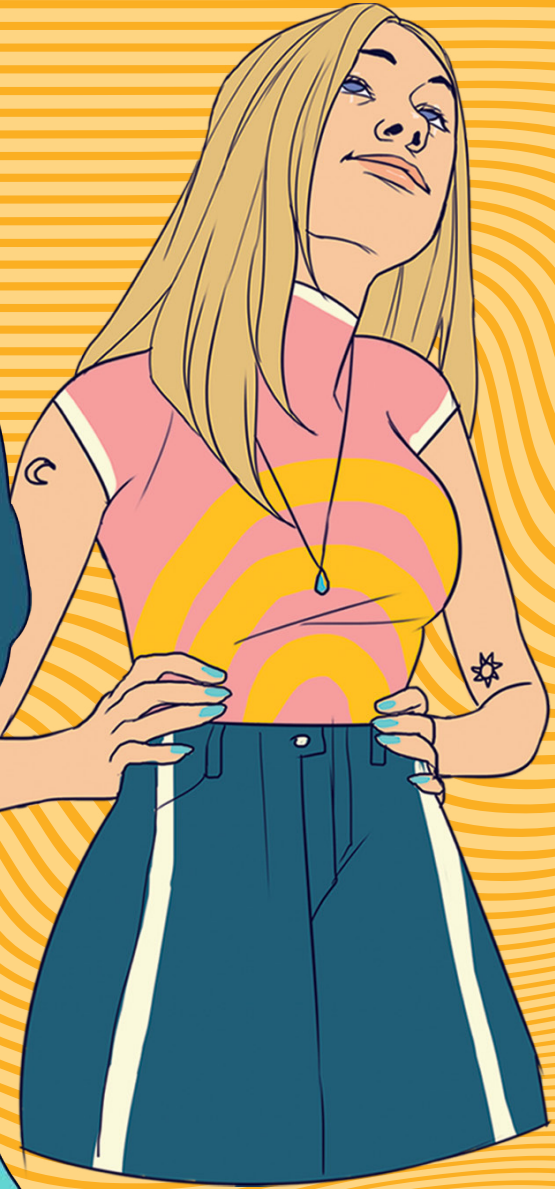
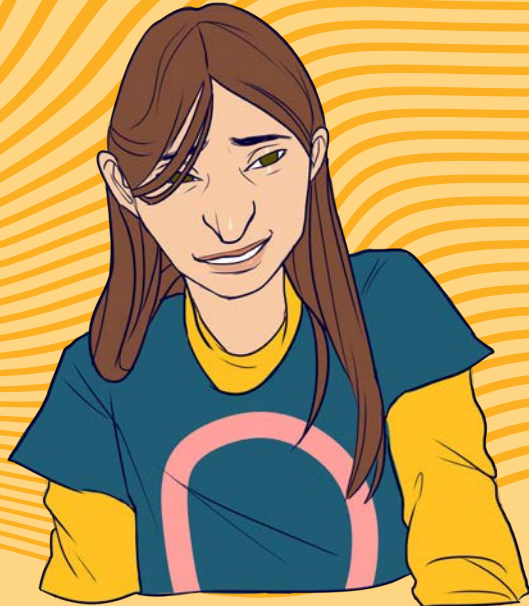


Empowering young
Queenslanders for
a bright future



Young Queenslanders Consultation Report

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Interpreter



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding this document, you can contact us on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and we will arrange an interpreter to communicate the report to you.

www.qld.gov.au/languages



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Acknowledgement

The Queensland Government proudly acknowledges and deeply understands that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Australians and traditional custodians of their rich and diverse cultures, histories, and traditions. We recognise their profound and unbreakable connection to the lands, waters, and seas of Queensland and the Torres Strait. It is our utmost priority to honour and show our deep respect to Elders, both past and present, for their invaluable contributions to our society.

We value and embrace our responsibility to ensure equity, strength, and advancement through shared decision-making and ensuring culturally safe and responsive services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Queenslanders. We strive to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through collaborative efforts as individuals, communities, and governments.

We are immensely proud of the remarkable First Nations leadership, unparalleled excellence, and unwavering spirit of partnership that helped formulate this ground-breaking strategy. We are firmly committed to actively listening to the voices and values of First Nations young Queenslanders, supporting them on their journey to self-determination and empowering them to shape their own bright future.

We recognise the pivotal role played by First Nations young Queenslanders in their communities, and we are dedicated to empowering and supporting them as emerging leaders. We are committed to helping unleash their full potential to build a prosperous future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

As we thoughtfully reflect on the past and boldly envision the future, we actively walk together on our shared journey of reconciliation. We firmly believe that all Queenslanders are equal, will continue to work to ensure the rich diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities across Queensland are fully recognised, respected, and valued.

This Acknowledgement was written by Liahni Truscott, Senior Program Officer within the Office for Youth in the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts. Liahni is responsible for delivering the Queensland Indigenous Youth Leadership Program and is a proud Wakaya woman who is passionate about promoting cultural change and safety.



Introduction

As each young person embarks on their distinctive journey through life, they will encounter their own set of challenges and opportunities. These challenges and opportunities shape their growth and development pathways – and may increase the support they require from their communities to thrive and reach their full potential.

Data does not just include facts and figures captured through survey reporting. It can also encompass a broader spectrum of storytelling and qualitative information that better paints a picture of unique identities, needs or general sentiment at a point in time. This Consultation Report includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis of structured and unstructured feedback collected through various consultation channels as part of the 2022 consultation for the *Young Queenslanders Strategy*. The report provides a synthesised overview of the key findings and common themes. The report also includes an amalgamation of information from other data sources, including the 2021 ABS Census.

This document functions as a Youth Sentiment Snapshot – a point-in-time record of the perspectives and experiences of young people across Queensland gathered through consultation. It is imperative to explicitly state that this document does not constitute a binding commitment in and of itself – our commitment lies in our resolute dedication to advocate for the views and aspirations of young people within the framework of Queensland Government policies, programs, and services. Our primary objective is to ensure that the voices of our young people are not only acknowledged but actively integrated into the decision-making processes that impact their present and future. This commitment underscores our unwavering commitment to cultivating a youth-centric approach within government initiatives.

Throughout this report quotes from young Queenslanders who participated in consultation have been used to contextualise key findings. While some quotes have been tidied up grammatically to improve legibility, no changes were made to the words chosen, the meaning or sentiment.



Trigger warning

This consultation report contains quotes from young people discussing their experiences, including sensitive topics such as mental health challenges and a reference to suicide. These quotes may be distressing or triggering for some readers.

We encourage caution and self-awareness while engaging with this content. If you may find these discussions upsetting, please consider your wellbeing and choose whether to proceed with reading. Support services are available for those who may need assistance:

Lifeline's Crisis Support Service

Anyone in Australia can speak to a trained Crisis Supporter over the phone, any time of the day or night 24/7.

Speak to a crisis support worker by telephone on 13 11 14, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Website: www.lifeline.org.au

Kids Helpline

Is a free and confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

Call 1800 55 1800 any time, for any reason. No problem is too big or too small.

Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Join My Circle the free, private and safe peer support community.

Website: kidshelpline.com.au

13YARN

Confidential one-on one support from Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis counsellors is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call 13 92 76 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

13YARN empowers communities with the opportunity to yarn without judgement and provides a culturally safe space to speak about their needs, worries or concerns. The website provides a range of culturally safe fact sheets and resources.

Website: www.13yarn.org.au

Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue provides free mental health support and counselling services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone and online chat.

Call 1300 224 636 for counselling services.

Beyond Blue also provides online community support and a range of mental health resources including further information and multiple-choice self-assessments.

Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

1800RESPECT – National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support services

1800RESPECT offers support for those affected by sexual assault or domestic and family violence and abuse.

Call 1800 737 732, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Website: www.1800respect.org.au

National eSafety Commissioner

The National eSafety Commissioner provides resources and information to help young people stay safe online, such as where technology is being used to target or pressure young people into something they do not want to do or how to determine whether online content is trusted information.

The eSafety Commissioner investigates complaints about some specific types of illegal and restricted online content.

Website: www.esafety.gov.au

Preamble

The existing data landscape for this cohort is often derived from information that involves adults and children spanning multiple age brackets that cannot be sorted or disaggregated, and the collection of presumptive or incorrect data from parents and caregivers.

While young people are not just statistics – gathering and reporting data for various population groups is essential for identifying and addressing issues of inequality, and for allocating services and resources where they are most needed.

