



Youth Affairs
Council Victoria

Turning Ideas into Action Youth Forums 2016

Summary Report

The Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body representing the youth sector in Victoria.

YACVic provides a means by which the youth sector and young people can voice their opinions and concerns in regards to issues and policies affecting them.

YACVic works with and makes representation to government and serves as an advocate for the interests of young people, youth workers and/or workers who work with young people, and organisations that provide direct services to young people.

YACVic also promotes and supports the participation of young people in debate and policy development in areas that most affect them.

YACVic is funded by the Victorian Government's Office for Youth, Department of Health and Human Services.

Copies of this publication are available from www.yacvic.org.au

Included in this publication are images taken from various events organised or facilitated by YACVic.

YACVic gratefully acknowledges the support given by its members and participants of those events, including their permission for YACVic to use any associated images.

YACVic also acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians of the lands on which the youth forums were held and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

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Foreword by YACVic CEO

I am pleased to present this Summary Report from the 2016 Turning Ideas into Action youth forums series. The 12 youth forums, run by YACVic in partnership with the Victorian Government's Office for Youth, were the first of their kind in Victoria. This report gives a valuable overview of the forums and their importance for Victoria's young people, particularly in rural and regional areas.

The Turning Ideas into Action youth forums are a tangible outcome of the Victorian Government's Youth Policy, established in 2016 to improve engagement with Victorian young people around issues that are important to them. YACVic was excited to partner with the government on this project, which supports our commitment to young people in rural and regional Victoria and greatly builds on the existing work we are doing in these areas.

We travelled far and wide to deliver the forums in 12 different locations across Victoria between September and December 2016. We were extremely grateful to have the opportunity to work locally with over 60 community partner organisations and we were most appreciative of their support and expertise.

The most valuable part of the project for YACVic was working with young people across Victoria and hearing directly from them on issues and ideas they have for a better Victoria. We engaged 472 young people and captured over 3,000 individual issues, statements of need or ideas for action. 100% of forum participants surveyed agreed that the forum gave them the opportunity to talk about issues that are important to them. And 85% reported that they left the forums with new thoughts on how to turn their ideas into action.

We really look forward to seeing this momentum continue as the information gathered at the forums will now feed into the Victorian Government's Youth Summit in March 2017 and the inaugural Victorian Youth Congress. We also continue to work closely with the Victorian Government, local governments and community organisations on other engagement activities.

Thank you to all forum participants and our community partners, including local government youth services, who helped to make the Turning Ideas into Action youth forums such a success. We hope you enjoy this report and stay tuned as the action continues!

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Georgie Ferrari
Chief Executive Officer, YACVic

Introduction

From September to December 2016 the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic), in partnership with the Victorian Government, ran a series of 12 youth forums across the state. The forums were part of YACVic's ongoing commitment to ensuring young people's ideas are front and centre in policy making in Victoria. The series was coordinated by YACVic Rural, which expands our state-wide advocacy and support for young people in rural communities and the rural youth sector.

Titled 'Turning Ideas into Action' the forums were conducted as a strong first step in the implementation of the Victorian Government's Youth Policy, 'Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria'. This was released in 2016 after consultation with over 2,000 young people and details how the government is engaging with young Victorians on issues that are important to them.

Turning Ideas Into Action was designed as a mechanism for young people to amplify their voice and help shape future government decisions. In total, 472 young people attended a youth forum, in one of 12 locations, and over 3,000 individual statements of need or ideas for action were captured. This report shares the concerns and ideas generated by young people at the forums with young Victorians, community partners, and local and state government departments.

Information gathered during the forum series will feed into other Victorian Government initiatives, such as the inaugural Victorian Youth Summit, which will be held in National Youth Week 2017. It will bring together young people from across the state to identify issues that matter most to them. Young people will also elect regional representatives to the Victorian Youth Congress. These representatives will advise government and act on priority issues. The Victorian Government will publish further information about these projects on its Youth Central website.

Turning Ideas into Action in numbers:

- + 12 youth forums held in 12 locations over 12 weeks
- + 472 attendees at an average of 39.3 young people per forum
- + 3,053 individual issues, ideas and responses captured and coded across all forums
- + 60+ local community partners contributed to the success of the forum series
- + 4,300kms travelled to and from forum locations

Forum Locations

The 12 locations for the 2016 youth forum series were determined by the Victorian Government and Office for Youth in consultation with YACVic and included 10 regional and two metropolitan forums. Unfortunately, youth forums could not be facilitated in all parts of Victoria, but YACVic, through its Rural and Regional Presence Project (YACVic Rural), is committed to working across the state to engage young Victorians and hopes to have the opportunity in 2017 and beyond to host similar forums in parts of Victoria not represented in the 2016 forum series.

The word cloud below displays the locations of the 12 youth forums with each forum's font size representative of the number of young people who attended it, with Port Fairy being the largest with 110 attendees and Morwell the smallest with 10 attendees.



