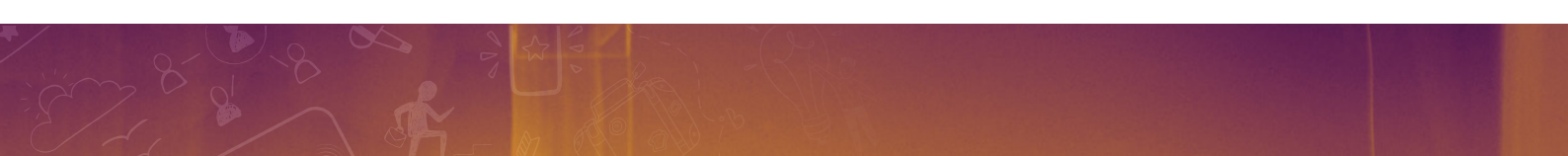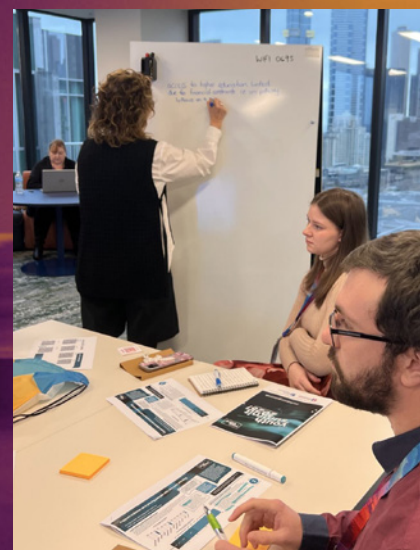
3. Provide Early Intervention Support for Children, Young People and Families

Support should start early – not wait for things to go wrong.

Young people emphasised the importance of receiving support before things escalate. They called for increased access to mentoring, community programs, flexible education and trauma-informed services. Many highlighted the need for early education on racism, sexism, respectful relationships and online harm, particularly for children and younger adolescents.

Early Intervention Solutions:

- Invest in early intervention programs that respond to trauma, instability, poverty and unmet needs before they escalate.

- Support young people's wellbeing through mentoring, community programs, life skills and access to sport and extracurricular activities.

- Provide culturally safe, trauma-informed support for children and young people.

- Run early education programs to challenge racism, sexism and online hate, including misogyny and harmful ideologies.

- Expand youth health models to include both physical and mental wellbeing from an early age.

4. Provide Appropriate, Accessible and Timely Mental Health Support

Mental health care should be affordable, available and designed with young people in mind.

Young people want services that are accessible, affordable, youth-friendly and culturally safe. They are asking for early support and prevention, not just crisis care, which meets their lives and experiences.

Mental Health Solutions:

- Fund free or subsidised youth-led, culturally safe mental health services to reduce waitlists.

- Offer anonymous digital support options and extend service hours to suit young people's lives.

- Extend service hours to suit the lives of those studying and working.

- Increase services in remote areas and improve access to both prevention and early intervention.

- Raise Medicare rebates and make mental health care easier to navigate and afford.

- Broaden service offerings to include youth-friendly formats, settings and staff with lived experience.

5. Prepare Children and Young People for the Future (Education and Employment Systems and Supports)

Education and employment systems need to reflect young people's lives today and prepare them for the next stage.

The education system needs to prepare young people for the next step in their lives and careers, not just prepare them for university and further study. Employers need to embrace the skills and benefits that young people bring to the workplace and help them to develop role specific skills.

Education and Employment Solutions:

- Embed life skills, mental health, digital literacy and respectful relationships into the school curriculum from an early age.

- Offer flexible, inclusive and trauma-informed learning pathways that support diverse learners and needs.

- Make education more practical, accessible and relatable – from everyday skills to creative and cultural learning.

- Increase access to entry-level jobs, internships and supportive workplaces that recognise young people's circumstances and transferable skills.