The lack of quality information on young people as a cohort becomes more evident when considering those with specific vulnerabilities or identities. For example, no estimate of the LGBTQIA+ population is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics or state government agencies, and very little is available from other sources. While the 2021 Census allowed all respondents to select from three response options for the sex question – male, female and non-binary, the purpose of the addition of the non-binary sex option was only to allow respondents to participate in the Census when the male or female sex categories did not accurately describe their sex and was not intended or designed to collect data on gender.

Research has shown that a disproportionate number of the LGBTQIA+ cohort experience homelessness, have poorer mental health outcomes and a higher risk of suicidal behaviours than their peers. These rates increase for the youth cohort within this community.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) acknowledges significant data gaps impacting young people that affect various topic areas and domains.¹ These gaps include insufficient data on young people in the 12–18 age group, a lack of information on some health and community services, and reporting data for different population groups – including people with specific vulnerabilities or lived experiences, such as young people with disability, from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, or those living in out-of-home care.

There are no nationally agreed indicators to measure young people's transitions through major development stages, their interactions with services and systems, and how these interactions

impact outcomes. National data linkage activities continue to evolve, yet there is no established approach for routinely linking Commonwealth and state/territory data. This limits the ability to holistically track young people across a wide range of data sources.

Australia's welfare indicator framework has three core domains – wellbeing, determinants, and welfare services performance.² These data gaps are significant in the context of reporting against these domains, and they are recognised in national policy priorities such as the Healthy, safe and thriving: *National Strategic Framework for Child and Youth Health* and the *National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030*.

Specific topic gaps in national reporting of young people's wellbeing include their top issues, health literacy, family and household composition, student engagement, housing instability, body image, medical technology use, child abuse and neglect, bullying, racism, and the impact of climate change.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021) Australia's youth, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 13 January 2024.

2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Australia's welfare 2017. Australia's welfare series no. 13. AUS 214. Canberra: AIHW.

Fast facts – Young Queenslanders





In Queensland, a young person means someone who is between the ages of 12 to 25 years old.

In the 2021 Census, there were approximately 911,158 young people living in Queensland. This means that nearly 1 in 5 Queenslanders is a young person.

At the 2021 Census, in Queensland there were:

69,031 12-year-olds	68,947 13-year-olds	68,230 14-year-olds	66,267 15-year-olds
63,972 16-year-olds	62,030 17-year-olds	60,048 18-year-olds	61,190 19-year-olds
63,685 20-year-olds	64,289 21-year-olds	64,163 22-year-olds	65,347 23-year-olds
	66,251 24-year-olds	67,706 25-year-olds	

Of those who travelled to work:

 8.4% took public transport	 85.7% drove in a vehicle	 5.3% used active transport	 0.6% used another mode
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Of Queensland's young people at the 2021 Census:³

- » 7% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- » 18% use a language other than English at home
- » 3.8% provided unpaid carer assistance to a person with a disability or health condition⁴
- » 3.3% are parents and of these parents 29.4% are men and 70.6% are women
- » 6.1% provided unpaid child care
- » 1.2% have experience of out-of-home care
- » 0.6% were having experience of homelessness

In the youth justice system:

- » The number of 10–17-year-old young people who commit offences has decreased by 20% in the past five years. In 2022–23, there were 46,388 proven offences committed by 3,398 individual young people aged between 10-17 years (0.6% of all young people in Queensland). Data from 2023 showed that 43% of young people who have a finalised court appearance never return to the youth justice system.

In the adult justice system:

- » 1.1% have had contact with Queensland Corrective Services

Of the Queenslanders who were active participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), 37,975, or 27.4% were young people.

This means 4.2% of young Queenslanders were active participants in the NDIS.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) 2021 Census of Population and Housing [Census TableBuilder Pro], accessed 5 January 2024.

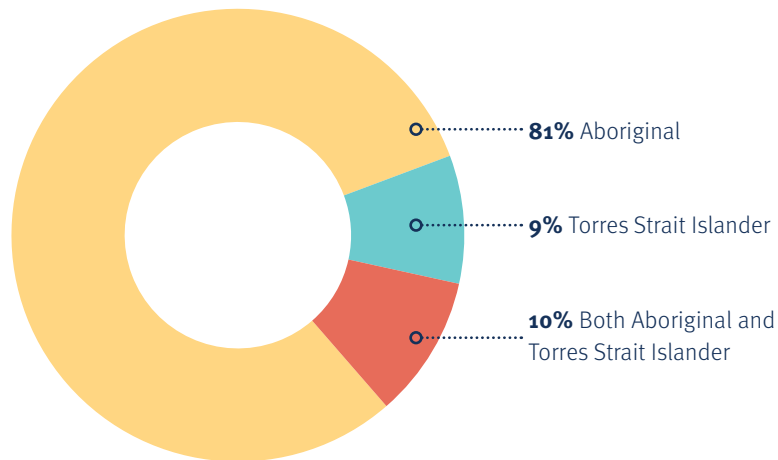
4. Please note data for this item is only available for young people aged 15-25 years old.

Fast facts – First Nations Young People

In the 2021 Census, over 237,000 people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in Queensland – representing 4.6% of Queensland’s population. Notably, more than 128,100 (or over 50%) of Queensland’s First Nations peoples are aged 25 or younger.

Within this group, over 64,600 are young people between the ages of 12-25. This means that over 1 in 4 First Nations Queenslanders is a young person.

First Nations young people in Queensland



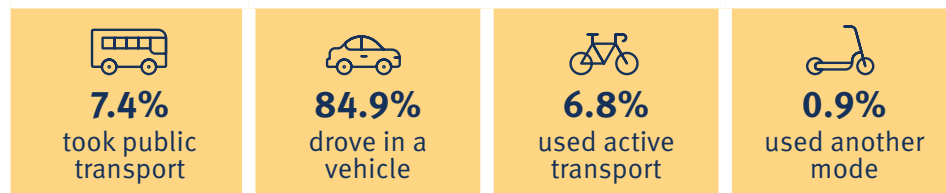
Our young First Nations Queenslanders feel a significant responsibility in influencing and contributing to the growth, development, and cultural richness of our state.

Of Queensland’s First Nations young people at the 2021 Census: ⁵

- » 7.6% use an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Language at home
- » 5.4% provided unpaid carer assistance to a person with a disability or health condition ⁶
- » 7.4% are parents: of these parents 27.8% are men and 72.2% are women
- » 12.6% provided unpaid child care
- » 3.3% have experience of out-of-home care
- » 2.2% were having experience of homelessness
- » In the adult justice system:
 - » 5.9% have had contact with Queensland Corrective Services

Of the 4.2% of young Queenslanders on NDIS, 4,353, or 11.4% were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Of those who travelled to work:



5. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) 2021 Census of Population and Housing [Census TableBuilder Pro], accessed 5 January 2024.

6. Please note data for this item is only available for young people aged 15-25 years old.

We listened to young Queenslanders

In 2017 the Queensland Government released the *Queensland Youth Strategy*. With an overarching commitment to listen to the voices of young people, the 2017 strategy was shaped around four building blocks that aimed to support young people to participate, access housing, build healthy futures and be educated into employment.

Over the past 7 years a lot has changed in the landscape for young people in Queensland – from unprecedented floods and bushfires to the widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, encompassing housing pressures, lockdowns, isolation periods and impacts to fields such as employment and science.

In recognition of these changes, the Queensland Government ran a state-wide consultation from mid-October to late November 2022 to develop a new strategy for young Queenslanders.

A range of in-person and online feedback options provided opportunities for young people, stakeholders, and the community to share their feedback on:

1. key issues and challenges facing young people;
2. what services, support and information young people need; and
3. how government can better connect and engage with young people and sector stakeholders.

We heard from over 3,200 young people across the state including young people from CALD communities; those living in regional or remote areas in Queensland; those who identify as LGBTQIA+; First Nations young people; those with lived experience of the out-of-home care and youth justice systems, and homelessness; young people with lived experience of the health care system, including those living with disability and long-term health conditions; and neurodivergent young people.

How we did it

To ensure we heard from a diverse group of young people in our consultation, we had to be proactive, think outside the box and meet young people where they were. We used a range of innovative engagement methods including social media and other digital platforms such as In the Loop, the Queensland Government’s engagement platform that invites the public to be part of the conversation and stay informed of key decisions.

Young people were also engaged in-person and online as part of a consultation workshop roadshow which specifically targeted minorities, disengaged young people or groups often underrepresented in government survey responses.

