

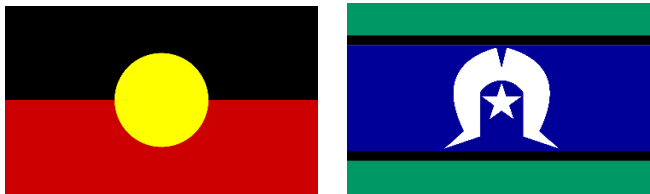


2026-27

Youth Affairs Council Victoria

Funding Blueprint for the Victorian Youth Sector

Acknowledgement of Country



Our work takes place across Victoria. YACVic's head office is on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation in Naarm (Melbourne). We also have offices on the lands of the Guntjijmara Nation in Warrnambool, and on the lands of the Wemba Wemba and Wadi Wadi Nations in Swan Hill.

YACVic pays our respects to Elders past and present for their wisdom, strength, support and leadership. Bunjil's lore states that those who walk on this land must care for Country and the waterways as well as care for the children and young people.

We stand in solidarity to pay respect to the ongoing culture and continued history of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations. Sovereignty was never ceded.

This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

About YACVic

Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body and leading advocate for young people aged 12–25, and the youth sector that supports them. Our vision is that the rights of young people in Victoria are respected, and they are active, visible and valued in their communities.

We promote youth participation and make policy recommendations on issues that affect young people's lives, build the capacity of the youth sector and nurture connections for collaboration and support, and identify and advance thinking on emerging issues for young people. As changemakers we have a particular focus on young people who face marginalisation and disadvantage.

About YACVic Rural

YACVic Rural provides additional targeted advocacy for young people and services in rural and regional Victoria.

We connect with young people, youth practitioners and the youth work sector to identify the unique needs and priorities of rural and regional young people. We respond through purpose driven place-based projects, programs and trainings, collective impact, sector support and policy input to accelerate positive change for young people.



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“The youth sector is vitally important for our entire society. Young people are quite literally the future, and if we don’t provide them with the services they deserve, then we are not only doing them an injustice, we are setting ourselves up for failure as a society.” - Youth Worker

Executive Summary

The more Victoria invests in the foundational supports that young people need now, the stronger our communities will be. It means that young people will thrive, now, and into the future.

Right now, Victorians are facing significant challenges – mounting cost of living pressures, growing housing insecurity, the impacts of climate change and disasters, and navigating the ongoing effects of COVID-19.

Young people are doing it particularly tough, with alarming rates of youth suicide, rising homelessness and educational disengagement, and navigating technological shifts like the under 16 social media ban. Strengthening the systems designed to support young people has never been more critical.

We recognise the significant financial pressures facing the government, the reality of competing budget priorities, and that solving these issues requires strong cross-sector co-ordination and collaboration.

In this context, this funding blueprint for the Victorian youth sector focuses on smart, evidence-based investment. We focus on scaling up prevention and early intervention approaches that support young people where and when they need it – before challenges escalate into crisis.

Investment in youth services delivers strong returns: [for every dollar invested, this returns at least \\$2.62 in benefits](#) through improved economic, social and health outcomes, alongside reduced reliance on crisis systems.¹ This directly aligns with the *Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF)*,² recognising that early investment in young people addresses problems before they escalate, reducing pressure on costly acute services – like hospitals, prisons, and homelessness and family violence services.

Yet, the youth sector is under increasing strain, facing rising costs, workforce shortages, and growing demand from young people with increasingly complex needs. Without sustainable investment, the sector’s capacity to deliver safe, inclusive, and effective services to young people is at risk.

This blueprint outlines a set of practical, evidence-informed recommendations developed through extensive consultation with young people and the youth sector, including YACVic’s statewide listening tour and youth sector survey.

To achieve success, Victoria must prioritise meaningful youth engagement. Young people deserve a say in the decisions that affect their lives, and are harnessing



their unique experiences, knowledge, and ideas to offer innovative solutions to complex policy challenges.

These recommendations align with existing government strategies and reform agendas and are designed to complement and strengthen current commitments.

YACVic, alongside our members and the broader youth sector, stands ready to support the Victorian Government in creating a progressive and equitable state for all young people.

Sincerely,

Mary Nega (she/her)

YACVic CEO

A note on language: Youth work is a broad practice that crosses over multiple environments and sectors. When referring to the ‘youth sector,’ this includes organisations working to support young people aged 12-25 using youth work principles (i.e. putting young people at the centre, developing relationships and trust, and supporting holistic growth and development).

The youth sector includes generalist services (e.g. community organisations, local council services, school services, community outreach, creative arts programs and sports clubs), and intensive support and case management (e.g. housing security, drug and alcohol use, legal, social inclusion, education and employment, and mental health and wellbeing).



1. Value a strong, sustainable, and connected youth sector

Overview:

A strong and sustainable youth sector means professionals working with young people have the resources, skills and training needed to improve young people's lives. When Victoria's youth sector is strong, young people are better supported to reach their goals and full potential as active members of the community. However, funding arrangements and government contracting continue to place services under pressure due to short funding cycles, and inadequate funding. Moreover, limited support exists for organisations to take on placement students, limiting workforce capability, attraction and development.

Provide multi-year funding

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Increase default contract lengths for community sector funding agreements to at least five and preferably seven years**, as recommended by sector leaders and the Productivity Commission.
- 1.2 Improve transitional funding arrangements for community sector organisations** by:
 - a) Amending grant rules to ensure service providers are given at least six months' notice of any cessation or renewal of funding.
 - b) Providing contractual options allowing organisations to request additional funding where a contract is ceased, to support the transition of services to another provider.

The Productivity Commission has previously recommended increasing default contract terms for community services to seven years.³ More recently, sector leaders have called for at least 5-year contracts.⁴ This recommendation should apply to all service agreements, including both grants and common funding agreements.

Short contracts and uncertain renewal processes continue to undermine organisational sustainability and constrains capacity of the whole youth sector to make a difference in communities and young people's lives.⁴

“It is near impossible to be able to have real impact when you can't plan beyond 1-2 years. Real change takes time because relationships take time to build – without relationships between services, schools and young people real change and impact won't happen.” – Youth worker



YACVic's Youth Sector Survey highlighted key findings:

- 46 per cent of employer participants are funded only through the short-term, typically 1-2 years.
- 57 per cent of employers and 47 per cent of youth workers identified short-term or cyclical funding as the biggest barrier to fully effective youth programs, projects and/or services.
- 48 per cent of employers reported difficulty finding and retaining staff due to contract uncertainty and short-term funding cycles.

