

What's Important to YOUth?

Final Report from the Koorie Youth Council

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Final Report from the Koorie Youth Council | 1 |
| What's Important to YOUth? | 1 |
| Organisation Contact Details:..... | 1 |
| Organisation | 3 |
| Recommendations | 4 |
| Methodology | 6 |
| Survey targeting Aboriginal young people: | 6 |
| Focus Groups with young people:..... | 6 |
| One-to-one consultations with representatives from Aboriginal Organisations:..... | 7 |
| Survey of Aboriginal services | 7 |
| Questions used in surveys and interviews | 8 |
| Survey targeting Aboriginal Young People:..... | 8 |
| Survey targeting Aboriginal services: | 8 |
| Demographics | 9 |
| Outcomes – Key Findings..... | 13 |
| Summary of key findings:..... | 13 |
| Themes and trends in what young people have told us..... | 15 |
| What issues did young people commonly raise?..... | 15 |
| What issues did young people choose to discuss in more detail? | 18 |
| How did young people prioritise the issues provided in the consultation guide by the DHHS? | 23 |
| What should be done to improve things? | 24 |
| What did young people from Parkville College have to say? | 28 |
| Themes and trends in what community leaders and service representatives have told us..... | 30 |
| Specific comment on proposed Government initiatives:..... | 33 |
| Conclusion..... | 34 |
| How does this relate to a whole-of-government youth policy? | 34 |
| References and key relevant reports. | 35 |
| Appendix A..... | 36 |
| What's important to YOUth? Aboriginal young people's survey..... | 36 |
| Appendix B..... | 39 |
| What's important to YOUth? Aboriginal services survey | 39 |

ORGANISATION

The Koorie Youth Council (KYC) provides a voice for Koorie young people to influence Government decisions, an opportunity to express themselves – and an opportunity to get together and have fun. The KYC is funded by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and supported by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and the Korin Gamadji Institute. The KYC is membership based and currently has a network of over 300 young people from across the state. KYC members must be Koorie young people aged between 12 and 25 living in Victoria.

Further information about the KYC can be found at the KYC website at www.koorieyouth.org.au

A note about language:

The Koorie Youth Council (KYC) acknowledges that Victoria is home to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from many different and diverse traditional areas and language groups. Koorie (also spelt Koori) is a term 'used by contemporary Aboriginal people and communities of Victoria and Southern New South Wales to identify and differentiate themselves from Aboriginal groups from other parts of Australia.'¹

Koorie Youth Council were established as the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council in 2003. In 2012 we changed our name to the Koorie Youth Council to encourage all young Koories to feel ownership of the organisation. In keeping with this, we have chosen to use the term Koorie in our report. We use 'Koorie' as an inclusive word, referring to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait person from Victoria or living in Victoria.

¹ Koorie Heritage Trust website 'Our History'
http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/about_us/history__1 (accessed 23/5/15)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Koorie Youth Council makes the following recommendations in relation to the development of a new whole-of-government youth policy. It has been a challenging task to condense the outcomes of this consultation process into recommendations. Also of key relevance are the outcomes of the report (which go beyond these recommendations) as well as the conclusion in which we outline the way in which outcomes relate to a whole-of-government youth policy.

The Koorie Youth Council recommends:

- that the youth policy contains a strong commitment to continuing to hear the voices of young people, as a key element of policy and service development and design with a focused effort on hearing the voices of rural and disadvantaged young people, including outreaching to those with experiences of the justice system and the out-of-home care sector.
- that the youth policy contain a clear articulation of the importance of cultural respect and the cultural safety of Koorie young people, their families and communities. It should also articulate an expectation of cultural competence of services in order to promote cultural safety.
- that the youth policy acknowledge and respond to the concerns of Koorie young people in relation to 'education', 'culture and identity', 'health and wellbeing', 'alcohol and drugs' and 'employment' as captured in this report. Additionally, the policy should reflect and respond to the concerns of young people in the justice system as reflected in this report.
- that the youth policy clearly support sector development (youth, education, family services, health, justice and child protection) to support the ongoing development of best practice work with young people, including a focus specifically on Koorie young people.
- that the youth policy contains a commitment to investment in more Koorie youth worker roles and early intervention supports.
- that the youth policy contains a commitment to ensuring Koorie young people's access to culturally safe, timely, youth specific mental health support.
- that the youth policy contains a commitment to a workforce development strategy to create a stronger Koorie child, youth and family support workforce.
- that the youth policy recognise the need to support cultural strengthening and young people's connection to culture, land, community and family and contain a commitment to invest in programs to support young people's individual journey to connect as well as community based cultural strengthening programs targeting young people.
- that the youth policy recognise the key role that participation in community sport, recreation and arts activities plays in the development of healthy lifestyles and connection to community and culture. The policy should commit

to supporting the development of these activities and young people's participation in them (for example through programs that subsidize the costs of participation).

- That the youth policy contains a focus on improving educational support, engagement, retention and attainment for Koorie young people.
- That implementation and monitoring of the youth policy include a focus on outcomes reached for Koorie young people and involve engagement of representatives from Aboriginal organisations, services and communities in ongoing mechanisms to support implementation and monitoring.

METHODOLOGY

SURVEY TARGETING ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE:

As mentioned earlier, the survey tool builds upon the approach used in the general survey released by the Department, but has been tailored specifically to an audience of Aboriginal young people. Following the initial focus group/co-design session with the Koorie Youth Council members it was clear that issues that were likely to be identified as important to Koorie young people were not included in the existing list referred to in the broader survey. It was important then for KYC to create an opportunity for Koorie young people to identify their own issues (before having that process shaped or influenced by an existing list of issues) as well as give feedback on the list provided in the broader survey.

The survey was promoted through Koorie service networks and social media and was widely undertaken, with 249 young people engaging with the survey (however not all young people responded to all questions within the survey – this is detailed where relevant in the summary of findings).

FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:

The focus groups with young people have been tailored to meet the needs of each specific group. In terms of the Koorie Youth Council members' focus group, the session was hosted by the manager of the Koorie Youth Council (Greg Kennedy) and included co-design processes to shape the KYC consultation process, an interactive and dynamic brainstorm session as well as some themed group work and opportunities for individual feedback to be provided on issues raised. The KYC staff support the engagement of Council members.

The focus group with young people from Parkville College, (a state school for young people detained in custody in Victoria), was designed in consultation with staff from the Centre to ensure it was a meaningful process for those young people. Two workshops were conducted, one containing an activity through which young people were asked to use stickers to prioritise issues that were important to them from a list that had been developed in consultation with staff from the college. This was followed by a discussion around the most popularly chosen issues. The other workshop involved discussion groups with young people asking them to identify:

- The issues that are important to them
- The issues that impact their lives
- What would make a difference?

The outcomes of these workshops are listed separately within this report.

The focus group with young people in Mildura was hosted through Mallee District Aboriginal Services and facilitated by the manager of the Koorie Youth Council (Greg Kennedy). It included some themed group work and opportunities for individual feedback to be provided on issues raised.

ONE-TO-ONE CONSULTATIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS:

KYC has conducted consultations with:

- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service;
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service;
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency;
- Andrew Jackomos, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People;
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated;
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd;
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services (in both Robinvale and Mildura);
- and Koorie Education Support Officers in Robinvale.

Engagement with Aboriginal Organisations has involved one-to-one consultations with senior staff within the organisations (typically CEOs or senior management staff). Questions have been based on a consultation framework but then tailored for each interview to reflect the priorities and scope of each service.

SURVEY OF ABORIGINAL SERVICES

In order to broaden the opportunity for representatives from Aboriginal Organisations and Services to have some input into the KYC consultation process, KYC also released a short survey for services. This survey was focused on giving services an opportunity to provide feedback specifically on the proposed areas for action by Government as listed in the consultation guide.

Four services engaged with the survey. These were:

- Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Co-operative/Whitelion (delivering metro services)
- Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (delivering metro services)
- Viney Morgan Aboriginal Medical Service Cummeragunja (delivering services in a rural setting)
- Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation (Delivering services in both a rural and regional)

QUESTIONS USED IN SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

One-to-one consultations with representatives from Aboriginal Organisations:

The questions used in the one-to-one interviews with survey representatives are based on the following framework (but tailored to reflect the organisations scope and focus):

Getting to know the service:

1. What programs/services do you offer young people?
2. How do young people come to your service/organisation? Self-referred, referred through other services, outreach?
3. What other services do you tend to work in partnership with?
Do you work in partnership with youth services in the community?

Needs of young people:

4. What are the needs of young people accessing your service? (If young people self-refer, the question may be 'What are young people hoping to get from your services?')
5. Are there specific service/support gaps you are aware of in relation to young people?
6. Are there any specific challenges to working with/supporting the needs of young people – for example, compared to working with younger children?

Role of Government:

7. What are the key priorities for you in terms of focus areas for a whole-of-government youth policy?
8. The Victorian Government is proposing some specific actions they have asked for feedback on. These are: (services are provided with the list of actions as outlined in the consultation guidelines).

Survey targeting Aboriginal Young People:

The questions asked in the KYC survey of young people are listed as **Appendix A**.