Engagement snapshot – young people

1,452 people contributed and 196,206 engaged on social media	4,090 visitors to the <i>In the Loop</i> web page
938 online survey responses from young people	78 contributions to the online ideas board
752 contributed and 1,052 engaged across 37 workshop events	3 written submissions from young people

The importance of engaging people using different consultation methods

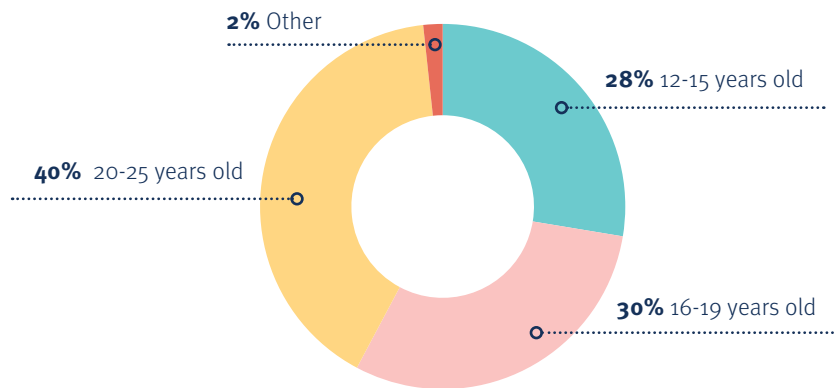
When analysing the feedback, interesting differences emerged between the unprompted thematically analysed feedback and the prompted quantitatively analysed feedback in relation to the extent issues were prioritised or ranked. When unprompted, young people focused more on their personal core needs, mainly discussing general health care and mental health followed by housing and education. In comparison, when prompted with issues, young people often had a broader lens, prioritising universally important issues such as affordable housing followed by climate change and mental health.



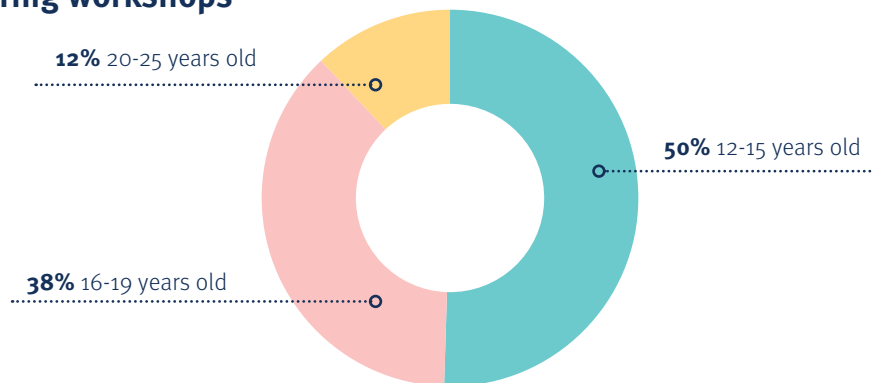
Participant profile

The young people who responded to the consultation varied in demographically depending on the consultation mechanism. Respondents were younger on average during in-person consultations as they were specifically targeted to mitigate the risk of them being less likely to engage with the consultation online.

Age of young people that responded to the consultation online



Age of young people that responded to the consultation during workshops



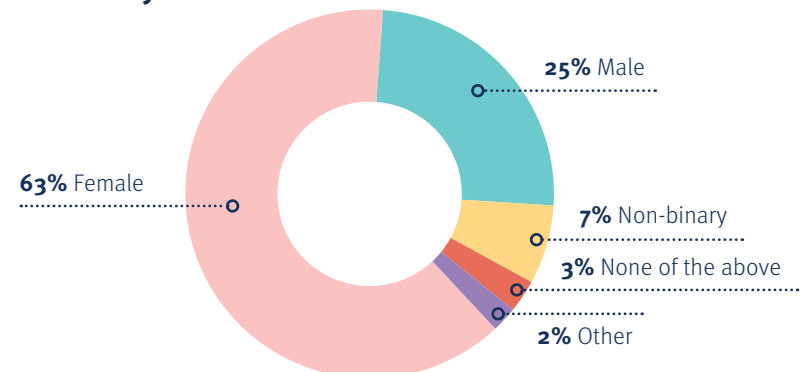
Participant profile – online survey

It should be noted that the survey was 'opt in' rather than a randomised sample, so results are representative only of the mix of respondents participating and not necessarily the wider population of young people in Queensland.

Studies have shown demographic trends in who chooses to respond to surveys.⁷ Generally, those who are more educated and affluent are more likely to participate in surveys than those less educated and affluent, those who identify as women tend to participate more than men and those from non-CALD backgrounds are more likely to participate than those from CALD backgrounds.

The majority of young people surveyed online identified as female, accounting for 63% of the respondents, while males accounted for 25%. The remaining respondents identified as non-binary (7%), chose "none of the above" (3%), or selected "other" (2%). In addition to providing their ages, young people were asked if they identified with a variety of lived experiences when completing the online survey.

Gender Identity



7. William G. Smith (2008), Does Gender Influence Online Survey Participation?: A Record-linkage Analysis of University Faculty Online Survey Response Behavior, PhD San José State University

Of the young people who responded to our online survey:

70% stated they were **living at home**

68% identified as **students**

43% identified as having a **chronic health condition or disability** (including mental ill-health)

39% identified as **LGBTQIA+**

28% live or lived in **rural or remote areas**

12% identified as **culturally and linguistically diverse**

11% had **experienced homelessness**

9% were, or had been, a **carer**

8% were **unemployed**

8% identified as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**

5% live or lived **in out-of-home care**

3% were, or had been, a **parent**

3% had experience of the **youth justice system**

7% **did not identify** with any of the above interest groups



Analysis of social media engagement

A key component of undertaking meaningful and respectful engagement with young people during consultation was to intentionally meet them where they are, including through the use of Instagram and Facebook.

Instagram

Young people were engaged through Instagram stories to provide their opinions by answering 10 polls. The majority of young people who participated found looking after country (63%), mental health (65%), cost of living (54%) and availability of public transportation (65%) more personally important than the corresponding issue in the poll. The majority of young people also found the idea of moving out of home daunting (91%) and would like to have education on how the government works, for example how to vote (93%).

On a scale from 1 to 5, young people most commonly ranked the following issues as 5, being most important:

- » Climate change
- » Looking after Country
- » Mental health and access to mental health care.

Being involved in government decision-making was most commonly ranked around 4 out of 5.

Facebook

Social media posts were also shared on Facebook for young people to comment on. The comments made by young people across these various posts and stories were mainly about:

- » Mental health
- » Education
- » Employment.

Other comments made were in relation to legislation, housing, cost of living and enforcement.

Mental health

Affordability of mental health support services as well as accessibility and availability were noted. Better education about autism and ADHD was proposed as a suggestion for improving mental health services for young people.

"...[a] psychologist, per session, with the rebate is still \$100+. What makes you think we can afford it even if we wanted to go."

"Also its actually really hard to get mental health help, general practitioners should know more about autism and ADHD and how it can be debilitating."

Education

Young people commented on the need for more education in life skills such as road legislation, taxes and taking loans from a bank. Some participants noted that such learning opportunities are available but young people may not find them important at a young age. Making QTAC applications easier was also mentioned.

"Tell us when we get our P's every law we need to know. Teach us how to do our taxes in schools. Teach us how to take out a loan from a bank. Start making it an okay thing to leave school and do a trade. I'm 24, outta school for a while but it needs to start happening."