Uncertainty about funding prevents long term planning, making it challenging to attract and retain qualified and skilled staff. Additionally, community services often receive very little notice on whether their current contract will be extended, meaning capacity that could be spent providing services to young people is instead spent on trying to secure or reapply for funding, making it hard for organisations to plan ahead and disincentivising staff to stay in insecure roles.


In turn, this leads to:

- Ongoing and avoidable recruitment costs.
- Loss of experienced staff, including their specialist knowledge and trusted relationships with young people and communities.
- A fatigued workforce experiencing high levels of stress and burnout.
- Difficulty in developing and scaling-up innovative programs or new approaches.

While the Community Sector Fair Jobs Code Standard 2 focuses on “promoting secure employment and job security,”⁵ this is largely untenable if short-term funding cycles are maintained.

“Often we don’t receive notice our programs have been refunded until the funding is about to expire so staff look elsewhere for work as we don’t know whether the program will be refunded or not”- Youth organisation

Job security will boost staff retention and enable youth services sector to invest in medium-term planning, thereby supporting the Victorian government’s reforms and activities more effectively. This shift would ultimately lead to better outcomes for young people, allowing them to develop secure and trusted relationships with their workers and support programs.



Ensure sector funding reflects the full cost of delivery services

Recommendations:

1.3 Boost base funding to the community sector to meet the real cost of delivering essential services, including accounting for:


- a) Appropriate indexation, that is applied uniformly across organisations, published yearly, and reflects rising costs incurred.
- b) Infrastructure, management, and administration costs.

For decades, the youth and community sector has been operating within a context of undervalue, underfunding, and with increasingly competitive funding arrangements.⁴ This restricts stability, impact, and collaboration. The sector is often stretched to do more with less funding, which has inadequate indexation and is inadequate to meet community need.

In our Youth Sector Survey, 65 per cent of employers told us they don't believe they have adequate funding to meet the basic delivery costs for their programs, projects and or/services. This financial strain is compounded by increasing workloads, where over 60 per cent of youth workers and over 75 per cent of employers responded that the number of young people engaging with their service has increased over the last two years, as well as the complexity of cases.

An over reliance on short-term contracts and funding small projects has left organisations without adequate resources for essential functions. This includes the administration, management, and infrastructure necessary for service delivery – often not included in contracts.⁴

Other factors have contributed to escalating operational costs for the community sector, including:

- The Fair Work Commission Minimum Award rate increases not being matched by funding increases.
 - The requirement for mandatory portable long service leave contributions since 2019 (the scheme has had a disproportionate cost impact on sectors with predominantly young workers).
 - Annual increases to the Superannuation Guarantee Rate since 2021.
 - The abolition of the minimum threshold for super payments for casual workers in 2022.
 - The 42% increase in the Victorian Workcover premiums in 2023.
 - The ever-rising costs of compliance, with new Social Service Regulations and Community Sector Fair Jobs Code being the latest areas.
- 

“We must adequately fund programs. Especially the overheads component. There’s such little recognition of the growing cost of investment required in tech and systems space. Resulting in widespread use of basic record management tools and limited funding for innovation.” – Youth Organisation

The Victorian government should work with peak bodies to establish a sustainable and equitable funding model that takes into account rising costs. This approach would ensure community services can continue to provide the essential support young people need.


Promote a connected and collaborative sector

Recommendations:

1.4 Provide adequate core funding to YACVic to ensure continued viability as backbone and convener of youth sector, and to coordinate key initiatives.

1.5 Invest in measures that improve youth service connectivity and drive collaboration – including YACVic Networks and Community of Practice’s (CoPs).

A well-resourced peak body for the youth sector and young people is critical to deliver essential advocacy, coordination, and sector development. YACVic’s ability to fulfill this role is threatened due to a decrease in funding in real terms while simultaneously experiencing an increase in demand for our services. Properly resourcing YACVic as the peak body will allow us to continue:

- Building sector capacity and best-practice via training, co-design, resource development, and information sharing.
 - Facilitating cross-sector engagement, cohesion, collaboration, and efficiency by bringing organisations together through networks and CoP’s.
 - Amplifying the voices of young people and the sector to decision-makers by listening to their needs and solutions.
 - Enhancing youth participation across government and beyond.
 - Translating evidence and disseminating trusted information so young people and the sector can access credible information and stay connected.
 - Promoting evidence-based policy recommendations to advocate for change to improve young people’s lives.
- 

Support youth worker students to complete quality placements

Recommendations:

1.6 Address student placement poverty by working with the Commonwealth to introduce support payments for youth work students undertaking unpaid placements.

1.7 Increase support to organisations delivering youth work student placements, including through:

- **Dedicated funding to organisations to ensure they have the resources and capacity to provide high quality student learning experiences and coordination.**
- **Specific funding for peak bodies (including YACVic) to strengthen youth sector capacity for placements.**

High-quality student placements are essential for enhancing community sector capability and workforce development. They help students build workplace skills and facilitate their transition to paid employment by applying theoretical knowledge to real world situations. YACVic's youth sector survey indicated 47 per cent of employers rely on unpaid positions, such as student placements, interns and volunteers, to support service delivery.

YACVic commends the Federal government's 2024 decision to introduce the Commonwealth Prac Payment for nursing, midwifery, social work and teaching students doing unpaid placement.⁶ But, youth work students are missing out.

Placement poverty is well established.⁷ Many students are required to juggle study and paid work while completing their placement, and often incur out-of-pocket expenses – including transport, accommodation, clothing, childcare, and compliance checks (e.g. police check and NDIS worker screening check).⁷ Without better support for youth work students, this risks workforce burnout before they even begin, and contributes to Victoria's struggle to meet rising demand for social services.

At the same time, the supply of high-quality youth work placements is limited. Students face challenges finding placements, while organisations do not have the funding or resources to support students and coordinate with education institutions. Lack of high-quality placement opportunities is compounded by high workloads and existing workforce shortages, further reducing organisational capacity.

To support youth sector organisations to effectively deliver high quality placements, funding initiative such as the 'Working for Victoria' program are pivotal. This was a partnership between YACVic with the Centre for Multicultural



Youth (CMY), delivering placement opportunities and resources to assist the youth sector in developing placement opportunities.