- Provide safe, inclusive environments in schools and jobs – free from discrimination and designed for everyone to thrive.

6. Provide Safe Communities for Children and Young People

Young people want to feel safe, respected and supported where they live, learn and grow – both in their physical and virtual worlds.

Young people deserve to feel safe at school, at work, online and in public spaces. There needs to be stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, safer housing options, better support for victim-survivors of violence and inclusive spaces that reflect and celebrate diverse identities.

Safe Community Solutions:

- Enforce strong anti-discrimination, bullying and harassment policies across schools, services and workplaces.

- Invest in inclusive youth spaces, cultural connection spaces and support networks for diverse groups.

- Support victim-survivors through education, peer networks and wraparound services.

- Promote community kindness, belonging and accountability – including tackling online hate and toxic masculinity.

- Listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and invest in community-led, culturally safe supports.

Recommendations and Benefits

1. Specialist Youth Guides

When support is available it is not always easy to find, or access due to complex processes or requirements. There needs to be clear pathways and tailored resources that help children and young people navigate government service systems.

Recommendation:

Youth specialist staff need to be available in key government departments and programs to support young people to identify the services that are relevant to them, find information, and complete applications.

This will reduce mistakes during application processes, and delays with accessing support, reducing the need for intensive and expensive crisis focussed support.

Details:

O   Staff should be trained to support young people including those from diverse backgrounds to ensure that support is appropriate.

O   Service delivery should be focussed on supporting those who are completing initial applications to help them understand processes and requirements.

O   Service delivery should be flexible with the ability to work in the community or out of office hours to fit with work and study schedules.

O   Where possible staff should be peer workers who are able to provide support for applications across multiple government departments and programs.

> ❞❞
> **It's so exhausting and hard to find the right supports let alone have all the evidence needed.**
>
> 15-17, female, WA

> ❞❞
> **Being in a regional town in WA, it is harder to try and find the services. And when you do find services, trying to ensure that they are fit for you. If they aren't, then who else can I go to? What if there isn't another place to go to?**
>
> 12-17, male, WA

> ❞❞
> **Accessing public services can be rather make people feel frustrated. Think of long wait times, weird and very confusing websites. I sometimes feel, as a teenager, that systems are designed more for efficiency on paper than for actual real people in crisis. I just wish services felt more human and flexible. Much more rootedin supporting people. Not just ticking boxes.**
>
> 12-17, female, NSW

> ❞❞
> **Definitely, peer support is incredibly important and useful and I think that particularly trained staff are so useful, having functional help makes it so much easier to be able to have successful and enjoyable engagement with services.**
>
> young person 12-17

2. Early Intervention Hubs

They say it takes a village. Many individuals fall through the cracks when accessing services because they are either not aware of services, they do not meet thresholds for service delivery, they are only accessing a service which provides targeted support, or services are simply not accessible for them in their local area.

Recommendation:

All communities need to be provided with a physical or mobile hub, with virtual elements, which provides a safe space to access multidisciplinary wellbeing and case management support.

Localised teams, with access to multidisciplinary support, can increase the accessibility and relevance of services for community members and protect the most vulnerable from falling through the gaps, provide referrals, while also creating safe spaces for connection.

Details:

O Provide a no wrong door approach to community focussed support through a physical space that increases connection between community members and allows for early intervention programs to be delivered.

O Physical spaces should be present in populated areas, with mobile support provided through a travelling bus or service centre, which are accessible for and deliver services in a way that supports diverse groups and individuals.

O A care team or care co-ordination arrangement should be employed to streamline service delivery and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation.

O Governance of hubs should include government, frontline staff and community to ensure relevance and suitability of local approaches.

O Hubs should host or have access to multidisciplinary support across mental health, health, child development, homelessness, family specialists, financial support and peer support where relevant.

O Access should not require a referral, and should be embedded within the community to streamline access to the hub and support services.