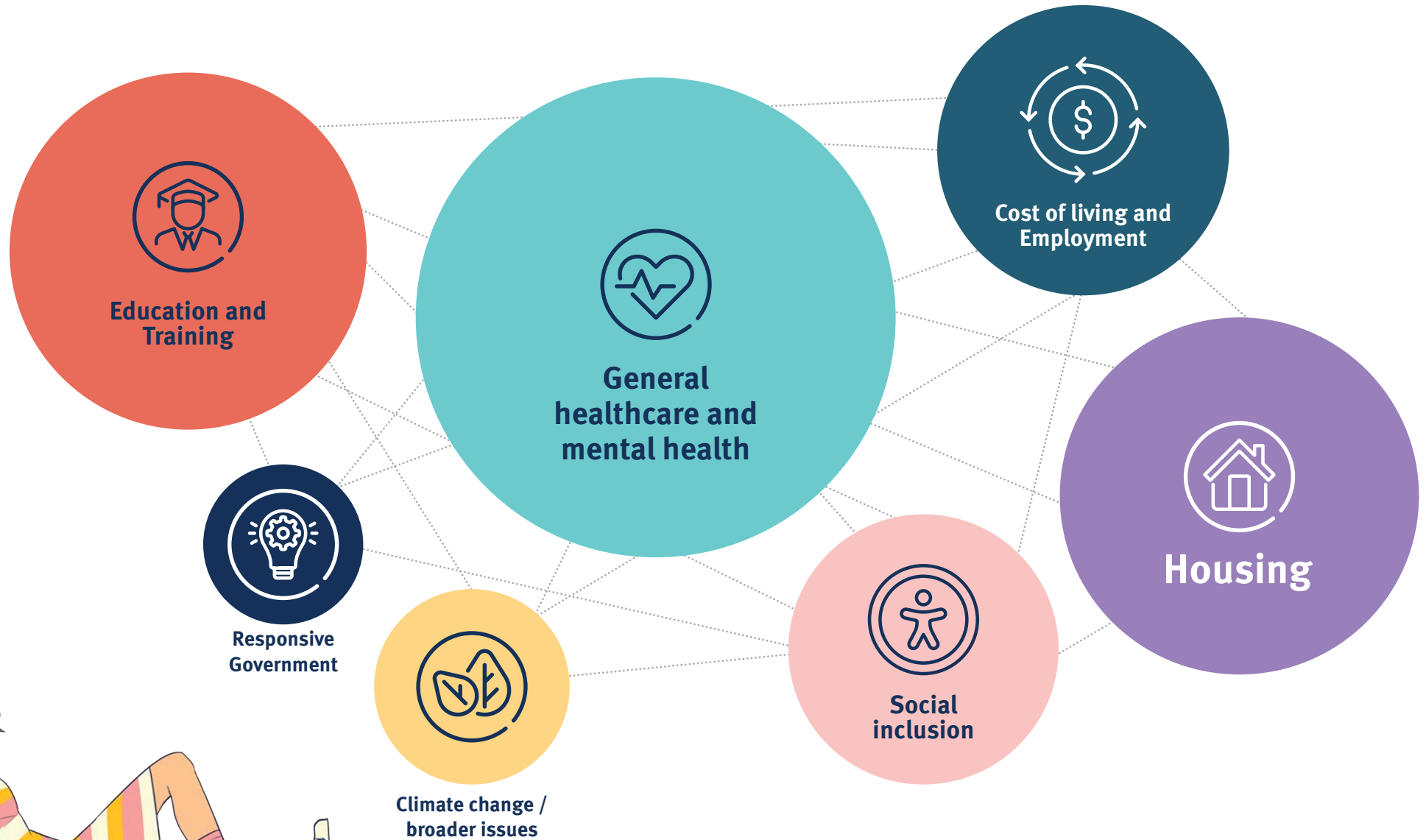
"Every student is different. Some students didn't want to learn to change a tyre or oil. So no matter what the 'full blown lessons' aren't going to be good enough. But there's a choice in education; yes, the public system isn't great because the general student body doesn't take these things super seriously. Your point of attention proves my point further, you don't know as a kid what you'll need, so by your logic no matter what you're not going to pay attention?"

"Make QTAC [Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre] applications easier to understand and apply for."

Employment

Employment was mentioned less than the other two main themes but was still prominent. Comments in relation to employment related to raising minimum wage and the challenge of balancing studying while also being expected to work part time.

What's important to young people



Health and Wellbeing including Mental Health and Support Services

Availability

Accessibility and cost

Education / Institutional awareness and integration

Staffing and training

Relatable communications

Young people expressed their concerns about healthcare, with mental health being the predominant concern. Many young people perceived the healthcare system to be complex, making it challenging for them to navigate or access services. The availability of mental health services was also a concern, particularly in regional areas where there were limited appointments or placements available.

In addition to these challenges, young people raised concerns about the lack of mental health education and awareness in the school system. They felt that the educational environment was not sufficiently supportive or aware of those who may be struggling with mental health challenges. This was particularly true in regional areas, where insufficient staff training for supporting students with mental health concerns was identified as a major issue.

Mental health was a prevalent theme arising from discussions with young members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Many individuals within this community feel misunderstood, isolated, or face challenges with their families, making it difficult for them to access adequate mental health solutions or support. This is often due to a perceived shortage of resources, or a fear of being judged by medical professionals based on their identity or situation.

“Our system is shocking. I literally got told unless you are planning on killing yourself right now you are going to have to wait for 3 months.”

“Drop prices of healthy foods, increase the prices of unhealthy foods, and stop stores from selling soft drink for cheaper than water.”

“I had an eating disorder so mental health is very important to me. I want government to offer more support groups.”

“I see mental health issues quite a bit some of my friends their little cousins don't feel safe going to adults about their problems. They talk to me about problems because they can't go somewhere else 'that's shame'.”

Young people said they want:

- » better access to affordable mental health care including availability of mental health services
- » better clinical understanding of young people's health needs and better transitions between services, including out of paediatric care
- » more support for young people with chronic and long-term illness
- » improved cultural capability (particularly in rural, remote and regional areas), better support for CALD communities, and increased understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues
- » an increase in gender clinics and support
- » support with the cost of treatment and medication (especially preventative)
- » improved education and resources for sexual and reproductive health both online and in school or university
- » healthy and affordable food available to all young people
- » action to address the impacts of drug and alcohol use by, and on, young people and their families.

“When I was young and in school I wanted to go and get mental help, but my parents were a barrier. While I was waiting for a referral when I was older, I just got worse and worse waiting for help. I went to my guidance counsellor, and they suggested I go to a psychologist, but my parents said no.”

“People need more than the current 10 sessions on the mental health care plan. I'm lucky enough to be on NDIS and worked hard to get there just so I could afford therapy.”

Housing Including Safe Community and Youth Spaces

Availability

Accessibility

Service Availability

Safe and affordable housing is a foundational concern for young people, and they identified that it directly impacts other key areas of life such as mental health and job stability. One of the main issues identified by young people was the affordability of housing due to rising rental and housing prices, limited supply, and difficulties in accessing suitable properties – particularly for those with limited rental or employment history.

Young people felt that a lack of choice in housing options compounded issues of personal safety including the relationships with other people that may share the accommodation, the physical property and the geographic area it is located in. Young people also wanted to see more reliable services (primarily internet) for those who need to work or study from home.

Young people told us that access to housing support was often complicated by other factors such as domestic and family violence or drug and alcohol addiction within the family home. Within regional areas or close-knit communities these can further complicate the quest for a new beginning, with longstanding domestic disputes and negative peer influences posing additional barriers.

Although distinct from housing from a supply perspective, access to community safe spaces was noted particularly for young people who feel emotionally distressed due to things like unsafe housing situations, or for disengaged young people. These spaces are viewed as a safe haven, with opportunities to access core services (e.g., laundry and internet), activities, and tools for

personal growth such as study or job application support. The success of these spaces however was noted to depend on the resourcing available, as well as other factors such as proximity to transport. Many young people expressed challenges in navigating the rental market without a clear understanding of their rights as tenants. The complexity of rental agreements and rental laws, combined with instances of private rental agreements operating outside legal boundaries, left many young renters feeling vulnerable to exploitation and unaware of the protections available to them under the law.

“...maybe set up something like we have for uni the hex debt but for housing.”

“It would be great to have a space for our youth to come and hang out. For a lot of kids here, school doesn’t work for them - so there need to be other options. Even a place to teach the young ones how to do their laundry or mow their lawns. If there is a safe space for young people, all of the [support] services can also be accessed from there.”

“More money for long term public housing and emergency housing. Rental caps. Fees for landlords who leave properties empty for extended periods of time.”

Young people said they want:

- » housing that is safe, accessible, secure, affordable and where they need it
- » support to enter the housing market
- » more public housing and places to live being built
- » safe spaces to play, relax, socialise, be creative, be active, and feel safe and supported
- » online resources outlining tenant rights and responsibilities, tailored for young people newly entering the housing market
- » reduction of incentives for people engaging in the housing market as a business including rental reform and a freeze on rent prices
- » affordable, safe, and reliable transport options to get from home to school, training and work.

“Access to social housing is essential for all Australian’s and the government should identify it as one of the most life-threatening issues that our nation is facing at the moment.”

“Renting crisis is affecting young people. From experience renting is harder because rentals are more likely to accept someone that is more established and are also more willing to accept rent up front which many young people are unable to provide.”

Education

Institutional awareness

Functional education incl. life skills

Lack of alternative career paths

Disengaged young people

Place-based educational offerings

Limited school availability

Stigma and Discrimination

Staff training and turnover

During consultation it was clear that educational and institutional settings serve as crucial points of contact for young people, providing both a secure foundation and potential challenges if young people are not adequately supported (e.g. dealing with bullying or stigma related to academic performance).