2. Support young people early, where and when they need it

Overview:

Every young person deserves the support and opportunities necessary to develop their skills and achieve their goals in life. To do this, all young people should have access to inclusive spaces, and tailored support services where and when they need them. The more we invest in prevention and early intervention, we avoid long-term costs, and the better young people and their communities will be.

Fully fund the implementation of the Youth Strategy

Recommendations:

2.1 Allocate adequate funding to fully implement all 74 initiatives in ‘*Our Promise, Your Future: Victoria’s Youth Strategy 2022-27*,’ and provide funding and accountability mechanisms for the implementation of a new strategy upon expiry.

Through the *Victorian Youth Strategy*, the government made a commitment to implement meaningful and sustained actions to improve outcomes for young people and the youth sector. Developed in collaboration with thousands of young people in 2022, the strategy sets out a five-year plan including 74 initiatives across six priority areas – health; safety and security, education and employment; youth participation; identity and culture; and access to services.

However, stakeholders in the youth sector and young people themselves have expressed confusion regarding the Strategy’s implementation, government reporting requirements, and funding allocations.

As a priority, the Victorian government should prioritise the allocation of funding to fully implement the 74 key actions outlined in the strategy including funding for timely and relevant communication of information regarding the implementation of these actions. Importantly, beyond 2027 the government should allocate funding and accountability mechanisms for the implementation of a new strategy upon expiry.



Invest in youth services and programs

Recommendations:

2.2 Increase investment in generalist youth services and community-based programs for all young people. Approach to focus on early intervention, place-based, and holistic support.

2.3 Invest in specialist early intervention youth programs where young people are already disengaging or at-risk (e.g. mental health, interaction with criminal legal systems, family violence, education, housing, employment).

2.4 Reinstate lapsing funding for critical youth programs – including the School Focused Youth Services (SFYS) Program.


2.5 Establish a Multicultural Youth Worker Program funding 20 locally based multicultural youth workers across Victoria to work with multicultural young people and communities of greatest need, especially those in growth corridors and in rural/regional Victoria.

Scaling investment in youth services and generalist youth workers in community and schools offers a critical opportunity to support young people early, holistically, and in a place-based way.¹ By investing in prevention and early intervention initiatives, young people are supported to engage in their communities and address co-occurring issues early (such as mental health, addiction or educational disengagement).¹

A key finding from YACVic's Listening Tour was the importance of youth services taking a place-based approach, with a current overreliance on outreach services. Place-based support can better understand and address the unique local needs of young people, facilitate trusted relationships, and help navigate local referrals.⁸

“I think it would be awesome to see more youth workers embedded in places where young people naturally hang out and feel comfortable. This could include schools, community centres, sports clubs, and even online spaces like social media platforms... by being present in these spaces, youth workers can easily connect with young people, build trust, and provide support. It's all about meeting young people where they are...” – Youth Worker

The [Youth Work Matters Social Return On Investment Study](#) found that every \$1 invested in young people via youth work programs directly returns at least \$2.62 in benefits through improved economic, social and health outcomes for young people, along with reduced need for costly crisis interventions and acute care.¹



This aligns with the goals of the Victorian Government's Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF).²

Despite this, budget priorities have seen cuts to important youth and community programs, and too big a focus on crisis-end spending. This includes:

- Lapsing funding of School Focused Youth Services, a program that has supported young people for over 25 years and plays a critical early intervention role by bridging the gap between school wellbeing programs and crisis services. Students will lose access to targeted support that keep them engaged in education and connection to their community.

“...there is a strong need for generalised Youth workers that young people can access prior to being in crisis. At the moment I feel like there is nowhere for young people to get support early on as they don't meet criteria.” – Youth Worker

Provide safe and inclusive spaces for young people

Recommendations:

2.6 Invest in repurposing more community spaces into youth hubs, to expand the availability of safe, accessible and inclusive spaces where young people can engage in activities, events and programs outside of school.

2.7 Allocate funding to peak bodies to support the ‘Youth Hub Network.’ This would support youth hubs to develop and share relevant resources, training, information and advocacy for best practice with young people.

Safe and inclusive spaces outside school and home are essential for young people to feel connected, included, and secure in their communities.⁹ Youth hubs serve as drop-in centres offering programs, activities and events, providing vital entry points for information and referrals to various supports, and are a space for young people to make social connections.

Young people are increasingly feeling a lack of inclusive and safe places to socialise outside of school, especially in rural and regional areas and among marginalised groups.⁹ Many have expressed the need for a 'third' space.

“It's important for me to be able to go to spaces where my identity is validated and accepted as a queer young person ...because sometimes they are the only spaces available where I can be myself and express myself in a safer space” – Young Person



Investing in community spaces for young people is even more important following Australia's under 16 social media ban. For many young people, social media is place where they connect, share experiences, form new skills, and offer and seek support.¹⁰ If the ban is intended to get young people offline and more involved in community in-person, then this needs to be funded.

“[We need] the establishment of a youth hub that houses all youth services and agencies, where young people and families can be aware of the services available. This hub could also offer education, employment and social enterprise opportunities for young people as a model for youth engagement and participation.” – Youth Worker

To ensure youth hub coordination, sustainability, efficiency and best-practice, Hubs must also be supported through a resourced network. This would provide relevant resources, training and information that advocates for best practice with young people.

Ensure access to affordable and reliable transport options

Recommendations:

2.8 Fund the development of a rural transport fund to remove significant access barriers for young people and youth workers. To support the attendance of professional development, events, education, work and support services.

2.9 Extend the Youth Myki to make public transport free for under 25's, particularly for young people living in rural and remote areas and those with concession cards.

Young people should have access to affordable and reliable transport options, enabling them to access education, professional development, work and support services where when they need too.

Transport disadvantage in rural and regional areas is a key outcome from YACVic's listening tour. Feedback indicated that public transport in these areas is often too expensive, infrequent, inconsistent or non-existent. Many young people may not have their driver's license, access to a car, or the financial means to cover car-related costs.

Lack of access to transport impacts all aspects of life, leaving young people isolated and disengaged from vital services, school, employment, social life and



other opportunities. It also impacts the ability to engage in professional development, events, and training.