3. Enhanced Financial Assistance

Current financial assistance does not match the living situation of young people in Australia or provide appropriate levels of support for young people across areas that include housing, food, transport and healthcare. The current situation results in young people having to make unsafe or unhealthy decisions, leading to crisis or the need for long term support.

Recommendation:

The Government needs to enhance financial support for young people by:

O Reviewing the eligibility requirements for financial assistance, specifically youth allowance, rent assistance and Commonwealth Prac Placements, to reflect the situations being faced by young people.

O Review the level of support provided by financial assistance programs to ensure that they are reflective of the true cost of living in areas where young people are and are required to live.

O Incentivise working while studying through reducing the level of tax that is paid when they are working multiple jobs.

O Introducing a Youth Card that provides discounts on essentials for those aged under 25 who are studying or looking for work.

O Creating more youth specific housing options in more areas to ensure that long term, and emergency accommodation is available that is safe, appropriate and accessible.

This will help to ensure that young people can focus on getting a quality education and be active productive members of society.

Details:

O Reduce the impact of parental and partner income on those receiving youth allowance, and review the independence criteria, to ensure those who need to live out of home, or are independent, are appropriately supported.

O Provide financial support for those completing Higher Research Degrees and for all courses that require placement.

O Review rates of financial support to reflect cost of living, which includes geographic specific considerations, and ensure that increases keep pace with CPI.

O Essential expenses that impact on the successful completion of study and finding employment should be either covered or be discounted by a Youth Card, which includes food, education fees, health, dental, optometry hygiene items, transport, bills, haircuts, driving lessons and healthcare.

User27 · Jun 2, 2025
Having to pick and choose what I do and dont spend money on for healthcare is exhausting and shouldnt have to be this way. My medications cost me so much even with DSP concession rate. I am currently not taking medication for my cardiac condition because I simply can't afford the medication prescribed as it is non PBS. I have to consider whether or not I stop taking meds for my mental health as some of them are non PBS too. I've had to put off getting wisdom teeth out as it's too expensive even with private health. I can't afford to go to a physio or even just a gym to help with my chronic illness. Do I spend money on therapy or food to eat? It's a constant exhusting battle of choices.
Reply · Like (3)

User24 · Jun 4, 2025
Not basing youth allowance on parents!!! Just because someone's parents are making enough, there is often extra circumstances that doesn't just translate that money into the hands of the young person.
Reply (1) · Like (7)

User109 · Jun 4, 2025
This!! I know so many people who are not supported by their parents but are also not eligible for Centrelink
Reply · Like (2)

your voice

4. Safe and Supportive Communities

Many spaces that should be safe and accessible for young people are not. Physical and online spaces are becoming less accepting and dominated by harmful behaviours, from peers and now more regularly by adults. Rather than responding to the behaviour or providing support to access these places safely, young people are being banned and isolated from their community, reducing access to community spaces and groups that provide support and connection.

Recommendation:

The government needs to deliver whole-of-community approaches to awareness raising and education in relation to creating safe and supportive communities, with a focus on how to treat people and respond to negative behaviours.

Increased acceptance of difference and creating safe communities will reduce discrimination and othering, create connection, and reduce the impact of bullying and discrimination.

Details:

O   General and targeted education campaigns should be delivered nationwide on key issues including: online safety, social media, discrimination, bullying, misogyny, and sexism.

O   Activities should include information campaigns, role modelling and community events.

O   Different campaign elements should focus on children, young people, adults, parents and general community, with teacher training to improve schools responses to unsafe situations.

O   Support services, such as hotlines and options for reporting behaviour, should be prioritised when topics related to safety are searched online to ensure that appropriate information and support can be accessed.