The key areas discussed by young people in relation to education were:

- **Awareness, support, and inclusivity:** a lack of awareness of diversities and unique needs can exacerbate mental health issues. Young people want their schools and their peers to be more aware and supportive of students facing mental health challenges, particularly those with vulnerabilities including lived experience of disability and neurodivergence, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people or those who identify as LGBTQIA+.
- **Place-based education:** that is relevant to the geographical area that a young person is based. Young people want to see the integration of content related to local and cultural topics of interest or employment opportunities, especially those residing in rural or remote areas.
- **Life skills:** there is a strong perception amongst young people that educational institutions have untapped potential to impart practical life skills that will empower them to navigate the complexities of their future lives with confidence (e.g., personal finance management and taxes).
- **Reengaging the disengaged:** a more flexible education system could better 'meet young people where they are' and should offer alternative vocational training avenues or career pathways, especially in First Nations communities. This includes addressing the effects of staff shortages and high turnover.
- **Consent, sexual health and healthy relationships:** proactive education that addresses this topic on a continual basis throughout schooling to clarify and instil core principles such as consent and respect.

At the 2021 census in Queensland:

38.4%
of young people were in **high school**

4.5%
of young people were in **vocational education including TAFE**

13.8%
of young people were in **university or other higher education**

Young people said they want to:

- » feel safe and supported to succeed in their training and working environments, and have an education that supports their diverse needs
- » be provided with the life skills they need to be a successful adult
- » learn about First Nations culture and history relevant to their local area
- » be able to access alternative career paths and seek opportunities for mentoring or development of their leadership skills
- » have the skills required to maintain employment and earn a wage they can live off.

"I don't think school teaches you enough about the real world, like life skills, Parliament and voting."

"School should teach life skills like taxes, renting, cooking and make the classes hands on so disengaged young people are incentivised to attend school."

"Support for children in families who have a history of school dropouts, to assist them to finish schooling and continue with their education, effectively breaking the cycle."

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies should be taught in the curriculum. We are in a program at the moment where we go back to Country in Woorabinda and we are taught about burning practices and how to use medicine trees and all of that."

Cost of Living & Employment



Depending on who we heard from and where they were based, the young people we spoke to were experiencing different types of financial challenges from the high cost of food in remote areas to a lack of employment opportunities in their town.

Concerns around getting and holding on to a job were slightly higher among those who identified as male and the number of young people noting cost of living pressures increased with age. Cost of living and employment concerns are mostly interrelated, with young people voicing concerns over finance management, minimum wage impacts, lack of financial support and lack of employment. Throughout consultation, young people discussed the impact that cost of living increases and employment pressure has on their mental health and their ability to afford housing, healthcare, and education.

It was noted that in regional areas inflated prices due to scarcity of items, in combination with disengaged young people and limited income may be drivers of petty crimes and other issues. Young people who identified as living with disability found finding work particularly challenging – with or without relevant experience – and consistently told us that even full time work hours were barely sufficient to keep up with the cost of living.

“I want to be paid enough to match the rising cost of living. I am seriously struggling trying to work part time and study full time. I can’t afford to move out or buy food.”

“Axe junior rates. These are below the minimum wage and have a devastating effect on young people. Struggles with housing, bills, and continuing to be a part of workforce. The work junior employees do is real work, it deserves the full pay.”

“The Queensland Government can create a site where if an employee is feeling unsafe or not respected then they can say, and the Government can help fix it.”

Youth Allowance Fast Facts:^{8,9}

The average income for a young person in Queensland is \$33,338.95	Youth Allowance is available to young people studying full time aged 18-24	29,371 people are on Youth Allowance in Queensland
0% of available houses in Central Queensland are affordable and appropriate	0% of available houses in the Cairns region are affordable and appropriate	0% of available houses in the Brisbane region are affordable and appropriate

Young people said they want:

- » support, such as mentorship programs, work trial periods and education in related skills such as resume writing
- » a youth-friendly way to anonymously report workplaces
- » increased incentives or regulations so companies employ more young people
- » equal pay and treatment in workplaces
- » a review of the casual employment and junior rates.

“I feel personally let down by the government with finances. I have had weeks or months of no work, no income and no support from the Government. Until I turn 22 and I am classed as independent there is just an expectation that my parents will pay but they cannot afford to pay for my Rego or fuel that is expensive.”

8. Anglicare Australia (2022) Rental Affordability Snapshot Regional Reports April 2022, accessed 5 January 2024.

9. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) 2021 Census of Population and Housing [Census TableBuilder Pro], accessed 5 January 2024.

Climate change

Lack of action

Environmental planning

Environmental accountability

Balance of power impacts

Impact of international stances on human rights

During consultation activities there was a clear consensus that more can be done to address climate change, and that there is a time-sensitive nature to this.

Climate change was one of the top ranked issues in the online survey, and the highest ranked issue for females and 16–19-year-olds. There was a strong emphasis among young people on themes of climate justice, and a recognition that climate change may disproportionately affect marginalised and vulnerable communities.

Young people showed concern about the impact of climate change on the planet's future, including biodiversity loss, extreme weather events, and the consequences for Queensland communities including increased poverty, displacement, and health risks. Many young people who ranked climate change as their top issue conveyed a sense of 'climate doom' and some revealed mental health challenges stemming from their climate-related anxieties.

Young people spoke passionately about this issue, and key solutions proposed highlighted the integral role of innovation and science in the fields of energy generation and agriculture in the fight against climate change. Young people perceived the current policies and commitments as inadequate or too slow in comparison to the scale of the problem and that they expect government to be more proactive in addressing this issue.

Concerns around climate change were noted from participants across the state from metropolitan centres to rural and remote areas. However, concerns around climate change were less prominent in unstructured feedback from in-person workshops, suggesting that young people view climate change as an issue on a global level more than a personal level.

“Community-led projects to build local resilience and adapt to these changes would be really helpful for strengthening neighbourhood relationships (psychological and emotional support) as well as tangibly implementing positive modifications.”

“First Nations knowledge has successfully managed the Australian climate for thousands of years - we should be using this knowledge now.”

“Please just do more about climate change. It's terrifying, and I want to live and have kids whose lives won't be impacted by the world ending...!”

“Fund innovative initiatives that will future-proof our agricultural industry i.e., transitioning farms to climatically suitable foods, ways to lower methane emissions from livestock, creating a circular economy where waste products from one industry are used in another, regenerative agriculture, traditional indigenous foods, affordable plant-based meat alternatives...”

Young people said they want:

- » to see clear action on climate change and other environmental issues
- » community-led climate resilience projects
- » large-scale incorporation of First Nations knowledge in land management
- » to be recognised as key stakeholders in decisions impacting on the climate and environment
- » investments into innovative agriculture and food initiatives that promote sustainability.

The top solutions to climate change proposed during consultation:

Renewable energy (support, encourage and incentivise)	Phase out non-renewable energy and fossil fuels
Supporting land care and conservation in community	Green transport (including public transport and electric vehicles)
Green infrastructure and developments	The role of industry (incentivise or tax)
Improvements to recycling/waste management	Education and awareness

Social Inclusion

Stigma

Racism

Sexism

Orientation

Peer Pressure

There was general consensus among young people that greater efforts are needed across the board to achieve holistic social inclusivity. Whilst young people acknowledged that this area appears to have improved compared to previous generations, stigma is still considered prevalent in young people's lives. Discrimination was also a voiced issue particularly relating to socio-economic factors, domestic and family violence, mental health disorders and neurodivergence.

Outright discrimination has been noted among young people to still be occurring, mostly peer-to-peer but also from people in positions of authority. Ignorance is felt to be a primary cause in many instances. Proactive and ongoing education and open discussions on the issue at a state level were key solutions suggested.

Discrimination was relatively prominent as an issue among the young people who responded to the consultation, with over one in ten (11%) citing it as their number 1 ranked issue. Discrimination was the highest ranked issue for the 12–15-year-old age group in the online survey and was a notable concern for females across all age groups. Participants who identified as LGBTQIA+ or culturally and linguistically diverse also highlighted discrimination as a notable and significant concern within their respective experiences.

Some vulnerabilities or identities are less likely to be visually apparent including young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ or certain cultural identities or young people with 'invisible' challenges such as neurodivergence. Young people identified that cultural obligations, family and community structures, fear of victimisation, threat of isolation and emotional discomfort are all reasons they delayed publicly identifying themselves.

"Formally reviewing all legislation to ensure there is no systematic racism and that there are stronger anti-discrimination laws e.g., special protections for indigenous children in custody. Listen to children, listen to the victims impacted, make people's rights known to them."