“Because of a lack of public transport, I’ve missed out on all social and extracurricular activities. Unless I get driven, I cannot even get to the school bus and home again, so I miss out on everything, netball, social events, absolutely everything. Without mum to drive me around I can’t do anything but stay at home on the farm.” – Young Person

Both sector workers and young people have strongly urged YACVic to advocate for improved transport options to ensure equitable access to essential services and opportunities.

3. End youth homelessness and housing insecurity

Overview:

Homelessness among young people in Victoria should be rare, brief and non-recurring. But when young people do experience homelessness or housing insecurity, our service system must be equipped with the necessary resources and programs to support them effectively, addressing their unique needs and experiences. As youth homelessness rates and housing insecurity in Victoria continue to rise, this requires investment in stable housing, tailored support services, and pathways to long-term solutions.

Fund a youth housing and homelessness strategy and youth housing model

Recommendations:

3.1 Develop a co-designed Victorian specific Youth Housing and Homelessness Strategy, focused on ending youth homelessness by coordinating services, supports, and interventions tailored to young people.

3.2 Fund Homes Victoria to partner with the community sector to develop and implement a dedicated and fit-for-purpose [youth housing model](#), to include:

- **5000 new social housing tenancies for young people** to improve access to affordable, safe and youth-appropriate housing and to meet rising demand.



- **Higher subsidies for housing providers** to enable access for young people.

3.3 Increase investment in prevention and early intervention services to address the needs of young people before they experience homelessness.

This should prioritise populations overrepresented in homelessness and marginal housing, focusing on holistic support and tenancy maintenance.

“Young people cannot afford housing at the moment. Young people are turning to living on the streets due to the lack of money. We do not have acceptable supports to keep us in safe homes.” – young person

Victoria is in a housing crisis, and youth homelessness rates are critical. Young people aged 12-24 make up 25% of all young people experiencing homelessness in Victoria, with around 60 young people seeking homelessness support in Victoria every single day.¹¹

Despite this urgent need, Victoria’s housing system and current approach to youth homelessness is not effective and is failing young people.¹² Here’s why:

- **Young people have distinct experiences and pathways into homelessness.** 4 in 5 young people experience family violence before becoming homeless,¹³ with many children being unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.¹⁴ Also, they usually have limited resources and coping strategies; and homelessness brings a higher risk of exposure to further trauma, erosion of mental health, and life-long homelessness.¹² This requires the services system to apply developmental and tailored approaches – including comprehensive support for young people alongside housing access to support their transition to adulthood and housing independence.
- **A lack of adequate, affordable housing options.** Current investment in housing falls well short of addressing the demand for housing and scale of young people experiencing homelessness. Due to decades of under investment in social housing, Victoria has the lowest rate of social housing in Australia.¹⁵ After the *Big Housing Build*, it will be around 3.5%, under the national average of 4.5% (which isn’t itself enough to meet demand).¹⁵ There is an urgent need for additional subsidised housing that aligns with the specific needs of young people, including tenancy duration and location near public transport, access to work and essential services.¹²
- **Intersectional needs.** The current system fails to adequately support the unique needs, experiences, and intersectional requirements of young people who are overrepresented in homelessness populations¹² – including



Aboriginal young people, disabled young people, young people from refugee, asylum seeker and multicultural backgrounds, and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.¹³

- **Rural and regional are missing out.** Many current initiatives targeting youth homelessness are not rolled out state-wide, leaving young people living in outer metro, rural and regional areas missing out on vital support.
- **Subsidies for viability.** The current funding model for youth housing is inadequate and requires up-to-date modelling to determine sufficient subsidy levels that allow young people to meet market rents.¹²

Victoria requires a targeted strategic framework and [model for youth housing](#) that coordinates services, supports and interventions, and addresses the unique challenges young people face. Investing in youth specific responses is a crucial opportunity for early intervention and prevention, ensuring young people don't experience a lifetime of episodic homelessness.

“We need stable accommodation options that are designed considering the unique needs of young people, and programs that provide young people with the opportunity to build positive connections in a way that is flexible and adaptable.” – Youth Worker

We welcome the considerable Victorian government investment to reform the Victorian housing system. But, with a thousand more young people accessing homelessness support in 2023-24 than the previous year, a year-on-year increase of 5 per cent, there is much more work to be done.¹¹ There is a critical opportunity for the government to work in partnership with the housing and homelessness sector to create an overarching strategy to end youth homelessness in Victoria.

Support for renters

Recommendations:

3.4 Boost investment in renter services - including the [Tenancy Advocacy and Assistance Program \(TAAP\)](#), [Private Rental Assistance Program \(PRAP\)](#) and Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP) - to meet rising demand and ensure providers can support renters to resolve tenancy disputes, maintain their rentals, and avoid eviction into homelessness.

3.5 Fund the Essential Services Commission to develop a Rent Increase Fairness Formula that can be legislated to ensure renters, rental providers and property managers have increased certainty and fairness.

3.6 Work with the Commonwealth government to boost the rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) in proportion to rent increases and



in line with recommendations from the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee.¹⁶

Rents are rising faster than incomes,¹⁷ placing young renters – often moving more often, and in insecure, low-paid work – under significant vulnerability and financial pressure to keep a roof over their heads.

Since 2021, rents have risen by 37.5% in Melbourne (up to 3.4 times faster than income growth), and by 36.4% in regional Victoria (up to 3.2 times faster than income growth).¹⁸ Most rentals are unaffordable to people on support payments (like Youth Allowance and Austudy), and notices to vacate for rent non-payment have increased fivefold since 2021.¹⁷

While recent rental reforms offer some protection (including no-fault evictions), they do not address affordability. Without support to maintain rental tenancies, more renters will face homelessness and be forced to turn to costly crisis services.

The Tenancy Assistance Advocacy Program (TAAP) provides critical support to people in private rentals, including helping them to understand their rights and obligations and to resolve renting disputes.

The Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) and Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP) provide timely assistance to help people stay in their homes, avoiding trauma and reducing pressure on social housing.¹⁹ Rental assistance – like help with bonds or rent – is far cheaper than costly crisis responses, and is highly effective, with 91% of at-risk households maintaining their tenancy when supported.²⁰

Demand for these programs has rapidly outpaced funding. Boosting these programs is critical to ensure young people can maintain their rentals and avoid eviction into homelessness.

Young people are supported as victim survivors in their own right

Recommendations:

3.7 Scale-up investment in youth-specific, trauma-responsive, family violence service responses (such as MCM’s [Amplify](#) program), to support young people as victim survivors in their own right, with unique needs distinct from children and adults.