Survey targeting Aboriginal services:

The questions listed in the KYC survey of services are listed as **Appendix B**.

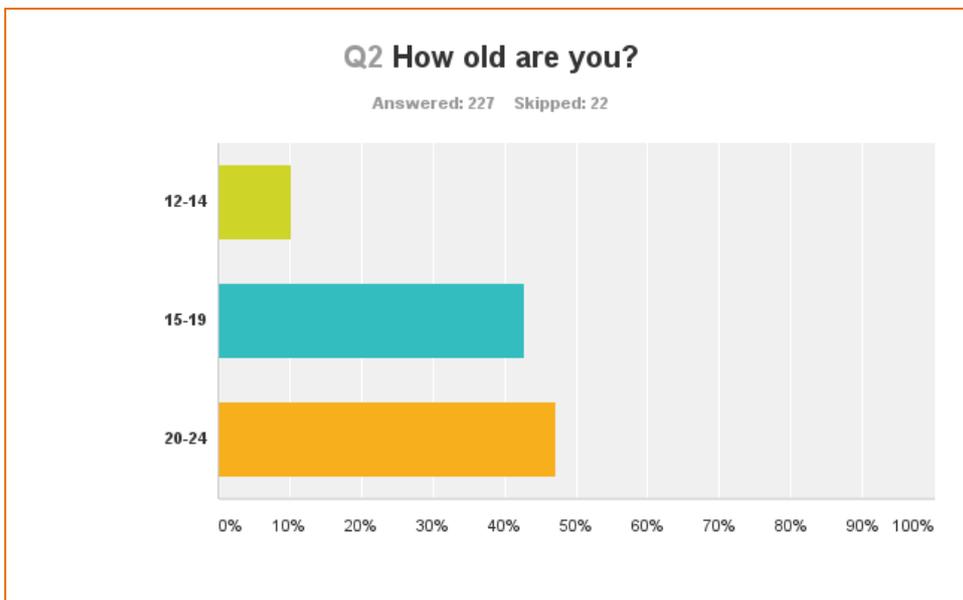
DEMOGRAPHICS

A summary of the demographics of people (young people and service representatives) engaged in the consultations by the Koorie Youth Council can be found below.

| | Method | Total number of participants | Age range | Gender | Cultural background description | Location |
|------------------------|--------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Survey of young people | | 249 (however not all young people answered all questions) | 12 - 25 | 170 – F 52 –M 5 - other | Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (98%) | 126 RR 101 Metro |
| One-on-one interviews | | 10 | Not relevant as service reps | Not relevant as service reps | Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander | 7 Metro 3 RR |
| Focus Groups | 3 | 29 | 15 - 25 | 16 – M 13 - F | Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander | 12 RR 17 Metro |

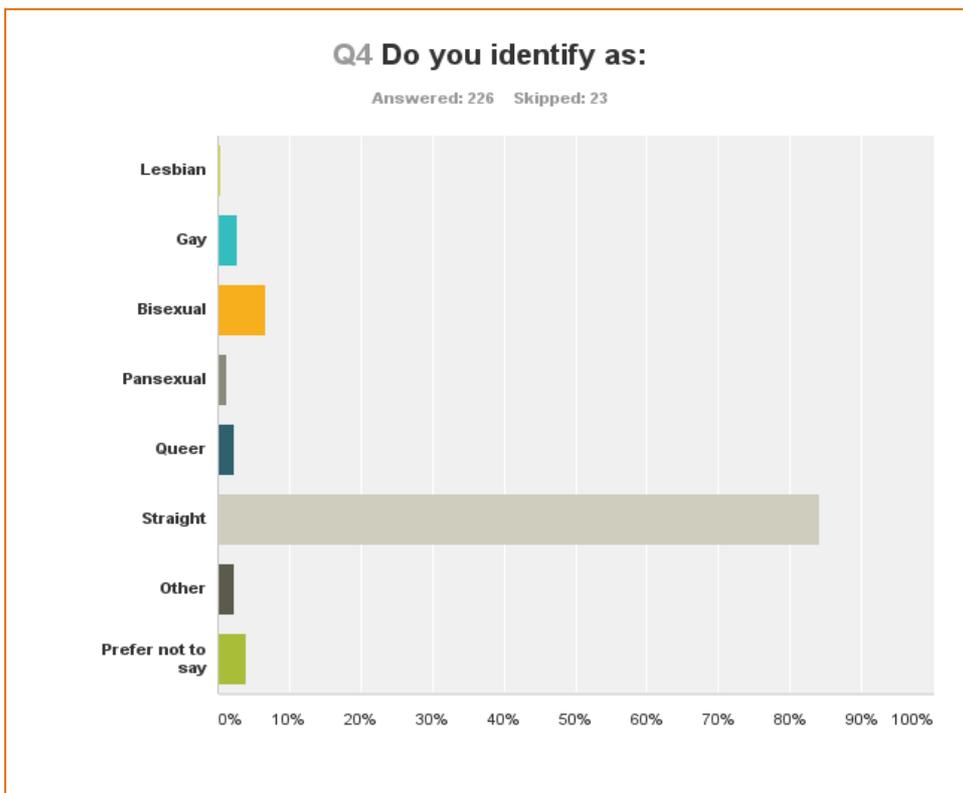
The Koorie Youth Council survey was directed at young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age.

While 249 young people engaged with the survey, they didn't all complete each question. When asked their age, 227 young people responded. As the graph below illustrates, almost half of the survey respondents were aged between 20 and 24 (107 young people), and just over 40% were aged between 15 and 19 years (97 young people).



Of these 227, 98.24% said they identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (4 young people who completed the survey did not). Interestingly, the vast majority of survey participants were female (74.89% or 170 young people); 22.91% were male (or 52 young people) and a further 5 young people described their gender as 'other'.

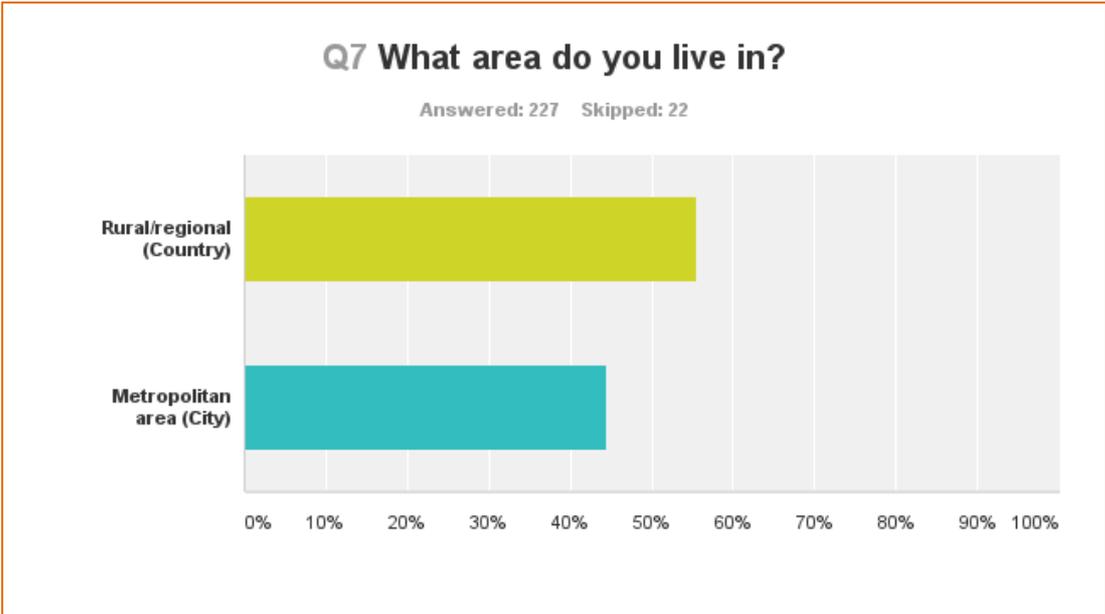
In terms of describing their sexuality, the young people identified in a range of ways as illustrated below:



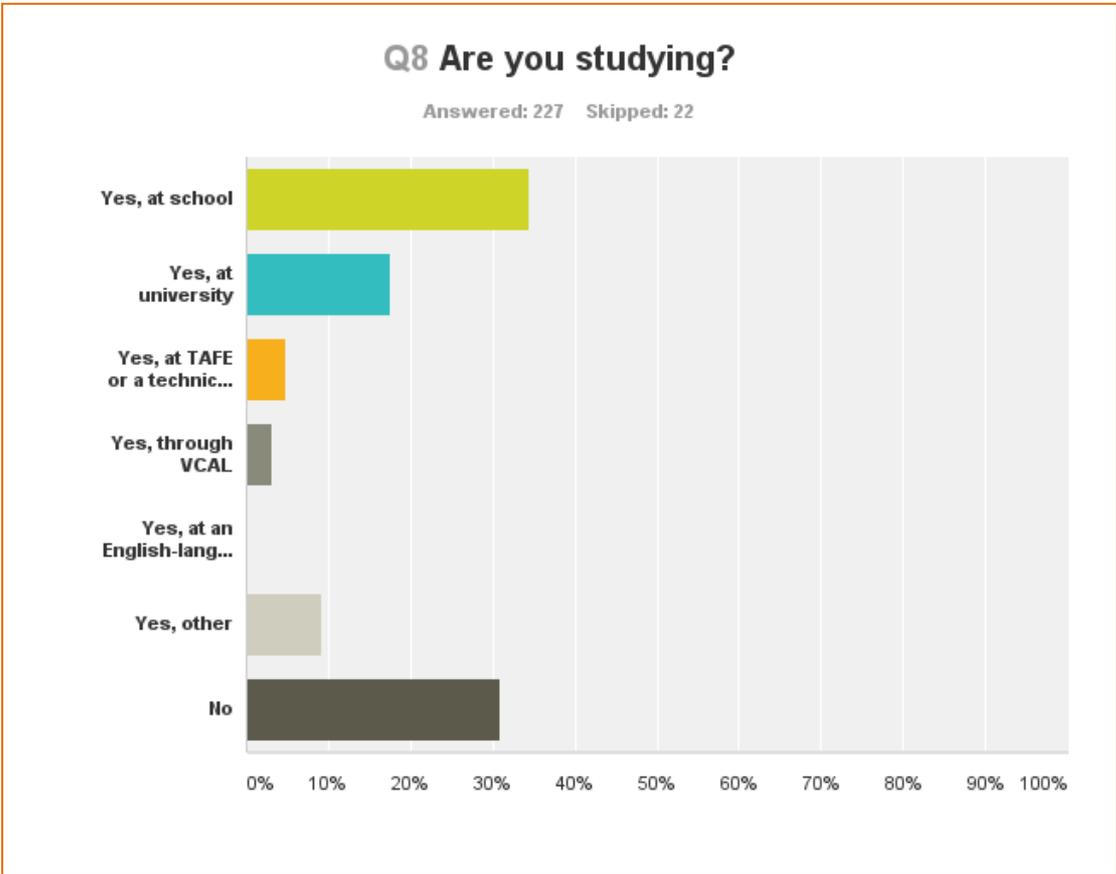
The young people were asked if they had a disability that restricts them in performing everyday activities and which is long-term (lasting six months or more).² Just over 10% (23 young people out of 224 who answered the question) identified as having a disability.

The survey attracted the participation of more young people from rural Victoria than from metropolitan Melbourne, however the distribution was relatively even as the graph below illustrates.

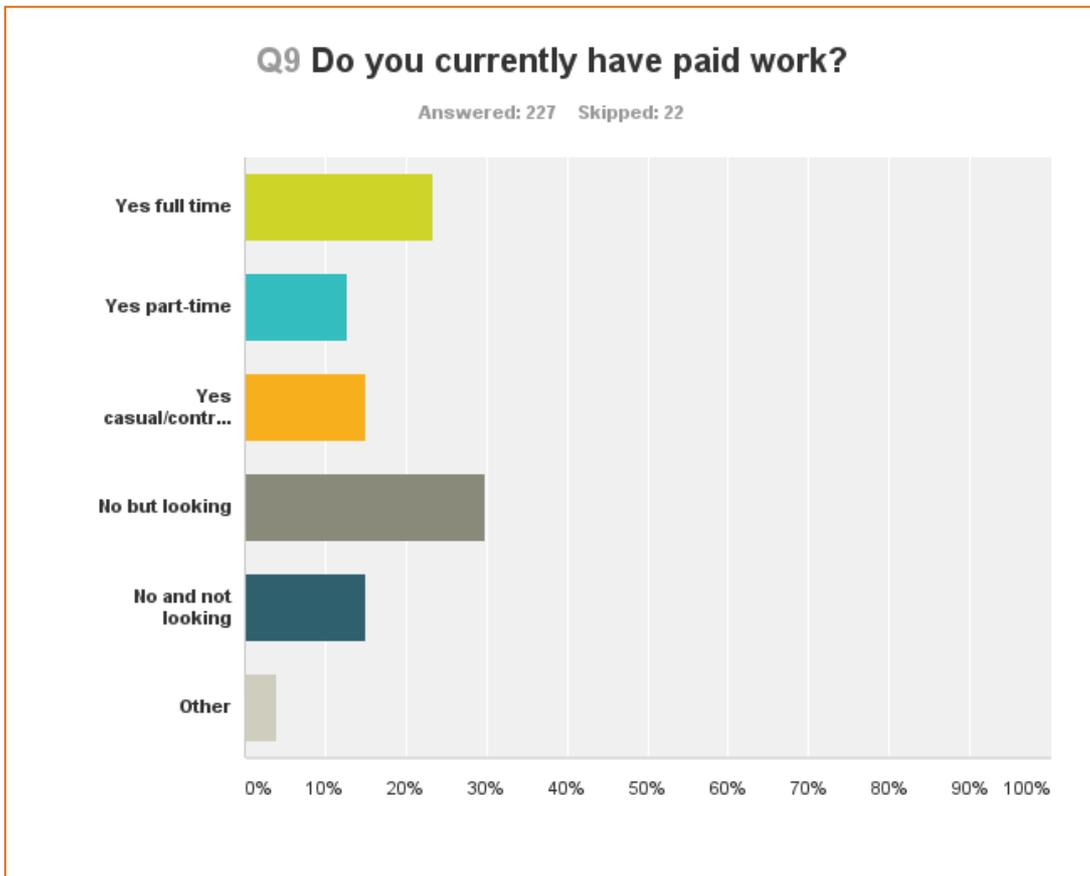
² For the purpose of the survey a person was described as having a disability if they report that they have a limitation restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months and restricts everyday activities. This includes a loss of sight that makes it difficult to read ordinary newsprint, even when wearing corrective lenses; or a loss of hearing not corrected even when wearing hearing aids; or mobility problems; or chronic or recurring pain; or any other physical, intellectual, psychiatric or psychological disability.



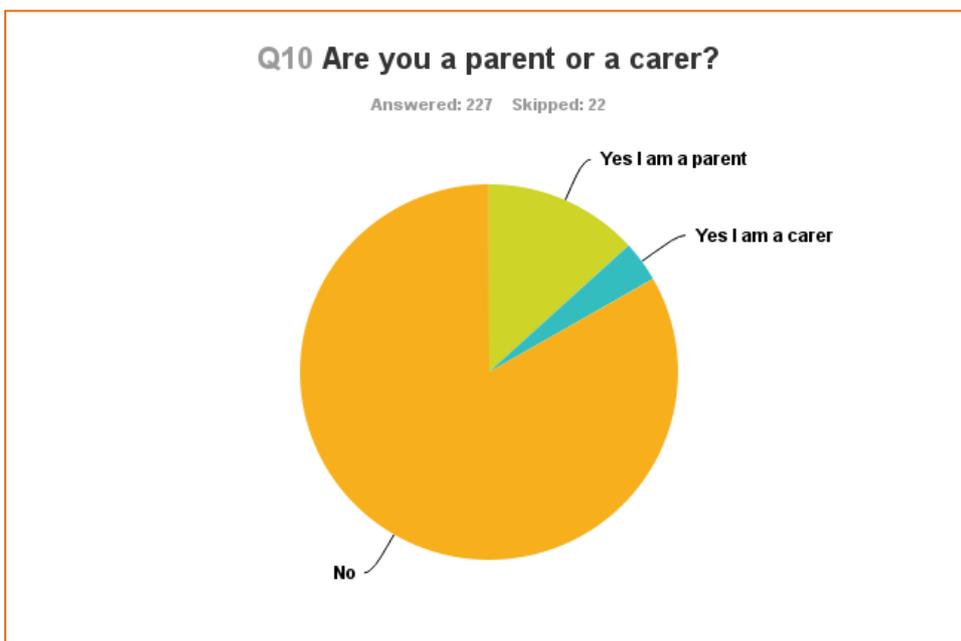
In terms of engagement with education, around a third of the young people who took the survey were in school and just under a third were not engaged in education (remembering that many in the group are aged beyond compulsory schooling years). University was the next most commonly listed educational setting. Interestingly only 4% were at TAFE or a technical college and 21% listed 'other'. The below graph illustrates the full picture, with a breakdown of figures provided in the accompanying table.



When asked if they currently had paid work, the answers were varied. The most common answer was 'No, but looking' with 30% (68 young people), followed by 23.35% answering 'Yes, full time' (53 young people). The below graph illustrates the spread.



While the vast majority of young people who took the survey were neither parents or carers, 13.22% identified as parents (30 young people) and 3.52% identified as carers (8 young people).