> ❝
> **Young people should be safe on the internet, and we need better education on how to protect ourselves online.**
>
> 12-17

> ❝
> **Having stricter rules and policies in place to make sure people feel safe - making these well known to everyone too.**
>
> Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

> ❝
> **Online safe spaces are great, but many people really benefit from (in real life) safe spaces, so there should be more of these in regional areas.**
>
> Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

> ❝
> **The ban is a good idea for safety, but many young people use social media as a form of connection, and support, so if these aren't available anymore, than there needs to be more funding and more awareness of My Circle, and more programs like My Circle (where conversations are moderated).**
>
> Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12-17

> ❝
> **Feeling like you belong, that you're not going to be attacked for who you are, and making sure that nothing like homophobia or ableism is accepted. I've found sometimes people try to be 'peacemakers' and try to rationalise it by saying it's just the other person's opinion. But in reality it makes the marginalised person feel unsafe and that they are being attacked for their identity.**
>
> 15-17, female, Qld

> **I would tell them how difficult it is to survive for the common person. Issues involving the cost of living are integral to discuss in order to alleviate the financial strain faced by most Australians.**
>
> 18-25, male, NSW

> **We need to have better wages to pay for inflation.**
>
> 18-25, female, Qld

> **I would like to tell them that the people in the working class need to be paid a liveable wage to be able to provide for the middle and ruling class, and that there should be a maximum wage limit.**
>
> 12-17, female, Qld

> **The cost of living, mainly due to groceries and rent costs need to be fixed. Either by somehow reduced the cost of them, or raising minimum wage… This will help a lot of people, but specifically people in our age range who are living independently by aiding in minimising mental health issues. Between studying and working to make ends meet, young independent uni students are left with no energy for self-care.**
>
> 18-25, female, Qld

5. Equitable Pay

Cost of living pressures are impacting young people, with many taking on additional employment opportunities to help make ends meet. However, young people do not feel valued by employers as they are paid below the minimum wage and do not feel that they are getting the training or support in the workplace to perform their roles.

Recommendation:

Wages should apply to all staff who have the same level of responsibility or are completing the same role, regardless of age.

Young people understand that lower wages are appropriate when they are undergoing training; however, there should be mandated requirements and limitations in relation to training to ensure that employment conditions remain fair.

Improving the pay conditions and training will motivate young people to be more productive in their positions as they will feel valued, have the required skills and be less concerned with their financial position.

Details:

○ Wages should be based on the task being performed and level of responsibility rather than as a percentage of the minimum wage based on the age of the employee.

○ Training should be available for employees and employers to understand bias in relation to age, gender, disability and mental health, to assist with improving employment conditions and productivity.

○ There should be mandatory training that is completed by new employees, that is completed within a specified timeframe, to help them to understand Fair Work and employer requirements in relation to their role. During training, a training wage should be available, to allow staff to build their capacity.

your.
voice

Education Reform

Many young people do not feel that school works for them, as there is a one size fits all approach to education and career pathways. Young people express not feeling safe at school, that school does not prepare them for the future, that the needs of diverse communities are not considered, and that the school environment is not suitable for their needs. This leads to disengagement, reduced performance and ultimately lower levels of skill and productivity.

6. Alternative Education Pathways

Recommendation:

Alternative education pathways and models need to be made in all communities and encouraged as an available pathway alongside traditional school paths.

Alternative approaches to education and models will help to engage young people in education, provide more employment focussed skills and improve their connection with peers and local communities.

Details:

○ A range of alternative education models should be made available, including trade schools, student led curriculum and re-engagement approaches.

○ These models should be made available for all students to enrol in, rather than for those that have been excluded or have disengaged from mainstream schooling.

○ They should allow for pathways into further education, including TAFE and University.

○ Development of practical and life skills should be embedded in the curriculum.

○ Flexible attendance patterns and timetables should be encouraged to consider individual requirements, including capacity, caring responsibilities and work opportunities.