The Orange Door and other family violence services must be resourced to support young people as victim survivors in their own right. That is, regardless of parental engagement or consent, and as distinct from younger children. Currently, there is a significant gap in targeted crisis responses and case management for unaccompanied young people experiencing family violence.



Most family services and child protection systems are not designed or resourced to support young people over 15.²¹ So, the only support services available are homelessness or youth services, neither of which are designed or resourced to manage complex family violence risk and/or cases.²¹ Youth specialisation includes expertise in the developmental, legal and other unique needs of young people, and applying tailored responses – such as assertive outreach, and communication strategies.

“Children and young people should have a dedicated, stand-alone family violence service response. The government should fund a meaningful co-design/production project to engage children and young people in designing a service offering that will meet our unique needs.”
– Conor Pall, Deputy Chair, Victim Survivor’s Advisory Council

Support young people experiencing concurrent homelessness and mental illness

Recommendations:

3.8 Fund the 500 supported housing places for young people experiencing homelessness and mental ill health, as promised through the Mental Health Royal Commission (Rec 25) and now overdue.

3.9 Boost funding to Youth Prevention and Recovery Centres (YPARCs) to expand support for housing issues.

Five years ago, the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System recommended the Victorian government build 500 supported housing properties for young people experiencing homelessness and mental ill health – a recommendation the Government promised to implement.²² Yet, no homes have been built, and the government has provided limited information on any action. Stable housing is a crucial protective factor for mental health, with these places alleviating pressure on costly crisis interventions.²³ As the housing crisis worsens, this must be a priority for 2026-27.

Youth Prevention and Recovery Centres (YPARCs) offer essential wrap around support for young people experiencing mental ill-health, filling an essential gap between community services and acute inpatient mental health services. However, the service does not include support for housing issues, making it challenging to admit young people facing homelessness.²³ This undermines the aim of providing therapeutic mental health care. Boosting resourcing to YPARCs would better ensure they can support young people who need it most.



Housing equity for young people facing additional marginalisation

Recommendations:

- 3.10 Provide necessary funding to implement all Yoorrook Justice Commission housing recommendations.** (*See also section 8: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self Determination*).
- 3.11 Expand the Pride in Place model to support LGBTIQ+ young Victorians.**
- 3.12 Invest in crisis-transitional housing for trans and gender diverse young people.**
- 3.13 Fund intercultural capability for the housing and homelessness workforce** to better meet the diverse needs of multicultural young people.
- 3.14 Fund dedicated culturally responsive, place-based crisis accommodation and early intervention housing and support services tailored to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds –** including young women, temporary visa holders, and large families.

First Peoples in Victoria face systemic housing inequality, with high rates of rental stress, homelessness, and housing insecurity. To progress self-determination in the housing system, the government must fully resource Yoorrook recommendations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

LGBTIQ+ people, particularly trans and gender diverse people, face higher rates of homelessness and have distinct pathways into homelessness, often due to relationship breakdown, family rejection, and structural exclusion and discrimination.²⁴ This shapes their experience accessing housing and services.

Pride in Place provides comprehensive, safe, and inclusive recovery pathways for LGBTIQ+ people experiencing homelessness. However, it has not seen an increase in funding since its initial pilot, while demand continues to rise, including from people outside its catchment. This model must be scaled up to state-wide. Additionally, to address gender-based violence and harassment often experienced by trans and gender diverse people while staying in crisis-transitional housing, the government should also invest in dedicated, safe housing for this group.

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are also overrepresented in homelessness figures, requiring a tailored service response. 77% of young people experiencing homelessness or marginal housing are born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.²⁵ Further, newly arrived people experience a disproportionate burden of housing stress – including unique barriers like discrimination, limited cultural understanding of the housing system, and language barriers.



4. Invest in smart youth justice solutions

Overview:

Victoria's punitive approach to youth justice is costly, and inconsistent with human rights principles and evidence about what works to reduce offending. When young people receive early support to learn from their mistakes, stay engaged with education, and connected to their families, communities and culture, this leads to better outcomes for both young people and community safety.

Invest in evidence-based early intervention approaches that work

Recommendations:

- 4.1 Scale up and provide secure funding for support programs for young people involved in or at risk of entering the criminal legal system** to address rising demand and increasing complexity (such as fully funding VALS' Balit Ngulu service across the state and YSAS' Youth Support Service and lived experience mentoring models).
- 4.2 In addition to recent announcements regarding 20 social workers in schools, increase investment in generalist youth workers in high-need schools and community settings**, recognising their central role in early intervention and prevention to divert young people from the youth justice system.
- 4.3 Fund concerted evidence-based approaches to youth justice reform, research and policy** – including funding for co-ordination of the Smart Justice for Young People Coalition.

Victoria's criminal legal system isn't working and continues to set young people up to fail.²⁶ Despite well-established links between youth offending and significant trauma and disadvantage, investment continues to focus on police and prisons rather than evidenced-based investment in prevention and early intervention that address the underlying causes of offending and break cycles of violence and harm.²⁷

More often than not, children that are locked up are victims of violence themselves, and the earlier a child enters the justice system, the more likely they will reoffend and become further entrenched in a cycle of disadvantage.²⁷

While we welcome some moves towards investment in early intervention (such as the establishment of the Violence Reduction Unit), this limited funding stands in stark contrast to costly punitive investment. In last year's 2025-26 state budget, the government committed \$727 million to expand the capacity of Victoria's prisons,²⁸ costing nearly \$8000 a day to keep a young person in prison, despite no



evidence that incarceration is a deterrence. This is more than it costs to send a young person to school for a year.

This approach focuses on punishment over restorative interventions that hold young people accountable for their actions while focusing on healing and interrupting cycles of offending and violence. Investment in Victoria must re-focus on trauma-informed, community-led interventions that are proven to have better outcomes for young people and communities.

Smart Justice for Young people (SJ4YP) is a coalition of over 40 community organisations working together to create positive systems change for children and young people interacting with the criminal legal system. Proper resourcing of SJ4YP is essential to drive effective, evidence-based youth justice reform in Victoria.

End the over-representation of particular groups of young people in the criminal legal system

Recommendations:

4.4 Fund the implementation of Smart Justice for Young People [*Working Together: An Action Plan to End the Over-representation of Particular Groups of Young People in the Criminal Justice System.*](#)

4.5 Maintain commitment to fund and implement *Wirkara Kulpa: Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy 2022-2032.*

4.6 Fund the full implementation of the Yoorook Justice Commission recommendations on child protection and the criminal justice system. (See also section 8: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self Determination*).