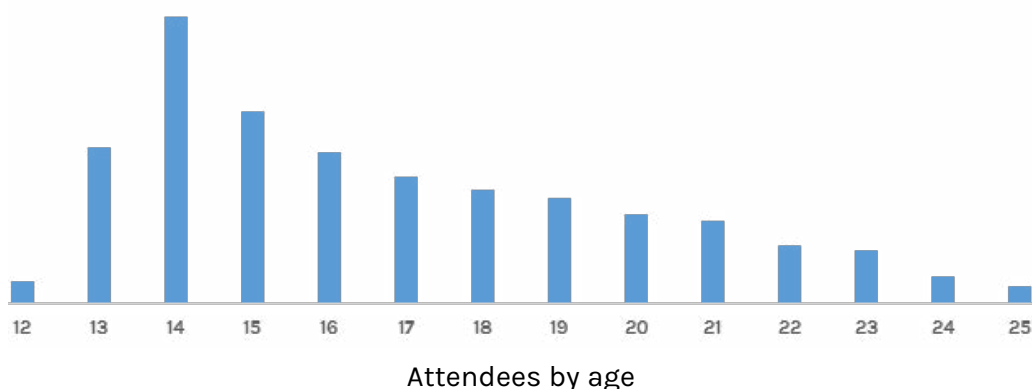
Attendees

The youth forums engaged 472 young people aged 12-25, averaging almost 40 young people per forum. The graph below provides a visual representation of forum participants by age.

The forums intentionally did not require attendees to identify by gender or cultural background. Rather we focused on working with local community partners and youth services in the forum locations to engage a diverse mix of young people, representative of their services and community.

Adults aged over 25 were present at most forums but were separated from the 12-25 cohort and do not feature in this report to maintain integrity in the process and data.

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Forum Design

The youth forums were designed by YACVic in consultation with the Office for Youth. In determining the best format for the forums we took into account:

- + the need to have the voice of young people front and centre at every forum
- + the need for the forum to be engaging for young people aged between 12 and 25
- + the need to have a format that could be replicated across all 12 locations and thus had the ability to adapt to the different locations/venues
- + the need to educate young people on the different roles and responsibilities of the three tiers of government in Australia, in an engaging way
- + the need to accurately capture and record the ideas and opinions of forum attendees so that they could be reported back to attendees, community partners and both local and state government
- + the need to keep the forums to under three hours so they could take place after school hours and still allow enough time for attendees to travel from outlying areas.

Each forum consisted of five distinct phases:

1. Forum Opening

Each forum began with either a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country, followed by acknowledging the forum as a youth space and a safe space for all attendees.

Time was then dedicated to a brief overview of the forum format and its intended outcomes and to introduce YACVic and its staff, the Victorian Government's Youth Policy and the Office for Youth staff who were present.



2. Issue Identification

The first activity that attendees were invited to partake in was to identify issues they were most passionate about. Attendees were given five coloured notecards and asked to write:

- + their age in the top corner
- + a heading for their topic
- + a sentence explaining the issue they wanted to raise.

Participants were then invited to talk to the person sitting next to them about the topics they had written down and, if they wanted, to stand up and share one or more of the topics they had written down with everyone at the forum.

Once everyone who wanted to share with the whole group had done so, the note cards were collected by YACVic and Office for Youth staff.

100% of forum participants surveyed agreed that the youth forum gave them the opportunity to talk about issues that are important to them.

3. Civic Engagement

To aid forum attendees in developing state-based solutions to issues they had identified, they were next given a quick overview of how the three different levels of government work in Australia and what areas they each cover.

Attendees were then provided with a colorful postcard and asked to write:

- + their first name, age and town/suburb
- + one thing they would do if they were Premier of Victoria for a day.

Again, forum attendees were invited to share their responses with their peers.

92% of forum participants surveyed reported that the forums gave them a better understanding of the different levels of Australian government.

4. Brainstorming Ideas for Action

Participants then used this information in small groups to brainstorm possible actions to address an agreed upon issue or identified need, stemming from the second phase of the forum. Attendees were given a template poster to complete with the following sections:

- + action title
- + statement of need
- + possible ideas for action
- + relevant Victorian Government portfolio.

Time permitting, attendees were asked to complete two posters per group. The posters were then shared with the larger group and other attendees had the opportunity to add to the posters they hadn't worked on directly.

85% of forum participants surveyed reported they left the forums with new ideas on how to turn their ideas into action.