> Bullying is often taken seriously in schools when it's from the peers, but what about when it is the authoritative figures who are doing the bullying. There need to be more systems in place to report teachers who are racist, ableist, homophobic etc, where we can report teachers bullying without fear of getting in trouble.
>
> Anonymous Youth Summit Participant, 12–17

7. Improved School Environments

Recommendation:

School environments, systems and structures must be reviewed to ensure that real world skills are included in the curriculum and that school environments are inclusive and accessible for all young people.

Improving the educational experience will have significant benefits across educational attainment, wellbeing, safety and inclusion, particularly as there will be a reduction in mental health and behavioural issues, while also improving attendance and educational attainment.

Details:

○ All school staff must have training on inclusivity and acceptance, from principals, to support staff, to help create safe and inclusive environments, focusing on mental health, disability, abuse, LGBTIQA+ and language.

○ Age appropriate, mandatory real world and life skills should be embedded into the school's curriculum across all school sectors, public, private and religious. Where possible skills should be included into the current curriculum as required elements. Other essential skills should be included in a 'Life Skills' focused class. Topics should include: budgeting, taxes, resume writing, healthy eating, online safety, career development, rights, voting, discrimination, sexual health, relationships, community support, mental health first aid, DFSV education and system navigation.

○ Life skills should be provided by specially trained staff, with peer or youth targeted roles.

your voice

8. Improved Access to Mental Health Support

Accessible, affordable, appropriate and timely mental support is not always available for children, young people and families, resulting in many not being able to access support until they are in crisis or only being able to access inappropriate support for their level of need.
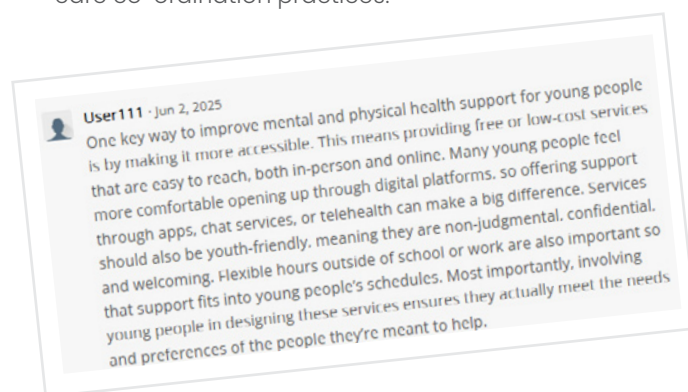
Recommendation:

Appropriately fund community, health and clinical mental health supports to ensure that people are aware of what support is available, that support is available when required, and that it is accessible no matter your situation or where you live.

By providing appropriate mental health support at different stages we can reduce the level of distress that young people are facing, the use of negative coping strategies, the number of individuals that are accessing or requiring crisis support and those that are being traumatised or requiring long term support.

Details:

- Government needs to make greater investment into services such as Kids Helpline, to ensure that information, education and early intervention support is available through phone, text based and web platforms.

- There needs to be greater access to peer based education and support for young people.

- Increase support for the missing middle, including their families and carers, for those transitioning between care, those requiring aftercare and those with a psychosocial disability.

- Improve emergency responses to mental health concerns through having non-emergency co-responder teams, alternative emergency department spaces and specialist mental health crisis teams.

- Improve subsidies for those accessing diagnosis, Mental Health Care Plans and private mental health care to provide low cost or free services.

- Improve access to support for those facing multiple issues and comorbidities, particularly those with disabilities.

- As housing pressures push population into regional and remote areas, ensure that there is equitable service delivery available, especially face to face services.

- Improve training for staff and clinicians to understand the lived experience of those with a mental health condition, the needs of young people and diverse communities.

- Develop and support strategies that address the needs of different cohorts of young people, particularly boys and young men.

- Improve community education, referrals and care co-ordination practices.