OUTCOMES – KEY FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- **Education was the most commonly raised issue** and the issue young people most wanted to discuss. Of 166 young people, 47.59% raised it as one of four issues important to them. Then, when asked to choose one issue to discuss, 12.65% of the young people chosen to elaborate on education again making it the most popularly chosen issue. It was also the most popular issue from the list of pre-determined issues young people were asked to prioritise through the survey and discussion paper released by the DHHS.
- Following from 'education'; 'health and wellbeing', 'alcohol and drugs', 'culture and identity' and 'education' were also priority areas popularly raised by young people when they were unprompted by the existing list.
- In relation to **education**, young people were primarily concerned with: education as an enabler to reduce racism and improve understanding about Koorie culture and the history of colonization; Koorie cultural content in schools as a means of developing cultural safety and pride for Koorie students; the need to remove barriers to equitable access to education experienced by Koorie students; the importance of improving the engagement and retention of Koorie students.
- In relation to **health and wellbeing**, young people were primarily concerned with: community health and wellbeing (not just individual health); the importance of healthy lifestyles; concerns related to access to health care; outcomes of systemic problems with health care and wellbeing such as disease and reduced life expectancy.
- In relation to **alcohol and drugs**, young people were primarily concerned with: preventing underage use of alcohol and drugs; the need for more and improved drug and alcohol services and support for Koorie young people; the need for more prevention and early-intervention support to reduce the harms of drugs and alcohol including community education; specific concerns related to the use of ICE in rural communities.
- In relation to **culture, language and identity**, young people were primarily concerned with: cultural preservation and revival (including languages); supporting young people to build or strengthen their connection to country; strengthening and celebrating Koorie young people's cultural identity; celebrating, practicing and learning about culture in schools and the community; improving the broader communities understanding of Koorie culture; supporting stronger cultural awareness in schools, higher education settings and workplaces and the key role of Koorie representation and engagement in decision making and public roles to strengthen recognition of culture.
- In relation to **employment**, young people were primarily concerned with: a lack of employment opportunities (particularly in rural areas); discrimination in employment; intergenerational experiences of unemployment; the need for more employment pathways, career options and Koorie role-models in work-

fields; improved support in accessing vocational training, gaining experience and finding jobs.

- In terms of issues young people wanted to discuss – **culture and identity was the second most popular issue**. This issue was not included in the list provided by the DHHS for consultation with young people and as such, that list does not adequately reflect Koorie young people’s concerns and interests.
- In order for the youth policy to reflect Koorie young people’s concerns and needs it must contain **a strong focus on cultural strengthening and cultural safety** as a core component of supporting young people’s identity and wellbeing, both in terms of contextual information in the policy regarding the purpose of a youth policy and in terms of priority areas for action.
- Young people’s responses make clear the **strongly interrelated nature of the issues** that they raised as important, particularly the relationship between ‘education’, ‘culture and identity’ and ‘health and wellbeing’. This makes clear the critical importance of policy and program development with a strong holistic, ‘wrap around’ approach.
- Consultations with Aboriginal Organisations and Services revealed the following priorities:
 - The need for more Koorie youth workers and early intervention supports.
 - The need to ensure Koorie young people’s access to culturally safe, timely mental health and drug and alcohol support.
 - The need for a workforce development strategy to create a stronger Koorie child, youth and family support workforce.
 - The need for initiatives to support cultural strengthening and young people’s connection to culture, land, community and family.
 - The need for support and investment in Koorie young people’s engagement in sports and recreation.
 - The need for a strong focus on supporting the educational engagement of Koorie young people.

THEMES AND TRENDS IN WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US

Here we have reported on what young people have had to say in a few ways, including:

- What issues did young people commonly raise (unprompted) in the survey?
- What issues did young people want to discuss in more detail and why do these issues matter to them?
- How did young people prioritise the issues provided in the consultation guide by the DHHS?
- What did young people think should be done to improve things in relation to these issues?

What issues did young people commonly raise?

Young people were asked to identify up to four issues that were important to them. An analysis of responses reflected a broad diversity of issues raised by young people. The 166 young people who answered this question raised a broad and diverse range of issues that could be categorised into 69 different categories. The eight most commonly raised issues were:

| Issue raised | Percentage of young people who raised it | Number of young people who raised it |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Education | 47.59% | 79 |
| Health and Wellbeing | 30.72% | 51 |
| Alcohol and drugs | 30.72% | 51 |
| Culture | 28.31% | 47 |
| Employment | 25.90% | 43 |
| Mental Health/suicide | 19.28% | 32 |
| Racism | 16.87% | 28 |
| Housing/homelessness | 15.66% | 26 |

Young people raised a range of elements specifically about each of these issues. For example, while some young people simply listed 'Education' as their response, others raised issues like cultural content in curriculum and equity of access to education. The following summary provides some insights into how the top eight issues were described by young people.

Education

While many young people simply mentioned 'education' in their response without elaborating, other young people gave deeper insights into the theme.

Reflected in their responses is a focus on the important role that education can play in improving knowledge and understanding of Koorie culture and of the history of Australia both before and after invasion, including the impact of colonisation and insights into Aboriginal historical knowledge and culture. The inclusion of Aboriginal history, knowledge and culture in curriculum and school activities supports the development of cultural safety and pride for Koorie young people by acknowledging Koorie identity and experience. As one survey participant described:

'Include more Indigenous studies in the Australian school curriculum. This creates a sense of inclusion for young Aboriginal youth and sense of cultural awareness for others.'

Also of note is a focus on equity and access to education. It is clear that young people are aware of an inequitable system in terms of education. They have either experienced or witnessed barriers to access to quality education for Koorie young people. We are provided insights into these barriers by other comments young people made, such as:

- 'Lack of cultural knowledge and understanding from education professionals'
- 'Indigenous youth who are having trouble with breaking the cycle of Indigenous issues ie, leaving school, not studying'

- 'No Indigenous taught content within westernised schooling curriculum'

Also strongly linked to equitable access to education, is the issue of retention. Young people's comments reflect concern about 'drop-out' rates and the importance of raising the number of young people completing year 12 and going on to further study. This is related closely to the issue of educational support within school as raised by several young people.

Health and Wellbeing

While many young people simply mentioned 'Health' or 'Wellbeing' as an issue, many others offered more specific responses highlighting particular areas of interest or concern.

Young people's responses here reflect a range of insights, including a focus on medical illness (cancer, diabetes); 'community health and wellbeing' rather than just a focus on the individual; the importance of healthy lifestyles; issues related to access to health care (for example 'lack of Aboriginal Doctors', 'Aboriginal young people receiving appropriate health care', 'more Aboriginal workers') and outcomes of systemic problems with health care and wellbeing (such as reduced life expectancy).

Alcohol and Drugs

While many young people simply listed 'drugs and alcohol' as an issue of concern, many other young people elaborated in their description of the issue, providing further insight into their concerns.

Young people's responses here reflect specific concerns about young people's use of drugs and alcohol and the importance of preventing underage use; the need for improved services and support for young people who have

a problem with drugs or alcohol; improved understanding amongst young people and the community about the health risks of alcohol and drug use as well as how to assist someone with risky substance use behaviors; specific concern relating to the use of Ice or methamphetamines

Culture, language and identity

In raising matters of culture, language or identity within the survey, young people showed a complex understanding of culture and the role it played in their lives and the wellbeing of their communities. While some young people simply mentioned 'culture' in their response, the majority of young people elaborated to provide specific insights into the importance of culture and it's inextricable link to identity.

Young people's responses reflect a strong interest in cultural preservation and revival (including preservation and revival of languages); supporting young people to build or strengthen their connection to country; supporting and celebrating young people's sense of cultural identity; celebrating, practicing and learning about culture (in schools and more broadly in the

community); improving the broader community's understanding of Koorie culture; supporting stronger cultural awareness not only in schools but also higher and alternate education settings and in workplaces; the key role of Koorie representation in decision making and public roles, as a means of strengthening recognition of culture; opportunities to share culture and celebrate diversity.

Employment

While 29 young people simply listed the words employment or jobs in their answer, several elaborated to give more insight into their concerns with regard to employment.

Young people's responses highlight concerns about limited employment opportunities in rural areas; poor pay rates; discrimination in the jobs market and workplace; balancing employment with child care costs; a lack of employment opportunities, including intergenerational experiences of unemployment; the need for more employment pathways, career options and Koorie role-models in work fields; improved support in accessing vocational training and finding employment.

What issues did young people choose to discuss in more detail?

After being asked to identify four issues that were important to them, they were then asked to choose one issue and tell us why it was important to them. In doing so, young people continued to raise a wide range of concerns, choosing issues that could be broadly categorised into 40 different categories.

The two most commonly chosen issues (and the only issues chosen by more than 10% of the young people participating) were:

| Issue | Percentage of survey participants who answered the question | Total number of young people out of 166 who answered the question |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Education | 13.25% | 22 |
| Culture, identity and language | 12.05% | 20 |

Following from these, the next most common issues young people chose to discuss were:

| Issue | Percentage of survey participants who answered the question | Total number of young people out of 177 who answered the question |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Drugs and alcohol | 9.64% | 16 |
| Racism and equality | 9.04% | 15 |
| Mental health/suicide | 7.83% | 13 |
| Employment | 7.23% | 13 |
| Health | 7.23% | 13 |
| Family violence | 4.22% | 7 |

In terms of the reasons young people gave for why the issue was important to them, again responses reflected a broad cross section of experiences, interests and concerns.

Why does education matter?

Education is seen as a key means to develop and foster cultural understanding and respect of Aboriginal culture in the broader community. As these responses from young people explain:

'Understanding our history could decrease racism, teach people about equality and just put recognition of what our people have been through!'

'The education of colonisation not being taught in school is a major issue, if we are to go forward so all Australians can have an no prejudice when coming to the past of Australia's history.'