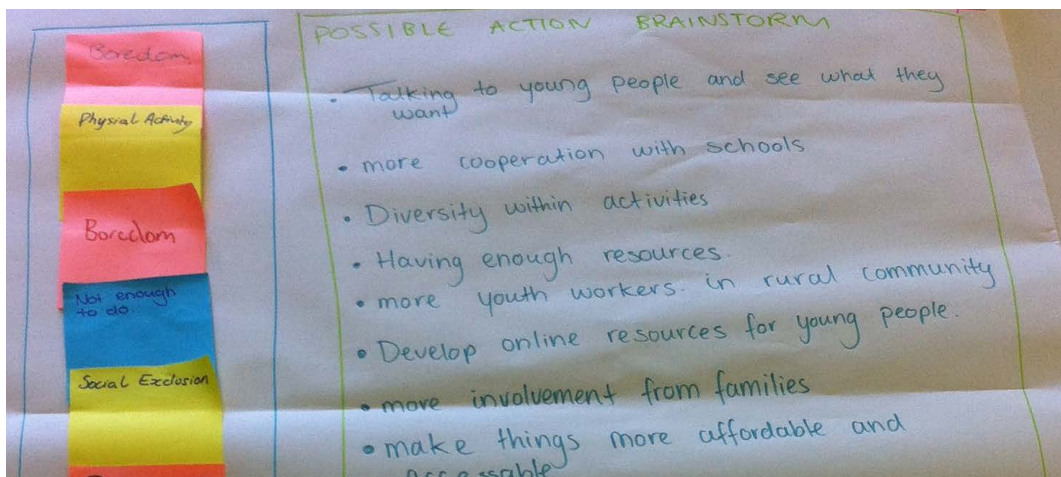
5. Forum Wrap-Up and Close

YACVic provided food and refreshments at each of the forums. It was a great way to show our appreciation to the young people for participating. It was also a good opportunity for young people to socialise together and for YACVic and Office for Youth staff to have further conversations with attendees about their ideas for a better Victoria.

Posters, notecards and postcards were all collected and attendees were reminded that their work would:

- + feed into the 2017 Victorian Youth Summit
- + form a mandate for the new Victorian Youth Congress
- + be reported back to them, the community, and local and state government through this report.

Lastly an evaluation was completed and attendees were given the opportunity to register their interest in participating in the Youth Summit, Youth Congress and other upcoming youth opportunities. A 4GB YACVic Rural USB stick was handed out to all attendees as a thank you.



Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

The data from the notecards, postcards and posters completed by the 472 youth forum attendees was entered into one spreadsheet with a total of over 3,000 individual ideas for action, statements of need or youth responses. Each piece of data was sorted by location, coded and then cross-checked with one of 30 categories based on attendees' responses to provide the basis of this report. This data is also supported by facilitator notes and audio recordings of young people talking about the issues that matter most to them and their community.

You can find more information about our data processes, including examples of tables and graphs, in Appendix 1 on page 64.

Data Sheets

In addition to the information contained in this report, YACVic also has the ability to produce and share data sheets upon request, to community organisations and local or state government, which capture youth forum attendees' direct responses by location and/or topic. To request a data sheet, please email rural@yacvic.org.au with 'Youth Forum Data Sheet Request' in the subject line and information about the data sheet/s you would like in the body of the email.

*Please note that while we have tried to cut down on the use of acronyms, for the purpose of this report the acronym of LGBTQI+ has been used as a short topic heading for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people and other sexuality and gender diverse people and communities.

Forum Reports by Location



- 1 Swan Hill
- 2 Morwell
- 3 Geelong
- 4 Dandenong
- 5 Maribyrnong
- 6 Bairnsdale
- 7 Ballarat
- 8 Bendigo
- 9 Dunkeld
- 10 Wangaratta
- 11 Shepparton
- 12 Port Fairy

This section of the report provides a brief snapshot of the 12 youth forums by location to give insight into the key themes and hot topics of each forum.

Each location report has been created using a consistent format so that information can be easily viewed, interpreted and compared across all forum locations.

A brief introduction and forum photos are used to set the scene.

Word clouds represent what young people were speaking up about at each forum.



These graphs provide a visual for the hot topics of each forum.

A short summary provides insight into what was said by young people on key themes.

The notecards highlight key ideas for action from each forum.

These location reports will be available to download individually from the YACVic website or by request at rural@yacvic.org.au