Certain groups of young people are coming into contact with the justice system at disproportionately high rates.²⁹ They are overrepresented in police contacts and youth detention, and they are under-serviced by government and community services.²⁹ The five most frequent over-represented groups in Victoria are:

- First Nations children and young people;
- Multicultural children and young people
- Children who live in out-of-home care;
- 18-25 year olds; and
- Girls and young women with complex needs.

To end over-representation, the Victorian government should fully fund the 49 asks contained in [*Working Together: An Action Plan to End the Over-representation of Particular Groups of Young People in the Criminal Justice System.*](#) This comprehensive, evidence-informed framework provides guidance for systemic reform across various sectors, including criminal and civil justice,



corrections, policing, education, health, housing and material needs, and family wellbeing.

5. Support all young people to be healthy and well

Overview:

All young people should have early access to critical health, mental health, and other specialist services, where and when they need them. And, young people should feel empowered to make informed choices about their health, by knowing where and how to access trusted, evidence-based health information and services.

Ensure young people can access tailored mental health support

Recommendations:

- 5.1 Increase investment in tailored youth mental health supports and services beyond the headspace model, including generalist youth workers in community and schools.**
- 5.2 Invest in youth-led suicide prevention and mental health education that is place-based and supports capacity building, such as an expansion of [Live4Life](#).**
- 5.3 Fund the Lived Experience Consumer Commissioner and a Lived Experience Carer Commissioner as part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.**

In the face of an alarming increase in youth mental ill health and youth suicide, alongside a slow down on implementing the remaining Royal Commission recommendations, this budget must re-commit to supporting youth mental health.

In YACVic's Youth Worker Survey, 84 per cent of youth workers told us mental health is the most pressing issue for the young people they work with. The Mission Australia Youth Survey (2025) also highlighted 28 per cent of young Victorians aged 15-19 consider mental health their biggest challenge, including experiences of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.³⁰

There is a critical gap in care for young people with complex mental health needs who don't require hospital services, but also don't receive adequate support from primary mental health services.³¹ While headspace plays a vital role, they are facing overwhelming demand and lack of resources to address rising number of



presentations.³² Over the last 20 years, mental health conditions among young people aged 12 to 25 have increased by 50%.³²

Current access barriers across the system – particularly in rural and regional communities – mean many young people are accessing support too late, at the point of costly crisis intervention.

There is a need for greater investment in youth specific mental health early intervention, treatment, and support for young people. This includes investment in the youth workforce beyond health care workers and mental health clinicians, particularly for rural areas where access to specialist services is limited.

Prevention and early intervention also requires strengthening mental health literacy and capacity building, including investment in place-based and youth-led suicide prevention and mental health education.³³ See the [Live4Life](#) model as a key example, empowering rural communities to improve youth mental health and reduce suicide.

“Youth participation and community development frameworks are key to our service delivery. Incorporating these frameworks in the planning, development, implementation, delivery and evaluation. Young people are at the centre of any type of project or initiative, and are the drivers of our programs.” – Youth Worker

Strengthen support for LGBTQIA+ young people

Recommendations:

5.4 Invest in place-based mental health and wellbeing programs to support LGBTQIA+ young people from multicultural, multifaith, and Aboriginal communities – through programs such as the [Healthy Equal Youth \(HEY\) project](#).

5.5 Scale-up the *Victorian Trans and Gender Diverse Health Initiative* to meet demand and increase access to vital healthcare support, including gender affirming care and specialised mental health and peer support.

5.6 Invest in training and education for community and health sector professionals on best practice inclusive support for trans, gender diverse and non-binary young people, particularly in rural and regional areas, to increase accessibility to safe healthcare.

LGBTQIA+ young people, especially those who identify as trans, gender diverse, or non-binary (TGDNB), face rising discrimination and vilification in mainstream media, online, and in-person.³⁴ Anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment directly impacts their



mental health, feelings of belonging, and ability to seek support.³⁴ Compounding these issues are long waitlists for services, a shortage of affirming and inclusive care, and insufficient understanding among healthcare professionals regarding the unique needs of TGDNB young people.³⁴

Scaling up programs like the *Victorian Trans and Gender Diverse Health Initiative*, will ensure timely and inclusive access to mental health support and gender-affirming health care for LGBTQIA+ young people.

The Healthy Equal Youth (HEY) Project is the only government funding specifically dedicated to youth LGBTQIA+ mental health and wellbeing, and suicide prevention. By providing training, safe spaces and community visibility, the project strengthens and supports young people in their communities. According to Deloitte’s 2024 evaluation Report, there is a rising number of young Victorians identifying as LGBTQIA+, coupled with an unmet demand for safe, inclusive mental health and wellbeing services, especially in rural and regional areas.

The Report also identified a critical need for investment in inclusive mental health and wellbeing services for LGBTQIA+ young people from multicultural and First Nations communities.

6. Safe, inclusive and supportive schools

Overview:

Equitable access to quality public school education provides the skills, knowledge, and opportunities that set young people up for success, and can break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. Students must feel safe and supported at school, and have their voice heard. But a lack of adequate funding of schools and resources to support tailored, early intervention continues to widen the achievement and wellbeing gaps of students from particular cohorts.

Invest in flexible and supportive learning environments

Recommendations:

- 6.1 Recommit to providing 75 per cent of the School Resourcing Standard by 2028 through the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement*.**
- 6.2 Increase funding to mainstream flexible in-school and remote learning options to support students with diverse learning needs to remain supported and engaged in school.**
- 6.3 Ensure programs that support young people to engage in education are well funded and connected with early intervention youth work in schools.** This includes increasing investment in generalist youth workers in schools,



Multicultural Education Aides in schools, and School Community Liaison Officers.

- 6.4 Increase funding and expand eligibility criteria for early intervention programs in schools such as Navigator**, to support young people who have disengaged from education much earlier.
- 6.5 Provide sustainable funding for Learning Support Programs and Homework Clubs, helping students who require additional support inside and outside of school.**
- 6.6 Address disparities in education outcome for students at risk of entering the criminal legal system, and young people in out-of-home-care** by implementing recommendations from the Smart Justice for Young People [Working Together Action Plan](#) and Commission for Children and Young People's [Let Us Learn report](#).
- 6.7 Fund new Family Engagement Officer roles at high-need schools**, connecting students, families, schools and community support agencies, helping to improve communication and linking families with services where needed.