Young people said they want:

- » to be treated fairly, without discrimination or stigma, and to feel safe and valued in their communities, schools and workplaces
- » their culture, history, and lived experience to be valued, acknowledged, and celebrated
- » more frequent and fit-for-purpose education on inclusivity, diversity and acceptance in schools
- » more 'places of peace' or safe spaces they can go to connect with other young people with shared lived experiences
- » increased representation and advocacy in government decision-making
- » to be able to speak openly and create awareness of issues
- » legislation and changes to laws to enhance protection mechanisms
- » more community events that promote inclusivity (e.g. Pride).

"My first primary school class tried to put me in the special needs' classroom. My parents said 'No, Tom is fine.'" [this young person was physically in a wheelchair – but able to participate in mainstream schooling]

"It is equal in Queensland but not fair. It's the same for everyone but not fair – [government] doesn't support everyone for their needs. Our needs for where we're from, our culture, how we look, what we need, is completely disregarded."



Responsive Government

Digital preference to access information

More direct channels / meeting young people where they are

Surveys and forums for engagement

Voting

Equip young people to engage in decision-making

Throughout consultation, young people demonstrated a strong desire to access and develop a range of skills to better engage in decision-making covering political, leadership and life skills.

While there was limited input regarding responsiveness as a standalone theme, close to 10% of all participants who responded to the online survey listed being involved in government decision-making in their top two issues.

Many young people spoke with passion about the creation of state-wide mechanisms where young people could be democratically peer-elected to represent the values of a young person in Queensland in Parliament.

Other suggestions included increased representation of young people in state government and policy positions, on committees and councils and acting as Ambassadors. The incorporation of government responsiveness into the education curriculum was also raised, with suggestions including school-based discussions about projects relevant to their local area to encourage students to participate in decision-making.

Overall, the findings of the online survey indicated a preference for digital communication channels, with a particular interest in online surveys and response mechanisms hooked into social media platforms. However, there was also strong interest in face-to-face groups or forums, particularly with vulnerable cohorts, highlighting the need for accessible and flexible communication avenues.

“Have local members hold events for the youth of the electorate to hear their opinions and thoughts on the issues that will and are going to affect us.”

“If Youth were to have a sit in a committee board with the Government that will give the Government an opportunity to hear firsthand the issues we the Youth Face on a daily basis.”

Young people said they want:

- » trusted sources of advice and guidance on youth issues, and clear and easy to navigate information on government services
- » educational programs to foster knowledge about government processes
- » policies by young people for young people
- » government to meet them where they are and provide a range of opportunities to engage, to demonstrate that they have been heard and close the loop on consultation
- » opportunities to actively participate in and contribute to civil and political society
- » local events hosted by elected youth-representatives to gather young people’s perspectives on issues affecting them directly.

“In school I was never taught how the government works. Some kind of education could be really cool. Like the council or the government just says, ‘hey come here and this is how the government works and this is how to vote, and this is how to research the government’.”

“Shed more light on younger and diverse people in politics and their ideas and opinions. Don’t dismiss them as inexperienced or dramatic and therefore unimportant. Young people deserve a say in the world they’re going to be living in.”

“Young voices are not being heard; more young people of voting age need to be consulted for policy change.”

Empowerment for all young people

Without an accurate understanding of the diverse identities and needs of our young people, we can't meaningfully assess what crucial support is needed for them to actively participate, cultivate their futures, live their best lives, and thrive in our communities.

We are committing to ongoing consultation throughout the lifecycle of the *Young Queenslanders Strategy*. We will keep meeting diverse young people where they are to capture their views and aspirations as we strive towards a better Queensland.

Several high interest groups were identified during the 2022 consultation, so as part of the analysis both qualitative and quantitative results have been summarised to provide specific insights relevant to each group.

When considering the views of high interest groups, it should be noted that a young person can fit into multiple categories (e.g., First Nations young person, living in a remote area and with a disability). The views of young people were considered across all the high interest categories they identify with.



Participants in our online consultation survey included:

72 young people who identified as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**

376 young people who identified as **LGBTQIA+** *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/ Aromantic or Other*

262 young people from **Rural and Regional areas**

407 young people who identified as **living with or having lived with a disability or chronic illness, including mental ill-health**

108 young people who identified as **Culturally or Linguistically Diverse**

131 young people who identified as having experience of **homelessness, youth justice or out-of-home care** including kinship care, foster or residential care

First Nations Young People

Employment

First Nations young people provided feedback primarily focused on concerns related to employment, education, community disintegration, and a need for additional safe spaces. For those living in First Nations council areas, the perception was that the employment and career opportunities available are limited, and developing essential life skills is challenging. Consequently, many viewed moving away to seek employment or training as the only option, recognising that this choice comes at the expense of their community.

When asked to prioritise their concerns, access to affordable housing was ranked as the most important issue, followed by climate change, mental health and access to mental health care, discrimination, and fair treatment in the workplace.

In targeted, in-person consultations conducted in First Nations council areas, young people and service providers raised issues related to a perceived decrease in respect between young people and the adults and Elders within the community, as well as ongoing generational social issues and familial conflicts. These issues were amplified by disengaged young people, a lack of alternative activities for them to participate in, peer pressure, substance abuse, and instances of crime.

Education including Support Services

Young people expressed their need for increased training opportunities, life skills development, and emotional/teaching support both within schools and the community. Educational support for students appears to be somewhat hit and miss for First Nations young people – while many teachers made a lasting positive impression, others have struggled to provide effective support and keep their students engaged. The availability of reliable services, such as the internet, is also challenging for this cohort of young people.

“[I experienced] A lot of racism [in school]. I largely taught myself. Some teachers would come and sit next to me and offer me help but some teachers would just tell me to do it myself.”

“Be more accessible. It’s so hard to get help let alone good service. There is not enough good places to go to. Also be more enticing. You got to make us think you want to help.”

“We believe (Our community) that discrimination is an issue stemming mostly from misinformation. This can be either from the education system, or from parental figures or lifestyle. Our country is diverse, and it is extremely important that our education reflects respect for people of all nations.”

“... these small little recognitions of culture, when talking about caring for the environment or learning about wildlife, is enough for children to develop and learn respect for our land and Indigenous people as they grow.”

Community breakdown

Safe Spaces

Young First Nations Queenslanders said they want:

- » increased training and development of life skills, and both emotional and educational support in schools and community settings
- » establishment of employment and education hubs in community (even if staffed by just one person) with Wi-Fi for young people to do their homework or participate in online courses
- » more safe spaces or youth hubs that host fun activities and events including donation spaces so young people that attend these centres can obtain free clothes and shoes
- » increased resources that are monitored to reduce vandalism, such as community sporting equipment
- » investment in community projects, like communal gardens, to foster a sense of community and collaboration
- » more responsive and proactive police that enforce laws effectively to prevent escalation of community issues
- » First Nations education funded and taught in schools, designed to keep First Nations students engaged and to foster a deeper appreciation of their culture (for example, learning about burning practices and medicinal uses of native plants in their local areas).

LGBTQIA+ Young People

Discrimination

Young people who identified as LGBTQIA+ expressed significant concerns during the consultation about the difficulties they face – specifically regarding discrimination, support at school, mental health, and climate change.

When asked to rank issues they identified climate change and affordable housing as the most critical, followed by mental health and its accessibility, discrimination, and access to support services for domestic and family abuse and sexual assault.

This group of young people shared that they frequently face unfair treatment, not only in general settings but also in environments that are meant to be safe and inclusive, such as schools and workplaces. They emphasised that this occurs despite the presence of policies intended to prevent such discrimination as they are often not effectively implemented or enforced.

A major area of concern for these young people was mental health and many reported feeling misunderstood or isolated, not just in social settings but also within their own families. This sense of isolation is compounded by the challenges they face when trying to access mental health services and support. They reported that the available resources are often inadequate, and they struggle to find services that cater to LGBTQIA+ people, including gender clinics. This lack of sufficient and understanding support exacerbates their feelings of isolation and can significantly impact their overall mental wellbeing and chances of success.

“I’ve dealt with discrimination too many times because of my colour and sexuality. I’m sexually harassed at work all of the time with men trying to change my sexuality. It’s why you don’t see a lot of women in male dominated industries like chefs or mechanics.”

“I have noticed a lot of big companies just quickly brush over discrimination to tick a box rather than actually trying to improve it.”

“I have had to deal with discrimination at school. More education and normalcy will reduce stigma.”