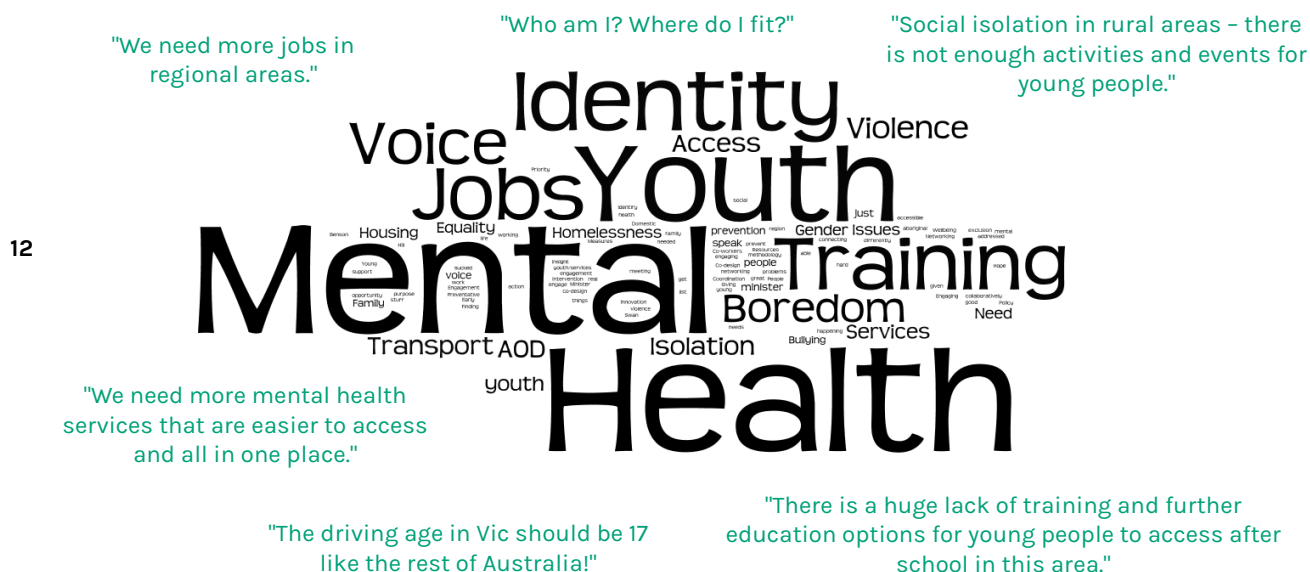
Forum One – Swan Hill

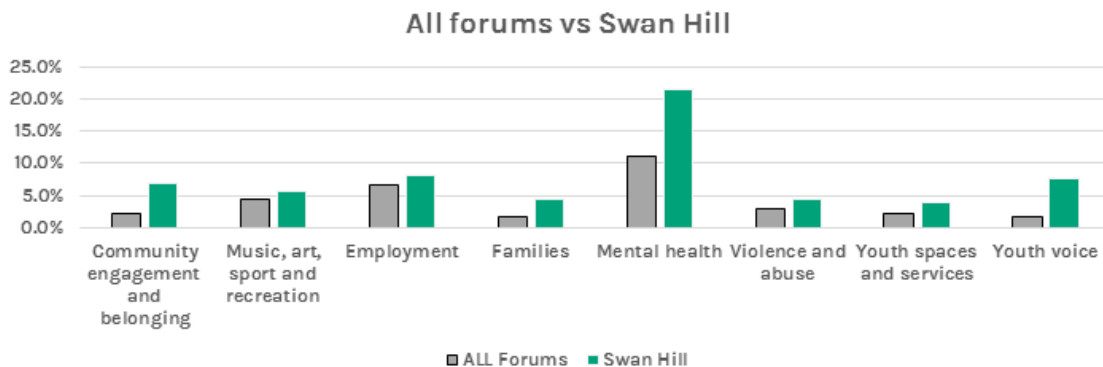
On 21 September 2016, during the first week of school holidays, we held the first of 12 youth forums at the Grain Shed in Swan Hill. The youth forum was combined with a youth sector event that included training in co-design for local youth practitioners.

The forum featured guest speakers Benson Saulo, former Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations, and the Minister for Youth Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Mikakos MP. After hearing a keynote address from Benson on the power of your own story and values, young people put their voice to the needs of the local community and worked together to brainstorm ideas for a better Victoria.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Swan Hill spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.





Mental Health dominated topics discussed, accounting for over 20% of all conversations and written work at the forum, almost double that of the forum series average. Discussion focused on an improved model of care for all young people with a strong emphasis on removing barriers and improving access to mental health services, and combating the stigma attached to seeking support for mental health.

Community engagement and youth voice featured highly, with an expressed need for more opportunities across the Southern Mallee for young people to take on positions of responsibility within their community. There was also a desire for more youth activities and events for young people to attend after school and on weekends, with some young people asking for better promotion of what's already going on in the region for young people.

Forum attendees also focused heavily on the topic of employment, calling for a range of actions to invest in industries and create more jobs in regional Victoria. Ideas include more supports for the agriculture sector, more local options for adult education, better use of technology to support small businesses, and incentives for young people to return to the country to live and work once they have completed their university education.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised in Swan Hill that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of Mental Health and Youth Voice were mentioned more by young people at the Swan Hill youth forum than in any other of our youth forums.

Ideas for Action:

Mental Health - provide services within schools that provide for all levels of need.

Bullying - invest in young people at a local level to develop innovative ways to get the anti-bullying message out.

Youth Voice - give more funding for young people to put their ideas into action.

Identity - run school programs and cross-generational community activities focusing on purpose, identity, choices and connections.