The government's decision to delay fully funding public schools has had significant impacts on Victorian students, and the teaching and school workforce – directly widening the achievement and wellbeing gaps of students from low-socio economic backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, rural and regional students, disabled students, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds.³⁵

Student needs have become increasingly complex in recent years,³⁶ while school attendance and early child development readiness has declined.³⁷ During periods of COVID-19 and remote learning, students' emotional and behavioural scaffolding by schools was limited.³⁸ There has been significant increase in the number of students with poor mental health, and wellbeing and behavioural issues.³⁵ Yet, schools and teachers are struggling with unsustainable workloads and staff shortages, and limited ability to provide early, tailored support to students.³⁴

Stakeholders have told us many mainstream schools focus on attendance without considering inclusivity, safety and student wellbeing. In addition to fully resourcing schools to meet teaching and learning needs, there is also a need to adopt student-centred education approaches, flexible learning options, and increased student support programs. This requires early support interventions, well before students show signs of school disengagement.

Early intervention programs such as the Navigator program should be expanded, so young people can access support well before they have missed the 70% of school required for program eligibility, and the pilot program engaging 10-11 year olds should be expanded to new areas.



“[We need] programs to support children and young people that are disengaging from education and are not Navigator eligible. More wellbeing staff paid appropriately in schools to support young people to remain in education.” – Youth Worker

Youth voice in schools

Recommendations:

6.8 Establish a student mental health taskforce to consult with students about their experiences and report back to government.

Children and young people are the experts in their own lives and are best placed to understand their wellbeing and learning needs. Schools and government don't always provide an opportunity for students to give feedback or be involved in the decision making about mental health or broader programs in schools.

A student mental health taskforce would strengthen timely and relevant feedback from students with lived experience to the government about how mental health programs and initiatives are working in schools. Successful co-design with young people requires a commitment to sharing responsibility and decision-making roles.

7. Intergenerational fairness, disasters and climate change

Overview:

Intergenerational fairness should be integral to policy decision making, including ensuring young people are actively involved in processes related to disaster preparedness and climate change. This requires implementing policies that prioritise long-term sustainability, resilience, and meaningful youth participation – ensuring that young people remain hopeful and empowered about their future.

Parliamentary decision making underpinned by intergenerational fairness and youth participation

Recommendations:



7.1 Invest in the establishment of a Victorian Commissioner for Future Generations.

7.2 Establish a Victorian child and youth advisory council on climate.

Crucially, ensure accountability measures are established to track the implementation of youth council advice by government.

There is a growing need for intergenerational policymaking, with Australians increasingly concerned about whether government decision-making accounts for the long-term challenges facing future generations. Insights from 'A Fair Go for All', an intergenerational policy survey,³⁹ reveal:

- 97% agree that current policies should consider the interests of future generations.
- 81% feel that Australian politicians generally think too short-term when making decisions.
- 79% support the establishment of a Commissioner for Future Generations.

The climate crisis poses one of the biggest economic, social, and environmental threats to current and future generations, with young people bearing the brunt of its impacts.⁴⁰ Young people have the strongest stake in the future, and as a generation will be forced to bear the burdens of past generations inaction.⁴⁰

Intergenerational equity recognises the duty of current generations to ensure decisions made today do not harm future generations.


“I've been born with a sense of urgency. I don't want to live in a future that is desolate, dry, volatile. I want to live in a lush, abundant, fair, ecologically sound future.” – Young Person

Understanding and responding to youth climate anxiety

Recommendations:

7.3 Pilot the development of a framework co-designed with young people to address navigating conversations around climate anxiety and the rise of disasters and extreme weather events, in partnership with the youth mental health sector.

Exposure to climate change is disproportionately impacting young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Orygen and Mission Australia research on the impact of extreme weather events on young people indicates six in 10 young people are worried about climate change.⁴²



Mental health impacts arise from direct experience of disasters, and from indirect exposure, such as observing, perceiving and thinking about climate change.⁴³ Marginalised groups, including young people in lower socioeconomic areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, disabled young people, and gender-diverse young people, face increased risks as they are often more vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather on their households and communities.⁴²

The Government should work with Youth Mental health specialist services to pilot a framework, co-designed with young people, focused on navigating conversations about climate anxiety and extreme weather events.

Young people and disaster resilience

Recommendations:

7.4 Scale-up place-based youth participation projects that build local skills and enhance qualification pathways for young people to respond to disasters and extreme weather events.

Young people are feeling the effects of climate change through disasters, including increased bushfires, heatwaves, floods, and storms. Yet, while young people consistently demonstrate adaptive capacities when given opportunities to respond to disasters, they are largely left out of climate change planning and disaster management conversations.⁴⁴

It is essential to include and harness young people’s knowledge, skills, and capabilities at all levels of decision making in emergency and disaster management.⁴⁴ By genuinely involving young people in these processes, we can prioritise intergenerational thinking, and help reduce feelings of climate anxiety and hopelessness.⁴²

See [Future Proof: Young People, Disaster Recovery and \(Re\)building Communities](#) as a best-practice example of a collective-impact project responding to the 2019-20 Victorian bushfires. The program supported youth-led activities, established local youth advisory groups, and created pathways for young people to gain qualifications, empowering them to take leadership roles in their communities to respond to disasters.

8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self Determination

Overview:



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families and communities must have access to high-quality, culturally appropriate services and supports. This requires platforming and prioritising Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing, self-determination, and Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations.

Recommendations:

- 8.1 Ensure that the government’s response to the Yoorook Justice Commission includes adequate accountability mechanisms,** ensuring accepted recommendations are meaningfully invested in and implemented.
- 8.2 Appropriately fund and resource Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) delivering essential programs for Aboriginal people** across housing, health, mental health, and youth justice.
- 8.3 Expand dedicated funding for youth specific Aboriginal supports –** such as through the [Koorie Youth Council](#) and [Marram Nganyin Aboriginal Youth Mentoring Program](#).
- 8.4 Fund training and development to strengthen the cultural competency of organisations that are not ACCOs or First Nations led,** to enable best practice engagement and allyship and lessen the colonial load on First Nations organisations and staff.