Education is also identified as **central to succeeding** in finding employment and accessing other life opportunities:

'Education is important to me because having a good education is the one of the most important key things you need to go far in life and achieve big things and make your family proud.'

Some young people identified education as important not only to themselves as individuals, but to **strengthen Aboriginal organisations and communities**. As one young person explained:

'I believe that to better our community, we need to further support young people in furthering their studies in all sectors. This could lead to possible future employment in our own organisations, therefore community is working for and in community, which I think is the right path we should be going down.'

Some young people described what they saw as **inequality of access to education** for Aboriginal young people:

'Equality is important to me on many levels. This can come into many different situations, like: being treated equal in school, having the same learning opportunity as any other young person, not being seen different because of my race or the colour of my skin and having the same rights as everyone else.'

Some young people described **feeling let down by schools** that didn't adequately reflect Aboriginal culture in curriculum or actively display respect for Aboriginal culture:

'I go to a (blacked out to preserve anonymity) school and we only have the Australian flag. The school claims it doesn't have the Aboriginal flag because there is only one family at the school that is aboriginal, being my family. I believe that in respect for our people they should fly the aboriginal flag high, seeing that aboriginal people were the first people in this country and it is just udder respect. Not acknowledging that the flag exists because there aren't many aboriginal kids at our school is in a way heart breaking and offensive.'

Another young person described the personal impact of attending a school that doesn't offer a **culturally safe setting**:

'Schooling is a big one for me! It also fits in with racism, it's hard to be an aboriginal or TSI at school because your so confused whether you be yourself or change? Because if you be your self the teasing, bullying, racism comes into it, and if you change and forget about your background then your losing identity and culture and being someone you're not! I think it's good if there is more aboriginal activities around schools!'

Educational **engagement and retention** was mentioned by many young people as a concern:

'I would like to see more young Koori people go on to university studies.'

'In the future I would love to see Indigenous youth finishing school at the same rate as other Non-Indigenous Australians and education is obviously the necessary key in achieving this.'

Increasing cultural content at school, celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and creating culturally safe environments were identified as key **strategies to support educational engagement** and addressing racist stereotyping in schools:

'Learning culture in school whether it be in dancing, language, basket weaving or history classes or even just workshops for indigenous and non-indigenous kids. I think it will keep indigenous kids in school so they have something to look forward to and then they would want to go to school, I believe they will also feel more comfortable about being at school by knowing non-indigenous kids are also learning about our culture! I believe this will also let non-indigenous kids understand our culture a whole lot more and they will stop stereotyping us and change their aspects on how they see us!'

Education is seen as a critical enabler and engagement as a **key protective element** in a young person's life. As this young person explained:

'Education to me is the importance of everything to achieve and have and need in life, without proper schooling and a good education for people no matter the age we will always have problems with the 3 other issues I have listed. Having good education means a good future and hopefully has more job

opportunities if there are any around in whatever field people are looking for, it will have a better impact on Mental health issues, suffering no schooling creates less self-esteem and other mental health issues and having more aboriginal kids in schools will bring communities together and create friendships through different cultures and races.'

Some young were aware of **intergenerational change** in relation to school and education and others felt a keenness to provide inspiration to younger people in their families and communities to succeed in their education:

'Studies is important for me because ill be the first in my family to graduate...'

'I'm very passionate in regards to Indigenous education as it opens doors to so many positive pathways for young ones to go down. If we finish our Education, we are setting a positive example for the younger generation.'

Why does culture and identity matter?

In describing why they had chosen culture or identity as a key issue of concern to them, young people told us it mattered to them because:

Some young people discussed **cultural preservation and revival** as central to identity, health, spirituality and wellbeing of both individuals and Koorie communities. As one young person said:

'Language and culture preservation & revival - It is the act of making sure that our languages and cultures are preserved and protected for future generations. It is reclaiming our identities and own histories, things that have been stolen from us and denied to us in the past. I am passionate about this issue because so much has been taken away from myself and my family in terms of culture and language. I am working really hard to make sure that our language doesn't become extinct and to also set an example for other Aboriginal people out there that reviving language and culture is very possible and doable. Retaining our language and culture is so important because it's who we are as the first peoples of this continent. Our culture and language is inextricably tied to us and our identities, without that we are lost. I don't want other Indigenous peoples to feel lost because they don't know their culture or language. I want them to feel empowered enough to actively learn their history and know their peoples' old ways.'

As another young person explained:

'An understanding of culture and traditions invigorates a sense of self which better enables individuals to successfully reach their full potential.'

Young people talked about the need for **'cultural stability'**, referring to a need to feel safe and strong in their cultural identity in the broader community. An experience of 'cultural stability' is seen as key to a better future for young people and for Australia. Here a young person refers to an experience of not feeling culturally safe at school:

'I've had a lot of cultural differences during my year 12 English class, along with legal studies. I've been told that I'm either a percent or a half cast of a indigenous person. I think having that cultural knowledge is a good way of informing other people that there isn't a percentage on who we are. It's exactly like being aboriginal and gay. There isn't a percent being gay, or half. It's all got to do with the narrow minded people, also the uneducated. Having that cultural stability among young teenagers will have a great recognition of how far we've come as a nation. It's more than important. It's what I push for each time I hear a bad word against our people.'

Others talked about the need for **more support** for young people to connect with culture in order to strengthen their identities, as this young person explains:

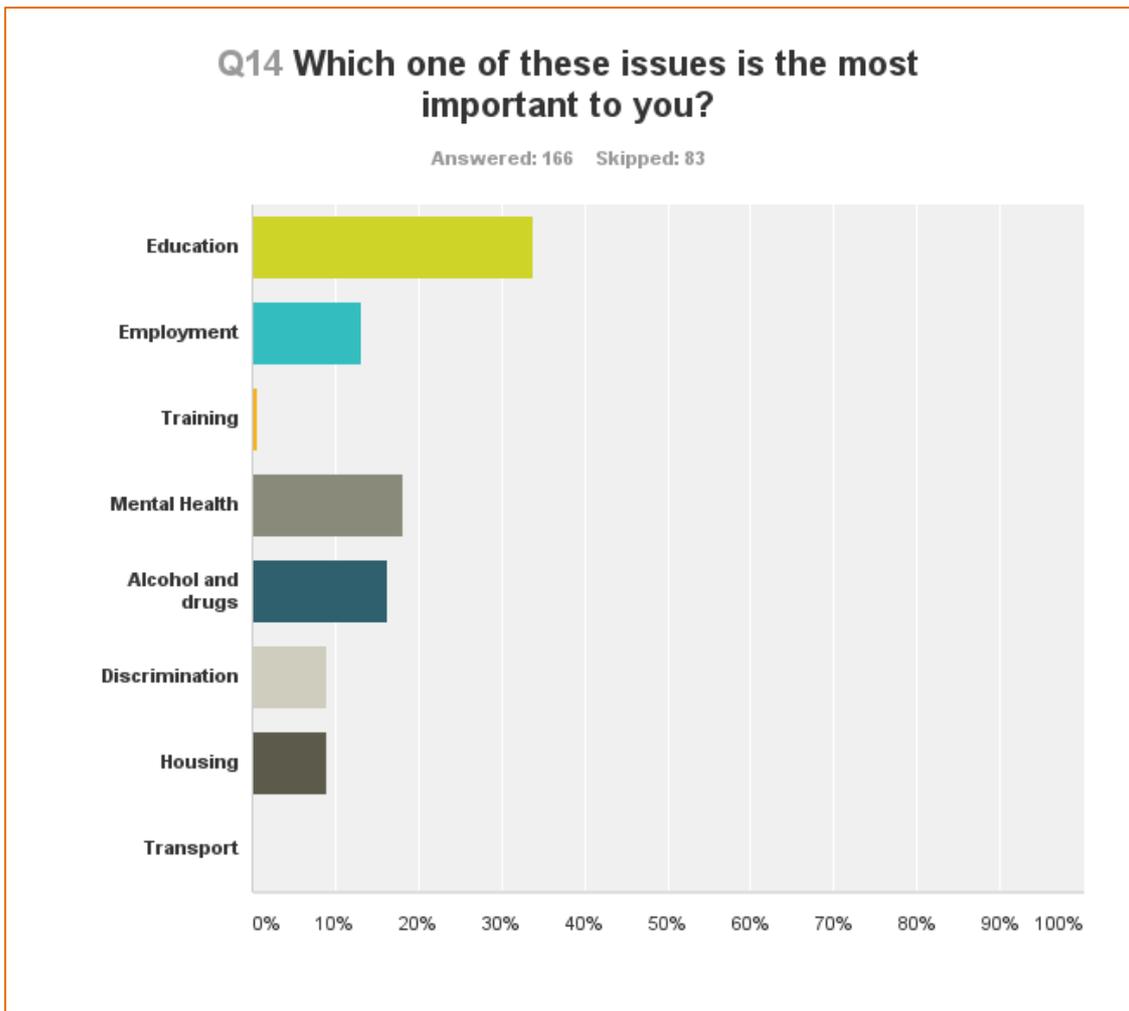
'It is important to strengthen culture with Aboriginal people because a lot of us struggle with identity. We need to embrace our culture and be supported to do this. There needs to be more of a focus to strengthen culture with youth in kinders, primary and secondary college.'