User111 · Jun 2, 2025
One key way to improve mental and physical health support for young people is by making it more accessible. This means providing free or low-cost services that are easy to reach, both in-person and online. Many young people feel more comfortable opening up through digital platforms, so offering support through apps, chat services, or telehealth can make a big difference. Services should also be youth-friendly, meaning they are non-judgmental, confidential, and welcoming. Flexible hours outside of school or work are also important so that support fits into young people's schedules. Most importantly, involving young people in designing these services ensures they actually meet the needs and preferences of the people they're meant to help.

> **"**
>
> The problem is with rural areas. These areas often do not get the same amount of support bigger cities do and makes accessing GOOD services extremely difficult.

18-25, female, WA

> **"**
>
> It is not the easiest to access services when I know there aren't a lot of options for the type of service that suits me best, i.e. safe, inclusive, and accessible for someone with my intersectional identities of being queer, a person of colour, neurodivergent and disabled. If I didn't have the privilege of being in a stable financial and social position, I would have definitely struggled even more. Community and peer-led organisations are my go-to, but they can be inaccessible as most are in the city.

18-25, gender diverse, Vic

Why Not

Amplifying Youth Voice

As part of the Your Voice Youth Summit, **yourtown** partnered with WhyNot to offer young people another meaningful avenue to have their voices heard beyond the event itself.

WhyNot is a national youth storytelling platform amplifying the thoughts, experiences, and ideas of young people across Australia. Through this collaboration, summit participants were invited to reflect on their experiences and insights in their own words, with the option to be published on the WhyNot platform.

This partnership created a lasting, public-facing space for young people to share what matters to them.

Below are excerpts from articles written by summit participants. Each one offers a powerful glimpse into what it means to be young in Australia today—navigating systems, surviving change, and pushing for something better.

Words by Matthew
(he/him), 18, Qld

There was something deeply grounding about acknowledging that my story is not the centre, that it's just one voice in a chorus of many. The diversity of experience in that space reminded me how powerful our differences are, and how they don't have to divide us. They can connect us.

Even when I couldn't relate, I still felt like I belonged. That was the most beautiful part. There was no judgment. Just openness. I didn't need to have walked the same path as someone to connect with their journey. All I needed was a willingness to listen.

This experience has changed the way I see my own role in youth spaces. I want to keep showing up, not just to speak, but to learn. I want to keep creating room for others, especially those whose stories don't often get heard. And I want to use my privilege not as a shield, but as a platform to elevate those around me.

Words by Fiona
(she/they), NSW

I recently attended the Your Voice Summit hosted by **yourtown** and Bupa in Naarm/Melbourne with forty other young people from across Australia. The Your Voice Summit was just one aspect of the Your Voice Project… I've had a few days to sit with the event; replay the conversations, the presentations, the quiet moments between sessions. We looked at themes such as education, cost of living, early intervention, employment, systems access and safety. As young people who are living these issues day in and day out, we know they can't be addressed in isolation.