Forum Two – Morwell

On 3 November 2016, the same day it was announced that the local Hazelwood power plant would be closing, the second youth forum was held in Morwell at the Latrobe Community Health Service. Although this was the smallest of our forums, the young people in attendance spoke passionately about issues that were impacting their community and put voice to their ideas for an improved Victoria. The level of involvement was very high and attendees represented local youth services such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth, headspace and the local Children and Youth Area Partnerships.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Morwell spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"Challenge cultural attitudes, such as masculinity and overall discrimination."

"It costs too much to see the doctor. Medication is also expensive. It is also hard to get an appointment. There also isn't much education about how the system works."



"Racism and bullying are other big issues for young people – we get judged by others by look, culture, color etc."

"There are not enough jobs for young people around, we need more job opportunities for young people."

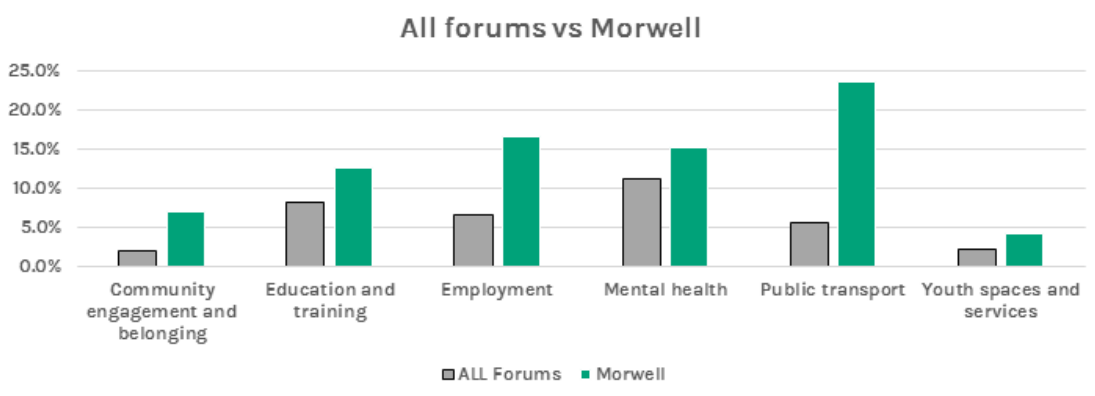
"Trains and buses are too infrequent, or non-existent. We cannot get to school/work/social activities without driving, but then we can't get our P plates at 17 like every other state."

Public Transport was the number one issue discussed, with a clearly stated need for more frequent and reliable public transportation options to enable young people to travel to/from work, school and social engagements.

Free public transport for all students was raised, as was the need for new routes between smaller towns and a call to lower the driving age to 17.

Ideas to strengthen youth employment opportunities were also high on the agenda as it was perceived that there were limited job options locally for young people to enter the workforce.

Access to education and training and greater supports for young people while they study were suggested as a pathway for young people to improve their employability in the local job market.



The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised in Morwell that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of Employment and Public Transport were mentioned more by young people at the Morwell youth forum than in any other of our youth forums.

Ideas for Action

Employment - every community needs to open a youth career centre to support with career path counselling.

Transport - if I was Premier for a day I would go on a spending spree, opening new public transport lines and buy back metro.

Mental Health - provide more opportunity and info in terms of mental health eg. young people who are counsellors and mentors.

Forum Three – Geelong

On 7 November 2016, 55 young people, ranging between 12 and 19 years of age, attended the third youth forum at the fOrT Youth Centre in North Geelong. City of Greater Geelong staff were present at the forum and attendees were asked to share what they envisaged Geelong would look like in another 30 years. Forum attendees thoroughly enjoyed the dinner provided and did a great job of expressing themselves as they spoke up on issues important to them and their community.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Geelong spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"Make parents and children more aware about the LGBTQI+ community. Safe Schools – all schools!"

"Discrimination on the street is a problem, laws against significant discrimination are needed."

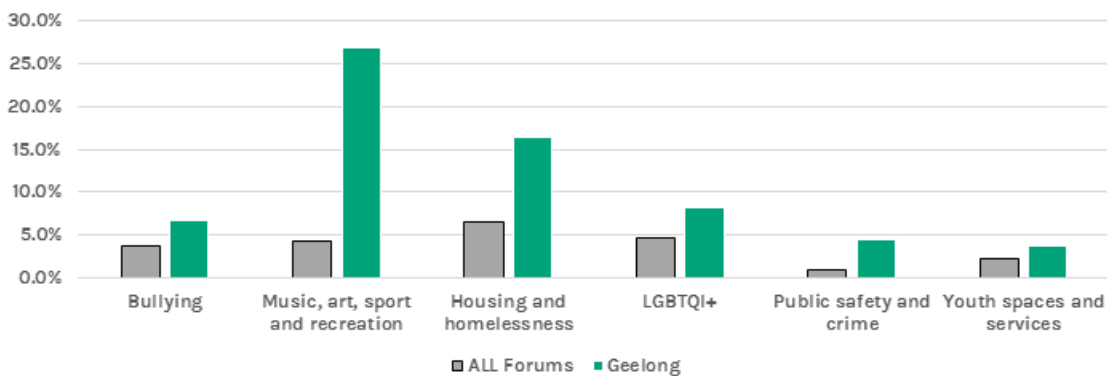


"Within a city such as Geelong there needs to be more interactive inclusive spaces."