The Yoorook Justice Commission (Yoorook) is the first formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Nations peoples in Victoria since colonisation.

As Yoorook released its Final Report in July 2025,⁴⁵ this budget presents a critical opportunity for the Victorian Government to begin to meaningfully implement these recommendations. This cannot be another report that sits on the shelf without real action. Yoorook heard how the government’s failure to adequately fund and deliver promises undermines community trust, and there must be accountability for the “pattern of unfulfilled promises, lack of transparency and chronic underfunding” by the Victorian Government.⁴⁶

Self-determination must be at the heart of Victoria’s reform pathway. But, there’s also a critical need to strengthen the role of allyship of organisations that are not ACCOs or First Nations led – we all play a role and shared responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice and cultural competency.

9 Disabled young people

Overview:



Disabled young people must be empowered to be active contributors and leaders in their communities. This requires co-designing policies, resources and trainings with disabled young people to identify solutions to systemic barriers with a human rights approach.

Recommendations:

- 9.1 Invest in policy, research and capacity building with disabled young people to ensure their voices are heard in the implementation of State Government initiatives, including the [Youth Strategy](#), the new [State Disability Plan and Victorian Autism Plan](#), and the Department of Education’s [programs for students with disability](#).**
- 9.2 Embed delivery of disability-led disability inclusion and awareness training across community, health, education and allied sectors to combat ableism and improve inclusive and accessible service delivery for this cohort.** Training should be co-designed, led and delivered by and with disabled young people, such as [Together Training](#).
- 9.3 Dedicate funding to implement minimum accessibility standards across all generalist service providers in mental health, health, and housing services, co-designed with disabled young people and the disability sector.**
- 9.4 Provide targeted funding to disability advocacy bodies working with disabled young people so they can support young people to understand the changes to the NDIS, Foundational Supports and other support services.** This includes ensuring organisations can support disabled young people to realise their rights, and navigate the system gaps and the interface between different services.
- 9.5 Dedicate funding to promote the Disability Liaison Officer program, and include consumers including disabled young people in a review of the Disability Identifier Project, and fund the eventual full implementation of the Disability Identifier Project.**
- 9.6 Provide peer-led disability-specific career guidance for disabled young people transitioning from education to employment, provided by disability-led organisations and counsellors with lived experience of disability.**

In Victoria, 12% of young people aged 18-24 identify as having a disability,⁴⁷ yet only 10% of all disabled Victorians qualify for NDIS plans,⁴⁸ leaving many without crucial support. There is also a large number of young people who are likely to be impacted by recent NDIS reforms, making it crucial that these young people are supported to find alternative support services.

Investment in advocacy support *for and with* disabled young people and workers supports this cohort to navigate complex systems and fully utilise the resources



and programs available – such as changes to NDIS and the broader disability supports ecosystem.

It is essential disabled young people have their lived experiences inform the rollout of inclusive policies and reforms, including from Victoria’s *Youth Strategy* and the new State Disability Plan and Victorian Autism Plan. It is also crucial that disabled young people are involved in key policy and systemic decisions made for students with disability in the State’s education system. This is particularly important during a period of significant systemic reform regarding disability and service provision following the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the NDIS Review*.

Training and resources which have been co-designed with disabled young people, such as [Youth Disability Advocacy Service’s \(YDAS’\) Together Training](#), improve outcomes for disabled young people by addressing stigma and equipping mainstream health and educational workers with the skills they need to provide the right inclusive supports.

10 Anti-racism and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Overview:


Racism and discrimination is entrenched in Australian structures, systems and institutions, causing significant harm to young people, their families, and communities every day. Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds must feel connected to their communities, safe, supported to participate in opportunities and included in decision-making.

Anti-racism

Recommendations:

- 10.1 Provide adequate funding to implement all initiatives outlined in [Victoria’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2029](#).
- 10.2 Based on evaluation findings of the current 18-month pilot of [Schools Standing Up to Racism](#), fund a statewide expansion of this whole-of-school approach.
- 10.3 Work with the Australian Government to improve data collection on cultural, ethnic and language diversity, and on experiences of racism, including systemic and structural racism.

Victoria is at a significant juncture regarding reducing racism. Over the last few years, we have seen a significant increase in racial discrimination, abuse and



system marginalisation.⁴⁹ Racism permeates the spaces young people encounter on a daily basis and has lasting, harmful effects. It has detrimental impacts on health outcomes, justice system overrepresentation, barriers to employment, and negative media representation.⁴⁹ The government must adequately fund all initiatives outlined in the *Anti-Racism Strategy*. This must also include a commitment to report back to the public on monitoring and evaluation of Strategy outcomes.

The government must expand whole-of-school approaches to address racism and discrimination – such as *Schools Standing Up to Racism* – which promotes, encourages and supports student voice in order to create meaningful and sustainable change.

Cultural diversity data, collected to influence important decisions about the lives of multicultural young people, their families, and communities, contains significant gaps and inconsistencies.⁵⁰ Collection of quality data about cultural diversity and experiences of racism is critical to ensuring sufficient understanding and relevant policy responses to the needs of more than half of Australia's population.⁵⁰

Young people from migrant and refugee communities

Recommendations:

10.4 Increase funding for youth- and community-led programs and community support groups which strengthen multicultural youth participation and integrate youth-led solutions into decision-making processes, such as CMY's [Le Mana Pasifika program](#), [Seat at the Table](#) and the [Jamma Program](#).

10.5 Fund the implementation of all recommendations from [Victoria's Multicultural Review 2025](#), specifically establish a new multicultural youth-led/lived-experience grants program to grow multicultural youth participation, leadership capability, and inclusion.

Almost half of Victoria's young people aged 12-24 are either born overseas or have one or more parents born overseas.⁵¹ Yet, multicultural young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds face significant challenges and systemic barriers – such as social exclusion, system navigators for their families, lack of culturally appropriate support, racism, discrimination and racial profiling, language barriers, and the digital divide.⁵²

Many organisations are providing essential support programs, but lack adequate funding to match demand. Jamma supports young South Sudanese people by improving community wellbeing, fostering safe and respectful relationships, creating pathways through education and employment, and deepening a sense of belonging. Le Mana Pasifika supports Māori and Pasifika young people in Victoria,



enabling them to recognise their worth and the unique value they bring to communities. Seat at the Table program addresses the significant underrepresentation of young women from refugee and migrant backgrounds in leadership roles.

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