Education has a key role in supporting cultural strengthening. As one young person described:

'Education of cultural heritage- I feel that in order for us to move forward and spark interest in the younger indigenous generations we need to create an education plan to actively involve the younger people and help educate the wider community. This in turn creates pathways and opportunities for our people that will help them in more ways than one.'

How did young people prioritise the issues provided in the consultation guide by the DHHS?

After raising and discussing the issues they identified as important, young people were then asked to prioritise the issues already identified as important by the DHHS, in the same way that all young people were asked to do in the Departments survey. As would be expected given the response already provided, education was seen to be the most important issue by young people. The following is a breakdown of how young people prioritise the issues listed.



| Answer choices | Percentage of responses | Number of young people |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Education | 33.73% | 56 |
| Employment | 13.25% | 22 |
| Training | 0.60% | 1 |
| Mental Health | 18.07% | 30 |
| Alcohol and Drugs | 16.27% | 27 |
| Discrimination | 9.04% | 15 |
| Housing | 9.04% | 15 |
| Transport | 0.00% | 0 |

Following on from education, mental health, education and drugs and employment were the most highly prioritised issues.

What should be done to improve things?

The survey asked young people if anything should be done to improve things in relation to the issue they had chosen or to the issues listed by the DHHS. In relation to the two most commonly chosen issues ('education' and 'culture and identity') an analysis of responses shows the strongly interconnected nature of these two issues.

Following is a summary of ideas put forward by young people to improve outcomes in relation to issues prioritised by the survey participants.

Education:

In relation to education, young people raised the following ideas and insights into how to improve outcomes:

- Improving the provision of early intervention and general learning support available to young people to assist with study, for example free tutoring and personal support.
- More financial assistance to support educational engagement, including more scholarships for higher education.
- More support for educational re-engagement of Koorie young people.
- More support for educational retention and completion of year 12 as well as completion of training and further education.
- A focus on life-long learning to support cultural knowledge of both the ATSI and non-Indigenous communities.
- Incorporate more education provided by Elders into schools - to speak to students and pass on cultural knowledge.

'I personally find it hard talking directly to my teachers about getting help when I need it, and it stresses me out a great deal when I start to fall behind in my grades, so I think setting up support workers and tutors in all high schools for Koorie kids would be really good and really benefit young people like me.'

Youth survey respondent.

- A stronger focus on creating pathways to employment for Koorie young people within schools and more opportunities to gain vocational experience within schools.
- The importance of embedding more education about, and celebration of, Koorie culture to make school more attractive to Koorie students and strengthen the confidence of Koorie students.
- Promoting high expectations of Koorie students.
- Improve the cultural competence and historic understating of Koorie culture and experience by Education professionals.
- More education support delivered by Koorie staff.
- More engagement with parents in supporting educational engagement.
- Ensuring all schools deliver quality curriculum on Aboriginal history and culture.
- Strengthening student voice.

Culture and Identity

In relation to culture and identity, common themes in young people's responses include:

- The need for more culturally safe activities and programs.
- The need to educate the broader community about the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the strength of Aboriginal culture today and the importance of not making presumptions about identity based on an individual's appearance.
- Ensuring all schools celebrate Koorie culture and promote understanding of Koorie culture (including a stronger focus on teaching of Aboriginal history and the history of colonization in Australia.)
- Funding for cultural strengthening and language revival programs.
- Teaching of Aboriginal languages in more schools.
- More community events, family days, cultural workshops (including arts music and dance).
- Support for schools and parents to challenge racism.
- More support for families and young people to connect to country.

'Indigenous youth... are struggling to find their identity in today's society as an Indigenous person. This is important to me, because it is a common issue. There are many experiences of stereotypes of Indigenous people that don't represent the Indigenous people that exist in modern society. Some people don't believe we are Indigenous unless we live in traditional way, and that we mustn't be very Indigenous if we chose to go to university and live in the city. This is a struggle for many Indigenous people who are proud of their culture, but are being told they aren't Indigenous because they don't live traditional ways.'

Youth survey respondent.

Mental Health

Young people offered the following ideas on how to improve outcomes in relation to young people's mental health:

- Improve young people's understanding of mental health and the signs and symptoms of a mental health concern.
- Strengthen the level of knowledge and understanding about youth mental health held by education professionals and providers of other services (such as employment support or health).
- Strategies and programs to reduce stigma – stigma related to having a mental health condition or problem, or related to seeking support with a mental health concern.
- Provide more culturally competent mental health services and ensure more Koorie mental health workers are delivering services.
- Ensure mental health support for young people is more accessible including increased early intervention support and youth friendly, recovery-focused services.

'Increased accessibility to services is positive but engaging with a service that is culturally specific for example for Indigenous communities dealing with colonization/intergenerational issues is extremely limited. Expanding the scope of services could encourage education of historical factors that add to personal circumstances which lead to mental illness – taking a holistic approach is most beneficial.'

Youth survey respondent.

Alcohol and Drugs

In relation to alcohol and drugs, young people's ideas to strengthen outcomes included:

- Increase youth specific alcohol and drug support services, including informal support groups, rehabilitative services and generalist support with a cultural strengthening component.
- Support help-seeking behaviors by reducing stigma related to alcohol and drug problems.
- Provide more education to children and young people about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, with targeted efforts through schools, higher education and sporting clubs.
- Maintain a focus both in preventative education and in treatment and support, on the impact of drug and alcohol abuse on families and communities (not just individuals). Also ensure a focus on the information and support needs of families of people struggling with an alcohol or drug problem.
- Taking a holistic approach to supporting people with drug and alcohol abuse problems, ensuring support is available for a long enough time period to be truly effective in supporting recovery.
- Approaches to address intergenerational drug and alcohol abuse, including strategies to reduce harmful exposure of children and young people to alcohol and drug abuse by parents, guardians and other adults.
- Provide more Koorie alcohol and drug workers in local communities offering holistic support, with a focus both on tackling the underlying causes of drug and alcohol abuse, improved supports post-rehabilitation treatment and cultural strengthening.

'...there needs to be more support for the individual when they are discharged from the facility. People have to pack up and move away to go to rehab but yet when they return home they are returning back to the same people, friends, family and area and then people wonder why they relapse. I think if there were more support after discharge it might help people from relapsing....'

Youth survey respondent.

- More initiatives to support community understanding and awareness of ICE use as well as target resources for rural communities with a high prevalence of ICE use.

Employment

In relation to employment, young people offered the following ideas of solutions to improve outcomes:

- Create more opportunities for young people to gain quality work experience.
- Provide more employment support to young people (beyond supports related to income assistance or provided through JobActive providers). For example, assistance with writing resumes, applying for jobs, preparing for interviews, getting the right experience, how to present yourself/dress for interviews or trials).
- Address discrimination in employment faced by Aboriginal young people.
- Support the development of more culturally safe workplaces through targeted cultural awareness programs for employers.
- Provide more apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Provide Aboriginal employment mentors, guiding young people with career advice and role-modeling work options.
- Support initiatives to boost employment of young people within Aboriginal Community Organisations.
- Targeted Government strategies to support the creation of jobs for young people, especially in geographic areas of high need.

'I think there needs to be more assistance and guidance when applying for jobs. From writing a resume and cover letter to getting the right training or experience.'

Youth survey respondent.

What did young people from Parkville College have to say?

Young people from Parkville College provided rich information about what mattered to them and what needed to happen to improve outcomes for young people in the justice system. The two workshops conducted are reported on separately here.

Workshop 1: Young people were asked to use stickers to show the relevance of statements to their lives in response to the question 'What issues most impact you?'

There were 8 statements up on the walls for the participants to choose from and these were:

1. People using drugs or alcohol.
2. Not knowing my culture.
3. Experiencing racism.
4. Troubles with mental health.
5. Not having somewhere stable to live.
6. Teachers and schools not understanding me and where I come from.
7. There's nothing to do where I live.
8. I don't feel supported by people in my life.

At the end of the activity, each statement had the following number of sticky notes:

People using drugs or alcohol **(4)**
Not knowing my culture **(4)**
Experiencing racism **(3)**
Troubles with mental health **(7)**
Not having somewhere stable to live **(3)**
Teachers and schools not understanding me and where I come from **(5)**
There's nothing to do where I live **(0)**
I don't feel supported by people in my life **(1)**

A discussion then occurred around the two issues with the most responses, which highlighted the following themes:

Troubles with mental health

- Young people feel troubles with mental health occur more in the Aboriginal community due to past injustices and the Stolen Generation.
- Young people spoke about their own experiences with having family members with mental health issues, naming specifically issues with depression and bipolar disorder.
- Young people expressed concerns about troubles with their own individual mental health due to isolation (from spending large amounts of time alone in their rooms).

Teachers and schools not understanding me and where I come from

- Young people expressed their desire for schools to have more understanding of their culture, specifically around different cultural tribes, not just broader Aboriginal culture.