"More public events for kids our age, meaning more interaction and opportunities."

"Young teens need a place to go when things aren't ok at home."

All forums vs Geelong



Stuff to do (music, art, sport and recreation) was the biggest topic of the forum, raised six times more often than the forum series average, with calls for more sporting facilities, youth-friendly events and programs such as those on offer at the fOrT Youth Centre.

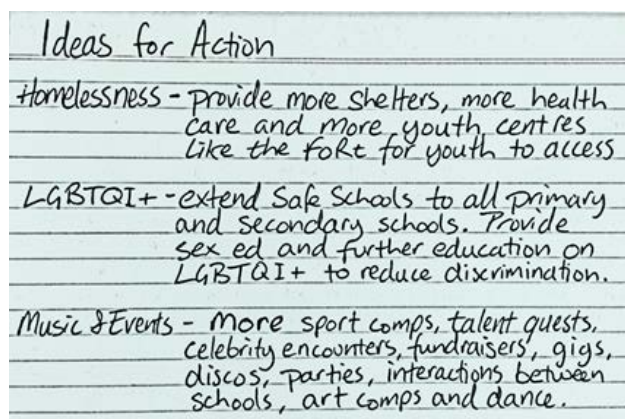
Homelessness and the need to provide more safe housing options and supports for young people in need were discussed as high priorities.

Public safety was also mentioned, with violence on the street and racially motivated attacks cited as points of concern for young people in the area, especially those without a home to go to.

Participants also called for more education and supports around LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people and other sexuality and gender diverse people and communities) for schools, police and community organisations to better provide for gender diverse young people.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised in Geelong that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of Music, Arts, Sport and Recreation and also Homelessness and Housing, were mentioned more by young people at the Geelong youth forum than in any other of our youth forums.



Forum Four – Dandenong

On 8 November 2016, 55 young people attended the fourth youth forum at the Council Chambers in Dandenong, with participants ranging in age from 10 (our youngest forum series participant) to 25 years old. The forum had a fantastic energy with young people relishing the opportunity to speak up on diverse issues and connecting with like-minded peers to create solutions. The forum also provided an opportunity for the Southern Melbourne Children and Youth Area Partnership to gain feedback and insight on priority issues for young people in their catchment.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Dandenong spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"Education should be remodeled to reflect real world experiences."

"Racism is everywhere and many people experience it. We have to work together to stop it."

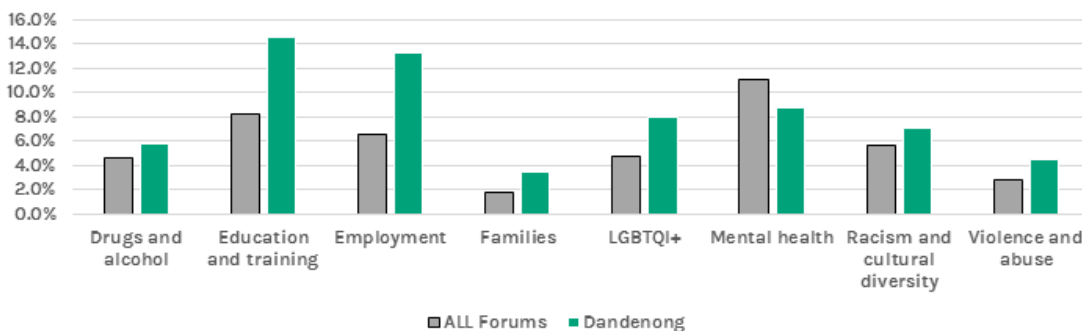


"There should be an ongoing national discussion on the mental health of young people and the context surrounding it ... and the underlying social and personal issues that may lead to mental health problems."

"Trans young people have a massive homeless rate and the youth homeless services don't know how to deal with transgender youth."

"There are so many young people living in Dandenong without a job that lead them into different problems such as drugs, gangs, mental health issues and not socialising. I think ... we need more jobs."

All forums vs Dandenong



Education and Employment, especially as they relate to recently settled migrants and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, were the most discussed topics during this forum.

There was also lively discussion on a range of issues representative of the diversity of young people in the room, such as equality within service provision, better treatment of vulnerable young people, the impact of racism within the community and increased supports for the LGBTQI+ community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people and other sexuality and gender diverse people and communities).

These notecards showcase some of the great ideas raised in Dandenong that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

Ideas for Action

Youth Voice - Issues youth face today are interconnected and need wholistic approach. Employ young people with lived experience to be involved in creating policies based on this.

LGBTQI+ - Create more inclusive and safe youth refuges for LGBTQI+ young people "Rainbow Houses" with trained staff, inclusive policies and appropriate facilities.