Education

Mental Health

Climate Change

LGBTQIA+ people including young people face unique challenges:¹⁰

1 in 5 reported having experienced **homelessness**

over **23%** reported they were **harassed or spat on** in the past 12-months

3 in 5 reported being **treated unfairly** because of their **sexual orientation**

nearly **12%** reported they were **sexually assaulted** in the past 12-months

1 in 2 reported high or very high **psychological distress** in the last 4-weeks

2 in 5 reported that they had **considered suicide** in the past 12-months

3 in 10 reported having **attempted suicide** at some point in their lives

4 in 10 reported experiencing some form of **abuse in an intimate relationship**

LGBTQIA+ young people said they want:

- » more accessible government support services in communities and schools for young people designed by young people – including an increase in free mental health support services
- » broader support for regional and rural LGBTQIA+ young people
- » a consistent and fit-for-purpose ongoing youth engagement mechanism
- » more education on diversity in schools to reduce stigma including information about gender identity for both students and teachers
- » more industry knowledge on the role youth workers play and how they can support and advocate for those not living with their parents.

“I was in DV relationship, and I had to get counselling and there was no understanding of lesbian DV relationships.”

10. Figures taken from Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

Young people living in Rural or Regional Areas

Community

Feedback from young people in rural or regional areas was mainly around mental health, education, and community. When asked to rank the issues, young people in rural or regional areas found access to affordable housing the most important followed by climate change, mental health, and access to mental health care, getting and holding onto a job where they will be treated fairly, followed by discrimination.

Young people told us that getting support for mental health concerns is tough in regional or remote areas, primarily due to extended waiting times and a scarcity of available services. The geographical distance between providers amplifies difficulties in obtaining timely and appropriate assistance when it is needed. They also felt that their concerns are not always taken seriously by teachers and doctors which means they can feel embarrassed to ask for help. The stigma associated with mental health issues, coupled with the tight-knit nature of smaller communities, intensified the challenges these young people face in openly discussing and addressing their mental health concerns.

In the educational context, they desire learning that aligns with their interests and locally relevant topics, such as potential employment opportunities in their area or practical life skills. These young people also highlighted the importance of having respectful and inclusive teachers in smaller towns.

Beyond the classroom, there was a strong yearning across the places we visited to revive a sense of community. Young people expressed a desire to actively participate in local events and engage in communal spaces such as gyms and support centres.

Young people living in regional and rural areas usually look for government services online through search engines, government websites, and social media – however they have a strong preference to talk to someone in person where possible.

“I think there should be more options for those that are classed as unemployable. The government could open up jobs to employ those that don’t have jobs so that they aren’t reliant on the dole.”

Education

Mental Health

Young people in rural or regional areas said they want:

- » to be taken seriously by medical professionals when they seek support
- » increased focus on overall mental health support and early intervention in educational settings to teach young people the fundamentals of managing their own mental health
- » more community events for young people to be engaged with
- » more free, safe and accessible community spaces where they can participate with their peers socially
- » integrated transport options including transport that facilitates convenient pick-up and drop-off services for young people
- » fit-for-purpose education including sports or skills taught in school being regionally available and relevant
- » increased leadership and development opportunities that allow young people to enhance their skills and give back to their community.

“Put more young people through peer skills programs and youth mental health first aid programs so we can be more self-sufficient... If we equip young people with the skills they need to respond to crisis, we can ease the strain on the mental health system and manage crisis in a better way.”

“There isn’t anything for young people to do in Mackay, that’s probably why they’re doing all these drugs it’s boring, maybe an aquarium or community centre for young people or a better water park.”

“The same resources shared with regional and remote areas. Smaller communities often see a lot more disadvantaged youth because the resources are just not the same as they are in the city.”

Young people with Disability

Employment

Feedback from young people with disability or chronic illness (including mental ill-health) focused on areas like healthcare including mental health, education, social inclusion, and employment. When asked to rank concerns, access to affordable housing was listed as the most important overall followed by climate change, mental health including access to services, as well as discrimination and access to domestic and family violence and sexual assault support services.

Access to mental health care was a critical issue for these young people and many spoke about facing long waiting lists and having to pay large fees before they could access the services they need. They advocated for more diversity among healthcare professionals to improve relatability and cultural connection with patients from diverse backgrounds.

Young people advocated for better education on how they should manage their health as they transition to adulthood. Many stated they rely on online resources to access government services, underscoring the importance of accessible and navigable materials. Young people with disability also spoke about the significant challenges they encounter within the education system, where they may face discrimination or exclusion based on their disabilities. Despite understanding there are policies that exist to protect them, many shared experiences of perceived inaction from their teachers.

Many young people spoke about their transition from paediatric to adult health services including discontinuities in the care they received. For First Nations young people with disability, gaps in care were reported to be increased due to a general mistrust in the healthcare system within their communities.

Challenges could also be amplified for young people with disability in regional or remote areas where healthcare professionals could lack the specialised knowledge or services needed to help them, leading to further gaps in their treatment and support. They also highlighted disparities in access to bulk

Education

Social inclusion

Healthcare and Mental Health

billing, subsidised costs, and support systems for their age group compared to senior Queenslanders.

Many young people said finding and keeping employment can be an uphill battle and the result is often not enough to cover their living expenses. Those with complex mental health issues such as neurodivergence or schizophrenia highlighted challenges they face securing employment suited to their needs, stating that many typical job environments, such as supermarkets or retail stores, are not appropriate for them due to sensory issues. These workplaces are often too bright, too loud, and overly stimulating, making them challenging for these young people to work in.

Young people with disability said they want:

- » more support from medical professionals who take their concerns seriously when they seek assistance
- » overall mental health support and early intervention in educational settings, where they can learn fundamental mental health self-care skills
- » more community events for young people to actively participate
- » more free and accessible spaces where they can socialise
- » integrated transport options including pick-up and drop-off opportunities
- » increased leadership and development opportunities, not only to enhance their own skills but to contribute back to their community.

“Young people with disability or chronic health issues need more support, especially transitioning to adulthood – there are more barriers to gaining independence.”

“There is definitely a disconnect between the NDIS system and the health system, which is a huge, huge barrier and there's just no overlap. You basically have to go to tribunal if you want to contest it and that's something that young people just probably wouldn't have the capacity to do.”

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Young People

Education

During the consultation, young people from CALD backgrounds often brought up issues of discrimination, the need for affordable housing, mental health concerns, access to mental health services, climate change, and educational challenges. They shared experiences of facing discrimination in various contexts, often linked to cultural practices rather than language barriers. This included issues with uniform modifications, religious practices, and specific dietary needs, such as Halal food.

A recurring topic was the perceived ineffective handling of bullying, noting that the burden of addressing these incidents often falls on the victims, discouraging them from speaking out. The group emphasised the need for safe spaces and resources to cope with the impact of bullying and discrimination. They also expressed concerns about the insufficiency of mental health support available to them, particularly for those under the age of 16.

In terms of education, young people from this group expressed a desire for more culturally diverse representatives in teaching roles to increase cultural awareness, and for greater representation of CALD young people on student bodies and local councils. They also emphasised the need for educators to proactively provide information about support services in students' native languages. CALD young people advocated for a deeper understanding and recognition of their cultural diversity to counter stereotypes and dispel misconceptions, such as sexism. Despite their efforts to educate others, they feel there is minimal support from educational institutions.

In addition to collecting information through the consultation channels detailed in previous sections of this report, we also collaborated with Multicultural Youth Queensland to conduct three specialised workshops that specifically targeted young people from CALD backgrounds. These sessions were led by young facilitators trained in consultation, storytelling, and policy.

Youth integration

Discrimination

During these discussions, young people from this cohort discussed the challenges they face in accessing basic services. They identified that ineffective advertising and targeting of support services were significant barriers for them due to language difficulties, which hinder their awareness of and ability to access support.

Young people from CALD backgrounds also reported racism and discrimination from authority figures such as police, employers, and institutions including in areas of housing and rentals. Economic challenges, especially for students on youth allowance, was also a significant topic, alongside issues faced in schools.

CALD young people said they want:

- » more members of the CALD community publicly advocating for the issues impacting their young people
- » increased understanding and acceptance of different religious and cultural practices to lessen stigma
- » greater flexibility and openness in accommodating cultural differences in areas like school uniforms and daily routines
- » enhanced support and guidance within schools from teachers who can identify and assist students needing extra support
- » establishment of more social clubs in areas with high migrant populations to increase socialisation opportunities among young people with similar backgrounds
- » development of safe social environments, such as before and after school activities, sports like football, and gym sessions.

“Have more people coming into the schools to teach about how to deal with issues and speak about the issues.”

“Teachers can spread awareness of the services. They know who is struggling and can point them to services that come into the schools. These people can maybe speak your language.”

“Having more people of colour, religion, ages in government roles. If government doesn't reflect inclusivity, then Australians won't either.”