Workshop 2: Young people were asked to respond to the question ‘what are the issues that are important to me?’ Their responses were:

- Human rights
- Aboriginal rights
- Land rights
- Aboriginal deaths in custody
- Kids locked up!
- Youth rehabilitation
- Multiculturalism
- Closing the Gap
- Family
- Sports
- Youth Justice
- Schools and education

*“They only wanna know us
when we get locked up”*

*Parkville College workshop
participant.*

Young people were then asked to answer ‘what issues impact my life?’
Their responses were:

- Family violence
- Needing better connection to community
- Knowing my connection to my own culture and where I come from.
- Reading and writing
- The police
- The prevalence of drugs and alcohol
- Not having access to technology
- Lack of support from:
 - legal services
 - case workers, youth justice workers & drug and alcohol workers
 - support pre & post-release
- Not being properly supported when released back into community
- Varying levels of independence – i.e. some young people are very independent and some are not
- Not having a good connection with my Koori Youth Justice Worker

What would make a difference?

- Better support transitioning back into community when leaving youth justice centers.
- Improved support from Youth justice, caseworkers & drug and alcohol services doing what they should be doing.
- More emphasis on rehabilitation than imprisonment (more youth rehabilitation centers)
- Learning more about individual cultural links more so than ‘generic’ culture.
- More access and frequency of Aboriginal Family-led Decision Making to support vulnerable young people.
- More cultural specific and current reading materials for young people in custody.
- Support agencies visiting youth justice centers more frequently.
- Better advocacy for the needs of Koorie young people in youth justice centers.

THEMES AND TRENDS IN WHAT COMMUNITY LEADERS AND SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES HAVE TOLD US

In our consultations with community leaders and senior staff from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Services a number of key themes emerged. Some of these related specifically to the proposed actions but others were beyond the scope of these. As such we will first discuss the key themes and then provide some specific comment in relation to the proposed actions.

The need for more Koorie youth workers and early intervention supports

A common message related to the need for more focus on the provision of generalist, early intervention support to Koorie young people. Observations made through the consultation process that illustrated this need include:

- That existing youth support roles tend to be related to the 'back end' – that is to areas regarded as 'tertiary' services such as child protection and youth justice. However few Koorie specific youth work roles/youth support roles existed with a more generalist, earlier intervention or community development focus.
- That while it is critically important to improve supports for the most vulnerable young people in the community (such as those in out-of-home care and youth justice), it is important also not to lose sight of the support needs of young people who are not intersecting with existing tertiary services. These young people 'fly under the radar' but may still need support (for example, support with a mental health concern, counseling support to deal with stressors in their lives, support to engage with cultural strengthening activities or to build community connectedness, support with learning and staying engaged in education and with becoming job-ready and finding employment).
- That in providing support to disadvantaged and disengaged young people, more 'front-end', community-based support is needed. For example, to support young people post-release from youth justice to connect with support to achieve progress in connectedness to positive role-models, cultural strengthening activities with a personal as well more general focus, and opportunity for employment, education or access to appropriate housing. Similar supports are needed for young people leaving out-of-home care, particularly those who may need additional support in their process of re-connecting with family, country and community.
- Other specific early intervention supports that were raised include the need for more diversionary support, drug and alcohol awareness and improved access to peer group networks.

The need to ensure Koorie young people's access to culturally safe, timely youth specific mental health support

A theme in the consultations with organisations and service providers was that young people needed better access to culturally competent mental health support. This related to:

- The need to improve young people's access to earlier intervention support for mental health concerns.
- The need to ensure that young people who have experienced trauma or abuse (such as young people in contact with child protection or out-of-home care or

justice) to have access to culturally safe counseling without experiencing long wait periods.

- The importance of cultural competence in mental health support given the interconnected nature of culture and wellbeing. This relates also to the wellbeing support many young people need to assist in their personal journeys of returning to country or connecting to culture (of particular relevance to young people who have been separated from family).

The need for a workforce development strategy to create a stronger Koorie child, youth and family support workforce

Community representatives advocated for the need for a targeted workforce development strategy to increase the Koorie youth work, counseling, family therapy and mental health support workforce and to support the development of good-practice delivery of support and services to Koorie young people. This was discussed in terms of:

- The need for a long-term strategy to increase the number of vocational training and university graduates in professions such as youth work, counseling, family therapy, psychology etc, through the provision of incentives such as scholarships and programs to support educational engagement.
- Resources to explore and support the development of culturally competent, good practice youth work with Koorie young people. Conceptions of 'youth' and 'family' are culturally influenced and as such so too is youth work practice. For example, good practice youth work with Koorie young people needs to reflect an understanding and respect for the role of families, kin and communities and the centrality of culture to wellbeing. Youth service provision needs to involve:
 - Increasing capacity of Aboriginal services and organisations to provide services to Koorie young people (through funding of youth worker roles as well as through workforce development activities related to training and ongoing professional development). This is in line with self-determination objectives.
 - Ensuring that other service areas relevant to young people (such as youth and family services, child protection and out of home care, health services, education services, sport and recreation and cultural programs) meet their obligations to provide services that are accessible and culturally safe for Koorie young people and their families.

Supporting young people's connection to culture, land, community and family

Another theme related to the need to provide targeted support to young people to assist them with returning to country, finding out more about their family history and genealogy and supporting their personal journey in strengthening connection to culture, family and community. While programs and services focused on this exist within the community, it was felt that young people required a 'youth-specific' response, specifically targeting and tailored for them. Of high priority would be young people in the out-of-home care or justice systems, however these services would have broad applicability.

The need for support and investment in Koorie young people's engagement in sports and recreation

Representatives from organisations we talked to highlighted the key role of engagement in sport as a protective factor supporting the wellbeing and connectedness of Koorie young people. They also raised concerns that many young people face barriers to participation in sports, particularly in relation to financial barriers to involvement. Supporting Koorie young people to access sporting opportunities and supporting the development of Koorie sporting events improving young people's wellbeing and strengthening communities.

The need to continue to strengthen educational outcomes for Koorie young people

While significant progress has been made in improving educational outcomes for Koorie young people, including an increase in the number of Koorie students who completed Year 12 or equivalent in the vocational training sector by 68 per cent, from 189 in 2010 to 317 in 2013³. However, ongoing focus on improving educational outcomes for Koorie young people, particularly in terms of retention up to year 12, needs to continue.

The Koorie Youth Council is aware that new approaches to supporting Koorie students are being developed by VAEAI and the DEECD with a focus on holistic, wrap around educational support for Koorie young people, and it is anticipated this approach will improve educational outcomes.

The need to strengthen the focus on understanding outcomes for Koorie young people after they leave school and on supporting them to access training pathways to genuine employment opportunities was also discussed as a priority.

³. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2010) *Garrin Garrin: A Strategy to Improve Learning and Development Outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians*. p.10.

Specific comment on proposed Government initiatives:

In most cases, service representatives felt that the proposed 'Actions for Government' as outlined in the Non-Government Consultation Guide Community Leaders' were acceptable approaches. It was challenging however to have a meaningful discussion about those proposed actions without more details about how they would be implemented. A central message was that it is important to continue conversations and ensure input from Koorie Organisations, services and community in the further development of these 'Actions' in order to ensure their relevance and value for Koorie young people.

There was however some specific comment in relation to the following areas:

Youth leadership and mentoring linked to education, training and employment for Aboriginal and multicultural communities, and for young people in the youth justice and out of home care systems.

Youth leadership and mentoring activities were seen as valuable. This was particularly the case for vulnerable young people in child protection and out-of-home-care who needed support to connect to positive role models and mentors. The importance of ensuring that mentors were adequately trained and supported to perform their role and that mentoring programs are culturally appropriate was also discussed.

Challenges in identifying and recruiting mentors was also a specific concern raised by services in smaller regional areas.

Leverage government contracting to prioritise the employment, training and industry sectors to increase workforce participation and improve the livability of regional and rural communities.

It was reported that it would be valuable for any initiatives under this action to involve learning from previous

experiences in leveraging government contracting to increase Indigenous employment.

Facilitate a coordinated approach to philanthropic investment.

Some service representatives felt this was not necessarily a positive approach. This stemmed from both a sense that philanthropic investment had historically been challenging to attract for some Aboriginal organisations or service and also that a coordinated or managed approach might stifle the innovation that philanthropy is often able to support by investing in areas that Government might not fund.

Promoting young people's voices within their own communities, including Aboriginal and multicultural communities.

This was seen as a valuable action that could also yield important results for improving service responses and opportunities for young people when the voices of particularly vulnerable young people are heard (such as those within the justice and child protection services system), and those from rural and regional areas of Victoria.

CONCLUSION

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT YOUTH POLICY?

Findings from our consultations with young people and Aboriginal Community Organisations and Services raises the following implications for a whole-of-government youth policy.