Diversity - Promote greater inter-culture and inter-faith events so we can learn about diversity in every culture and faith.

Ideas for Action

Education - Develop a youth-led peer-to-peer workshop series for year 8s and 9s on voting, finance & tax, consent, self defense and healthy relationships etc.

Employment - Open Australian TAFE's overseas, so you can get qualified to work in Australia before you arrive.

- Have Centrelink recommend scholarships, internships, and workshops for professional skill development such as how to build a business, or be a young entrepreneurial in today's world.

The topics of Employment and Education and Training were mentioned more by young people at the Dandenong youth forum than almost all of our other youth forums.

Forum Five – Maribyrnong

On a warm evening on 10 November 2016, 16 young people made the most of the Maribyrnong youth forum to speak with passion and conviction on issues important to them. In particular, this forum provided attendees with the opportunity to discuss the need for greater representation, inclusion and engagement of all young people and the need to combat racism and discrimination present in Australia today.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Maribyrnong spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"A constant, accurate, holistic and sex positive sex education that includes GLTBOI+ youth."

"Public education underfunded. University funding is stagnant. Threats to de-regulation of university."



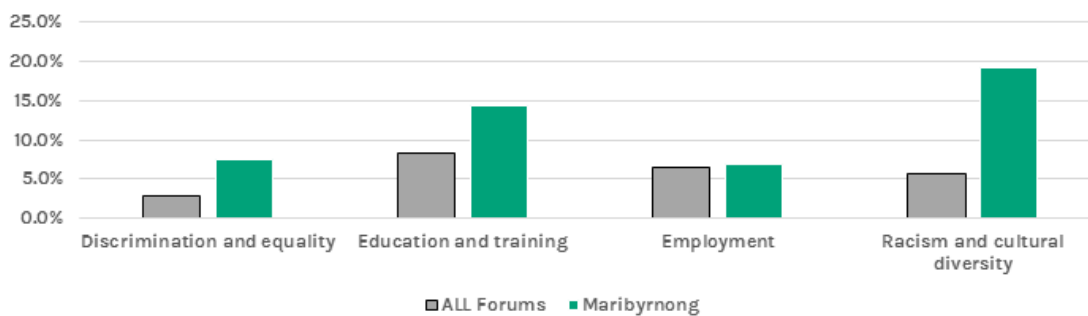
"3rd culture kids finding it hard to find a place and belong; lack of inter-culturally and interfaith engagement."

"Indigenous sovereignty over this land has never ended. Racial profiling and Indigenous incarceration has got to stop."

"Literally NOTHING has been done to combat [Islamophobia]. Bullying in schools. On the streets. National newspapers/media have spread the fear of Muslims."

"Lack of representation in the media by people of color. I want to see more people like me on television. Not as a 'token' person of color but as a human with a life story."

All forums vs Maribyrnong



The graph above highlights the four most prominent issues raised by those young people who attended the Maribyrnong youth forum.

Interestingly there was a lot of crossover between these four categories. For example, the issues of discrimination and prejudice were flagged as barriers to employment for many young people.

Likewise, mentorships and paid traineeship schemes were suggested as means of supporting young people to access employment opportunities.

As with other forums, the Maribyrnong youth forum covered a wide range of topics important to attendees. Media representation of people of colour, the need for more mental health supports, and investment in the protection of the environment were all spoken about by many young people during this forum. The need for reliable, affordable public transport and the importance of opportunities for young people to be leaders in their community were also highlighted.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topic of Racism and Cultural Diversity was mentioned at Maribyrnong youth forum more than any of our other forums in this series.

Ideas for Action

- Equity - Trans and gender diverse youth refugees... We are over-represented in homelessness due to oppression against us. Services should be dedicated specifically for us.*
- Education - Increase alternative schools for disengaged youth with a curriculum that strives to re-engage them as active citizens.*
- Diversity - enable more people of colour to engage in government in positions of power.*
- Employment - Create youth employment networks/workshops that encourage local employers to connect with and mentor young people in their community.*
- Health - Offer mental health first aid workshops in schools for teachers and students.*