Young People with experience of homelessness, youth justice or the care system

Housing

Feedback from young people with experience of homelessness, the youth justice system or out-of-home care was mainly around housing, mental health, and education. When asked to rank the issues, access to affordable housing was considered most important, followed by mental health and access to mental health services, climate change, access to domestic and family violence and sexual assault support services, and getting and holding onto a job where they are treated fairly.

This cohort expressed concerns around the escalating cost of regional living, particularly in terms of housing affordability, and noted they experience additional complications finding available shelters and safe houses where they meet the criteria (e.g., some shelters may allow women only, which can be difficult to navigate with siblings). Mental health support for young people with lived experience of homelessness, youth justice or the care system can also be challenging. Participants noted they experienced long waiting periods and that support can sometimes be restricted only to the reason they were originally placed and might not be extended outside of that topic – even when the person has mental health concerns. Some also felt that child safety officers could do more to represent their needs adequately in this capacity.

Mental Health

Educational progress can be harder for young people with difficult home life settings, and there is a perception that very little support and understanding is available for this cohort. Young people with experience of homelessness or the youth justice and care systems noted significant challenges around stigma and bullying. However, other young people with lived experience of the youth justice system spoke about how school was the closest thing they had to a family due to their circumstances and it was only through connection to education that they were able to get ‘back on track’.

“I was on the street for 3 years because there's no services. And they don't help you if you have drug addiction.”

“The youth justice system needs to be more about intervention and rehabilitation first over discipline.”

At the 2021 census in Queensland, of the 5,278 young people experiencing homelessness:

26.6%
identified as
First Nations

49.8%
identified as
female

50.2%
identified as
male

During the consultation many young people with lived experience of homelessness told us that they initially didn't realise they were homeless. The lack of awareness stemmed from not understanding activities such as couch surfing or living in a severely crowded dwelling met the formal definition.

Education

Young people with experience of homelessness, the youth justice system or in care reported preferring to access government services and support in person followed by search engines, the Queensland Government website and social media. Key solutions mentioned by young people with experience of homelessness, the youth justice system or in care were around housing, salary, transport and education.

Young people with experience of homelessness and the youth justice and care systems want:

- » services advertised where young people are (social media, community notice boards or shopping centres)
- » accessible and easy to understand online information about services
- » better pay for traineeships and more financial aid for those disadvantaged
- » more homeless shelters and available beds
- » more public transport and improved services, including later services and free transport options
- » licence exceptions for young people who cannot afford the required supervised hours or do not have the adult support to gain hours.

“... young people [are] becoming homeless as they cannot stay at home...”

Youth sector insights

Thank you

Our ability to connect with so many diverse young people across Queensland was made possible by the unwavering support of Queensland's dedicated youth sector and service providers.

Whether you facilitated their expression of thoughts online by sitting next to them as they filled out our youth survey or welcomed us in person to join young people for dinner while we ran trauma-informed discussions in spaces where young people felt safe, your support has been pivotal.

No matter where we travelled or who we spoke to, one thing was very clear – the passion, kindness and resilience of those working in the Queensland youth sector is unparalleled.



How we did it

Key stakeholders (e.g., peak bodies, youth service providers, state and local government, education institutions, community youth organisations) and interested members of the community (e.g., parents, carers, etc.) were provided with the opportunity to submit feedback via the 'general' online survey or a written submission via email or post.

Community engagement activities were also delivered at stakeholder and community events. The consultation was promoted to participants primarily through electronic direct mail, website features and direct communication.

Engagement with key stakeholders from the youth sector included:

515 web page visitors	151 stakeholder/ non-youth event engagements	74 public event engagements
55 online survey responses	23 written submissions	

What the sector said

Mental health and access to mental healthcare was seen by the youth sector as the most important overall issue facing young people. This was followed by access to affordable housing and learning the skills and information that will help young people in life.

Sector prioritisation of issues for young people

1. Mental Health and access to mental health support
2. Access to affordable housing
3. Learning the skills and information needed to succeed in life
4. Access to domestic and family violence and sexual assault support services
5. Healthy lifestyle
6. Getting and holding a job where they are treated fairly
7. Discrimination
8. Drugs and alcohol including use and misuse
9. Climate change
10. Young people being involved in government decision-making

The main topics identified by the Youth Sector in written submissions were:

- » Success
- » Wellbeing
- » Place
- » Responsive government
- » Diversity



Success

The overall sector findings in relation to success were centred around cost of living, housing, education, training and work, and the transition to adulthood.

Cost of living

Cost of living pressures were raised as being a concern among young people, especially the combination of rising costs of living and inflation, which were noted as contributing to other issues such as housing affordability, food security and financial security.

Housing

Access to affordable housing was raised as a related concern to cost of living, alongside a perceived lack of support for homeless young people. Young people who are experiencing homelessness can also experience stigma and discrimination, which can impact other areas of their lives such as applying for rental accommodation or accessing higher education.

Education

The sector raised concerns about low participation rates of young people in higher education, among other issues such as feeling a lack of preparedness for the future, mental health impacts (i.e., stress about achievements and future success), and school cultures.

Training and work

High unemployment rates for young people in rural and isolated communities were noted, as well as the additional barriers young people face in entering the workforce. There is also a need for support for First Nations young people.

Transition to adulthood

This was discussed to a lesser extent than other topics. The sector noted the importance of learning skills and receiving support during this period, and the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people such as a delay in accessing services needed for the transition to adulthood.



Wellbeing

The wellbeing findings in the written submissions encompass two broader themes, namely healthy relationships, and mental health. Other health-related feedback was raised to a lesser extent.

Healthy relationships

Some stakeholder submissions discussed the need for greater access to tailored services and education for young people regarding healthy relationships, including domestic and family violence and sexual assault services. Other concerns were around bullying and personal safety, the need for a consistent approach across government to support child safety outcomes, and healthy relationships more generally.

Mental health

Stakeholder concerns were centred around access and availability of support services for young people, and it was noted that poor mental health is perceived to influence the likelihood of students reporting academic stress. There were also concerns about the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on mental health, and over-diagnosis and over-medication of young people with psychiatric illness.

Other health

Other health related comments were made by the sector, including the overall access issues young people face when accessing health services, particularly with transport and availability. In addition, stakeholders noted the importance of family environments in overall wellbeing, and that there are insufficient detox and rehab services available for young people.

First Nations

Broadly speaking, the most significant issues raised in relation to First Nations Queenslanders included access to mental health services, medical care, after-hours crisis housing, and transportation.



Place

Climate change

The sector noted that young people continue to be concerned about the environment and in particular climate change. However, youth sentiment gathered by the sector outlined that young people have little confidence that actual change will be achieved.

Places and spaces

When places and spaces were referred to it was in relation to either community and a sense of safety, or general positive feedback from a specific region derived through consultation with their young people. In relation to community and sense of safety it was noted that safe places were found to differ in relation to remoteness of towns. Unsafe spaces were often referred to as those where people are rude, swearing etc; in contrast, safe spaces provide a presence of trusted people and a secure environment.

Responsive government

In relation to responsive government, sector feedback was mostly provided in relation to engagement with young people and improved leadership.

Engaging with young people

The sector noted that young people would like more opportunities for engagement with the government. The importance of ensuring such engagement activities are flexible, inclusive, ongoing, and not tokenistic was raised. Suggested engagement methods include co-design and pulse checks.

Leadership

Sector feedback in relation to a responsive government and its leadership include the importance of government support to both young people and the sector as well as improved government accountability through ongoing monitoring, public reporting, and improved collaboration.



Diversity

Within the written submissions, the youth sector provided feedback related to CALD young people, equity for all, and young people who have been in the justice system, in out-of-home care or who are parents or carers.

CALD young people

CALD young people were discussed in depth in one sector submission. It was acknowledged that CALD young people face unique challenges and barriers, including racism and discrimination, and that culturally safe support is needed.

Equity for all

Sector submissions highlighted the importance of achieving gender equality, reducing systemic racism and discrimination, closing the gap to ensure all young Queenslanders have the same opportunities, and the importance of community education and the public perception of young people.

Young people in the justice system and in care

Sector feedback in relation to young people in the justice system or in care included the need to engage these cohorts and ensure that they have a voice. The importance of ensuring equity for this cohort was also explicitly noted.

“Often when young people need our support they have already disengaged from the system. We need systems and structures in place that enable opportunities for all young people including those most vulnerable to engage with government and tell their stories.”

Young people need to feel they can be in charge of their own life, particularly when they may have grown up in environments that have taken that power away from them, if government does not prioritise meeting with and listening to its young people, the need for front line services and support is just going to continue increasing.

You talk early intervention, but how early is it if you only offer it to a young person that already needs your help?”