- In order for the policy to have relevance for Koorie young people it needs to acknowledge Koorie culture and the rights of Aboriginal people as first nation's people.
- The policy should prioritise the need for approaches to service delivery and support for young people to be based on cultural respect and aligned to frameworks for maintaining and restoring cultural safety such as that outlined in the VACCA report *This is 'Forever Business': A Framework for Maintaining and Restoring Cultural Safety in Aboriginal Victoria*.⁴ For example, the policy should articulate an expectation of cultural competence for services in order to promote cultural safety of young people and their families.
- The policy needs to acknowledge and support the interconnected nature of issues such as culture, identity, education and health so as to provide a policy framework that promotes holistic practices in services, organisations and educational institutions.
- The policy needs to clearly support sector development (youth, education, family services, health, justice and child protection) to support the ongoing development of best practice work with young people and specifically with Koorie young people. This should include a commitment to strengthening the Koorie workforce in the areas of youth support and ensuring vulnerable young people receive timely, culturally appropriate youth specific support particularly in the areas of mental health, educational engagement and pathways, drug and alcohol support and support with cultural strengthening and returning to country.
- The policy should place a strong focus on the important role of prevention and early intervention approaches to supporting improved outcomes for young people, including a commitment to increasing the provision of generalist and early intervention supports targeting Koorie young people and delivered in a culturally appropriate service model (including boosting the numbers of Koorie youth workers)
- The policy needs to make a clear and specific commitment to improving outcomes for Koorie young people in all of the focus areas (education, health, justice etc).
- Implementation and monitoring of the youth policy should include a focus on outcomes reached for Koorie young people and incorporate representatives of Aboriginal services/programs or community representatives in ongoing structures to support implementation and monitoring.

⁴ Details of this report are provided under 'References and key relevant reports'.

REFERENCES AND KEY RELEVANT REPORTS.

The Koorie Youth Council would like to direct the Department to the following key research reports to continue to inform policy development in relation to the provision of support and services to Koorie young people:

Frankland, R., Bamblett, M., Lewis, P., & Trotter, R. (2010). *This is 'Forever Business': A Framework for Maintaining and Restoring Cultural Safety in Aboriginal Victoria*. Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co-op. Ltd.

Bamblett, M., Freerico, M., Harrison, J., Jackson, A., & Lewis, P. (2012). *'Not one size fits all' Understanding the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children*. Bundoora: La Trobe University.

Appendix A

What's important to YOUth? Aboriginal young people's survey

The Koorie Youth Council is consulting with Aboriginal young people about the issues that are important to them. This information will be used to help the Koorie Youth Council understand what matters to you and to help develop a new whole-of-government youth policy.

The information you provide here will be collected together with information from other young people too and used to develop a report for the Victorian Government to make sure Aboriginal young people's perspectives are included in the development of the new youth policy. You will not be personally identified in any reporting and your personal details will not be shared with anyone.

The survey should take about 5 to 10 minutes. After completing the survey don't forget to leave your details to be in the running to win an iPad.

Firstly, we are going to ask a few questions about you. Would you like to know more about why we are asking for some information about you?

Yes No

(If yes, the following information was provided) Consultations for the development of the youth policy are intended to help us understand what's important to young people and how they interact with government policies and programs. It helps if we can break down information by gender, age, location, cultural background etc. This means we know if something is particularly important to one group of young people and can design policies and programs that target this group.

All information will be non-identifiable and will be grouped together with all the other responses coming from the wide range of young people being consulted as part of this process. The specific reports provided to us by each organisation will remain confidential. We will produce a final report that is a summary of all the information we've received. Your information will only be used to help us understand the specific needs of different groups and will not be shared with anyone else.

How old are you?

12-14 15-19 20-24

What gender are you?

Male Female Other

Do you identify as:

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Pansexual Queer Straight Other Prefer not to say

Do you identify as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes No

Do you have any sort of disability that restricts you in performing everyday activities and which is long-term (lasting six months or more)?

For the purpose of this survey, a person has a disability if they report that they have a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months and restricts everyday activities. This includes a loss of sight that makes it difficult to read ordinary newsprint, even when wearing corrective lenses; or a loss of hearing not corrected even when wearing hearing aids; or mobility problems; or chronic or recurring pain; or any other physical, intellectual, psychiatric or psychological disability.

Yes No

What area do you live in?

Rural/regional (Country) Metropolitan area (City)

Are you studying?

Yes, at school Yes, at university Yes, at TAFE or a technical college Yes, through VCAL Yes, at an English-language school Yes, other No

Do you currently have paid work?

Yes full time Yes part-time Yes casual/contract/freelance No but looking No and not looking Other

Are you a parent or a carer?

Yes I am a parent Yes I am a carer No

Please list up to 4 issues that are important to you.

Please choose one of the issues from your last answer, tell us what it is and why it is important to you.

Again, thinking about this issue you have chosen, is there anything that should be done to improve things?

Here is a further list of issues that some young people have already told the Government they think are important.

Education – especially the quality of schools, improving the educational achievements of young people and supporting young people as they transition into further education.

Employment - especially the level of youth unemployment in Victoria and the difficulties for young people entering the job market. Training – especially rebuilding TAFEs, improving training’s responsiveness to industry needs and strengthening the quality of training available.

Mental Health – especially the delivery of services and standards across all acute and community mental health settings and expanding the Safe Schools Program to support same-sex-attracted and gender-diverse students.

Alcohol and drugs – especially binge drinking and alcohol-related violence and reducing the use of ice.

Discrimination – especially the importance of promoting community harmony, celebrate diversity and multiculturalism and support women’s full economic and social participation.

Housing – especially the availability of social housing, homelessness and the affordability of housing for young people. Transport – especially improving public transport so that it is more available and accessible for young people. We want to know which of these are the 3 most important to you.

Which one of these issues is the most important to you?

Education Employment Training Mental Health Alcohol and drugs
 Discrimination Housing Transport

You chose *(insert issue)* as the most important issue. Do you think there is anything that needs to happen to improve things for young people when it comes to *(insert issue)*? If so, please explain.

Do you think young people can get the support they need from services in the community?

Yes No Sometimes

Please provide a short comment to explain why you think this.

Do you have ideas on how to make it easier for young people to get the support they need from services?

Yes No If yes, please share your ideas.

Would you like to be involved in the design and roll-out of the youth policy? Yes No

Thanks for completing the survey. To be in the running to win an ipad please leave your contact details below (name and email or phone number).

Appendix B

What's important to YOUth? Aboriginal services survey

The Koorie Youth Council is consulting Aboriginal young people and Aboriginal organisations and services in order to inform the development of a new whole-of-government youth policy currently being developed by the Office for Youth, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). We have had terrific responses already to our survey for Aboriginal young people, with around 200 young people giving feedback on issues that are important to them.

The Department has released a number of proposed actions that they would like feedback on. Any feedback you may have on these or any other areas of priority you would like to see included in a youth policy, would be very much appreciated.

We will be reporting back to the DHHS by the 30th October, and as such will be closing this survey by Wednesday the 21st of October. We greatly appreciate any input you are able to give. The survey should take about 15 minutes.

Please tell us the name of the service or organisation you are from.

Do you offer services in a rural, regional, metro or statewide context?

Rural Regional Metro Statewide

Do you offer services to/work with Aboriginal young people? If so, please briefly describe the nature of these services.

What are key priorities you think government should include in a new policy focused on improving outcomes for young people, especially disadvantaged and disengaged youth? (For example, improving young people's access to mental health support.)

The DHHS would like your feedback on the following proposed actions for government 'to improve coordination and better leverage youth related policies and programs.'

The proposed actions for government are listed below. Please indicate if you agree, disagree, or don't know about each of these actions.

If you would like to provide further comment about any of these specific proposals (such as key considerations for government in undertaking any of these proposed actions) please add your thoughts in the comments section.

Proposed action: 'better connect schools and community services, including youth and mental health services'?

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed action: 'strengthen connections between services for families, parents and carers with youth services to support young people early to address emerging challenges'?

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed action: 'strengthen partnerships between the education, training and industry sectors to increase workforce participation and improve the livability of regional and rural communities'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed action: 'leverage government contracting to prioritise the employment of young people, in particular disadvantaged and disengaged youth'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed action: 'facilitate a coordinated approach to philanthropic investment'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed action: 'expand models that link education and housing support and linking these to youth justice diversion'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed action: 'link employment initiatives for young people leaving residential care, with broader training initiatives to maximise outcomes'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Following are some further proposed priority areas for action for initiatives within the new youth policy. These have also been provided by the DHHS for consultation. Please indicate if you agree, disagree or don't know that they should be priorities.

The proposed priority areas are listed below. Please indicate if you agree, disagree, or don't know about each of these actions.

If you would like to provide further comment about any of these specific proposals (such as key considerations for government in undertaking any of these proposed actions) please add your thoughts in the comments section.

Proposed focus area: 'youth leadership and mentoring linked to education, training and employment for Aboriginal and multicultural communities, and for young people in the youth justice and out of home care systems'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'youth homelessness advocacy'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'preventing online sexual exploitation'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'preventing online sexual exploitation'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'facilitating employment pathways and network building'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'creating more corporate and philanthropic partnerships'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'initiatives to address body image'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'initiatives to address bullying'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Proposed focus area: 'promoting young people's voice within their own communities, including Aboriginal and multicultural communities'

Agree Disagree Don't know

Comments (optional)

Thanks for completing the survey. We really appreciate you taking the time. If you would like a copy of the KYC submission to the Office for Youth please leave your contact details below.