Leaving the summit, I felt hopeful, but also responsible. We owe it to every young person whose story shaped our vision, to ensure this isn't the end of a conversation but the beginning of one that needs to be seen through. That means following up, checking in, pushing for implementation. It means making sure our ideas don't just sit in a folder somewhere gathering dust but actually end up shaping policy and practice.
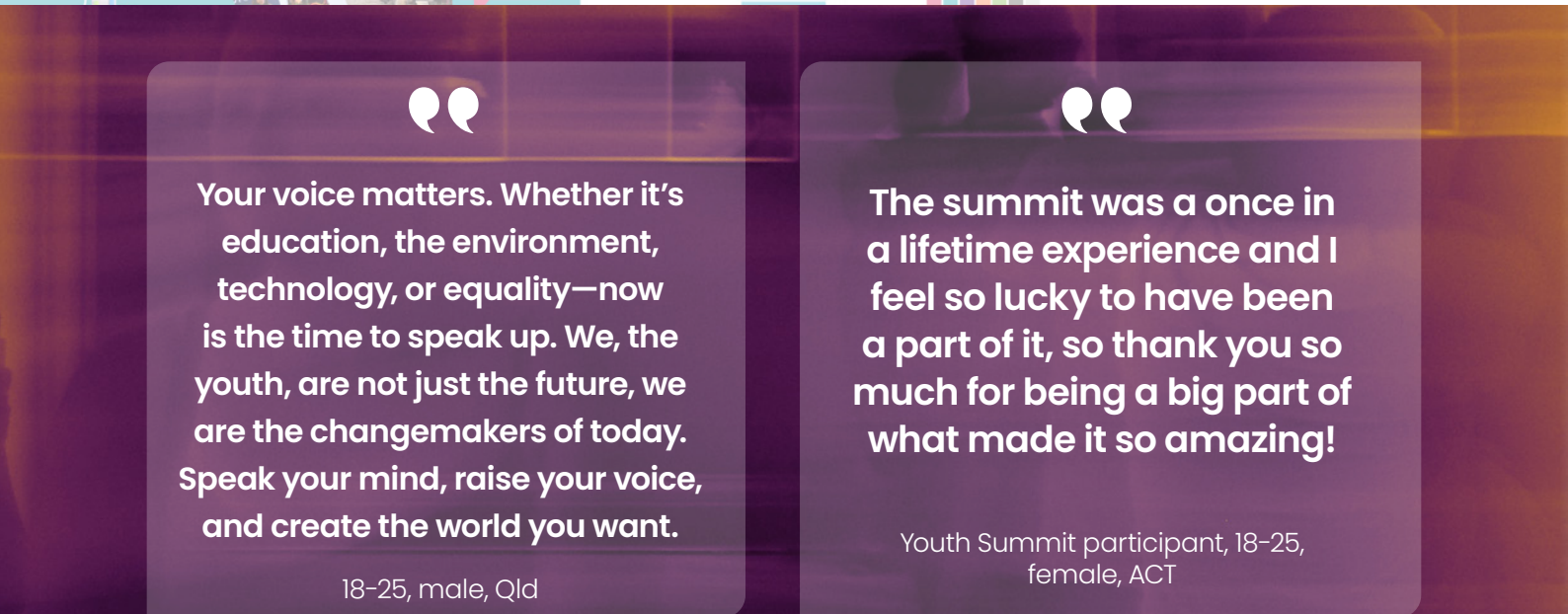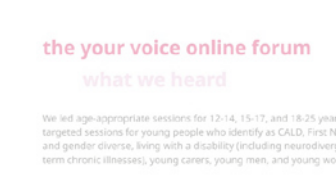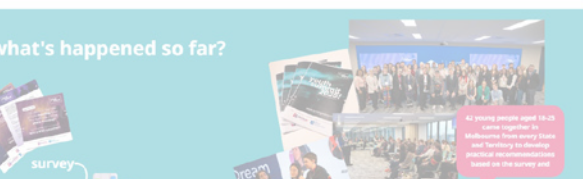
Words by Jordy
(he/him), 19, NT

In my time as a youth advocate, I've attended various youth forums and events across the country. It was clear from the start that this one was very different. Unlike many of the events that I've gone to, this summit didn't consist of pre-established advocates and change makers who were well known in the advocacy community. Instead, these were ordinary young people from across the country, some of whom had never even left their hometown before, and the discussions that happened that day were nothing short of incredible.

Participants discussed their own backgrounds and experiences, giving their opinions and advice to stakeholders. Their conversations centred on the importance of having a group of young people actually sharing ideas and opinions, rather than having a singular young person as the face of a commitment. Bailey highlighted the importance of such an approach: 'It's important not to have a token person. You need to have a group of young people to show you aren't just using youth for show'.

Read the full articles here: whynot.org.au

> Your voice matters. Whether it's education, the environment, technology, or equality—now is the time to speak up. We, the youth, are not just the future, we are the changemakers of today. Speak your mind, raise your voice, and create the world you want.
>
> 18-25, male, Qld

> The summit was a once in a lifetime experience and I feel so lucky to have been a part of it, so thank you so much for being a big part of what made it so amazing!
>
> Youth Summit participant, 18-25, female, ACT

A message from Bupa

The team at Bupa Australia were delighted to play a part in hosting the **yourtown** Your Voice Youth Summit, an event which gave young people the opportunity to tell government and the broader community how they feel about important issues like mental health, financial insecurity and climate change, and to help formulate some solutions.

There was incredible energy and ideas in the room, and we hope this event plays a part in creating an Australia young people can thrive in. This Summit supports the Bupa Foundation's commitment to making a better world by empowering children and young people to build a more sustainable and healthier future, and we are also the proud Principal Partner to Kids Helpline, operated by **yourtown**, since 2019.

Thank you to all the passionate young people and special guests who made the time to come to our Bupa Campus space to share their ideas and personal experiences.

1. design systems / services that meet the needs and lives of children and young people

Sometimes it's hard to get help because the system is confusing. We want to make it easier for young people to find and access support, with real people helping you.

key ideas:

- Create **Youth Specialists, guides, pathways and resources** for all government services such as Centrelink and housing offices
- **Trained staff** help young people understand what's available and how to apply offering support across all different departments and service areas
- Info should be in accessible, online and in person
- Support should be flexible and available at school, in the community and online

would having a youth support person to help you access services (like Centrelink or housing) be useful for you or people you know?

can we make these recommendations better? have we missed or not thought of anything?

We should be emphasing

support for navigating NDIS

It helps to make it more comfortable -Seanai

2. support children and young people with the cost of living

Life is expensive. Young people need more support to afford food, transport, health, housing and school.

key ideas:

- Raise **Youth Allowance**, rent assistance and other financial supports to match real living costs
- Expand eligibility criteria for government support and financial assistance
- Create a **Youth Card** for discounts on essentials
- More affordable housing options for young people
- Change the rules so support doesn't depend on your parents' income

thoughts on a youth card? if you had a Youth Discount Card, what would you want included on it to make life more affordable?

can we make these recommendations better? have we missed or not thought of anything?

Make public transport cheaper and more readily accessible.

discount for therapy

Sticky stock

86 young people took part in the online forums across 6 days, attending over 300 sessions in total!

4. provide appropriate, accessible and timely mental health support

Getting help for mental health should be easy, fast and work for different needs. Support should be free, local and available even outside school hours.

key ideas:

- Increase free or low-cost mental health services
- Help available in schools, online, at home and in community spaces

5. prepare children and young people for the future (education and employment systems and supports)

School should teach life skills, not just subjects. Workplaces should value young people and pay fairly.

key ideas:

- Teach life skills like budgeting, renting, job searching, legal rights
- More support for alternative education options (not just school or uni)

> **"**
> I want to say a huge thank you for giving me the opportunity to be involved in the your voice youth summit.
>
> 18-25, female, WA

> **"**
> I feel like in order for us to feel safe, respected, and included, there needs to be transparency. There is no point in including us in conversations or activities if, at the end of the day, my ideas aren't acknowledged or even discussed further.
>
> 15-17, male

- Enforce anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies in schools
- Empower victims of bullying to safely participate in school-led dialogues *on their terms*
- Include resilience, safety, inclusion and belonging in school curriculum from an early age
- Challenge toxic masculinity in peer groups
- Fund peer support or survivor networks in schools

- Recogn
- **Age-appropri**
  - Cyberb
  - Sextort
  - Image-
  - Groomi
  - Deepfa
- **Hold platform**
- **Address grow**

what needs to change so bullying is taken more seriously?

what kind of support should be available related to bullying (in school or outside of it)?

have we missed anything? can we make these ideas better?

More education for teachers.

people to be more caring and less judgy

what do adults nee before the bans co

how did today feel?

drop an emoji or write one word to show how you felt about today's session