Forum Six – Bairnsdale

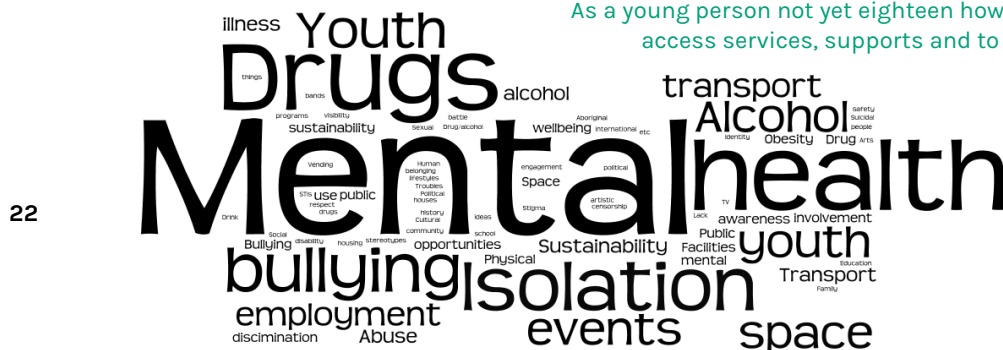
On 16 November 2016, 25 young people from across Gippsland came together in Bairnsdale to attend the sixth youth forum and share not only their concerns on issues most important to them but to also help brainstorm ideas for action in their community and across the state. Young people were fantastic at articulating what they cared about and what they wanted to see addressed, and came up with some excellent suggestions about what could be done to make Victoria better for all young people.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Bairnsdale spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"There are many stigmas surrounding mental health and many silent sufferers. Young people need help and education in what mental health is and how it can be treated."

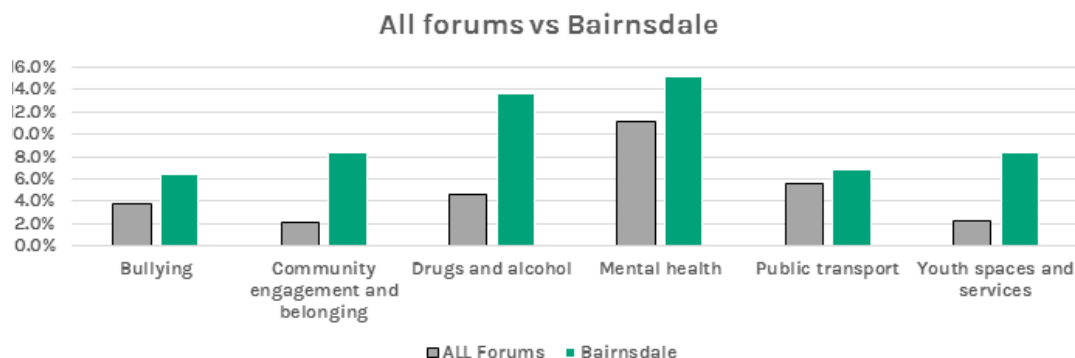
"The lack of public transport is a big issue down our way. It's inconsistent and unreliable. There are only two town buses a day. As a young person not yet eighteen how do you get around to access services, supports and to youth events?"



"Sport is great but not everyone is always interested; if you're not part of a local club it feels like you don't have connection to the town."

"Young people need ways to be supported in understanding their identity and sexuality."

"Our current school system says they have a 'no tolerance to bullying system' but yet most cases go unnoticed/unresolved frequently."



The graph above highlights the six topics that dominated conversation at the Bairnsdale youth forum, with all six topics receiving more attention in Bairnsdale than the forums series average.

The prevalence of drug and alcohol use in the community and the need for more services, supports and education around mental health were the two stand out topics, among other central themes such as bullying, public transport, sexual health, the environment, isolation and community engagement.

There was a strong consensus at the forum that more needed to be done to combat the perceived rise in illicit drug availability and use in the area, with more anti-drug education campaigns and better supports for young people fighting addiction suggested as potential solutions.

Forum attendees also articulated the need in their community for more youth spaces and specialised youth services to engage with diverse young people in the Gippsland area. However, they also highlighted the fact that without adequate public transport to help young people get to and from such spaces and services, they would be difficult for everyone to access.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised by young people in Bairnsdale that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of Youth Spaces and Services, Drugs and Alcohol, and Community Engagement and Belonging were mentioned more at the Bairnsdale youth forum than any other in our forum series.

Ideas for Action

- Isolation - have an option to apply for your drivers licence when you are 17.*
- Youth Space - build a youth space with free public transport to it and youth service run out of it. Like accommodation for couch surfers and free wifi.*
- Mental Health - introduce a program for high schools to help educate young people on what mental illness is, how it impacts people and how to treat it.*
- Environment - review the current sustainability policies and create a plan to roll over to at least 85% renewables by 2025, and 100% by 2030.*
- Education - teach students about life eg. tax, rent, insurance, investing etc.*

Forum Seven – Ballarat

On 22 November 2016, 65 young people made their way to Housey House at the Forge Pizzeria in central Ballarat for our seventh youth forum—our second largest forum with young people travelling from as far as Stawell to join in the conversation. Forum attendees were amazing as they explained the issues that were important to them, engaged in passionate conversation and worked with their peers to develop ideas and solutions that could be scaled up from their community to be implemented across the state.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Ballarat spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"Those in rural and remote areas especially have trouble with transport ... they are less likely to socialise with new and different people and have opportunities for work or education."

"Making education accessible to everyone. Knowledge is power and through education young people can find their voice and make an impression/change the world."

"Fill the damn potholes. It's terrifying to drive on our roads, especially for young people."

people and have opportunities for
work or education."

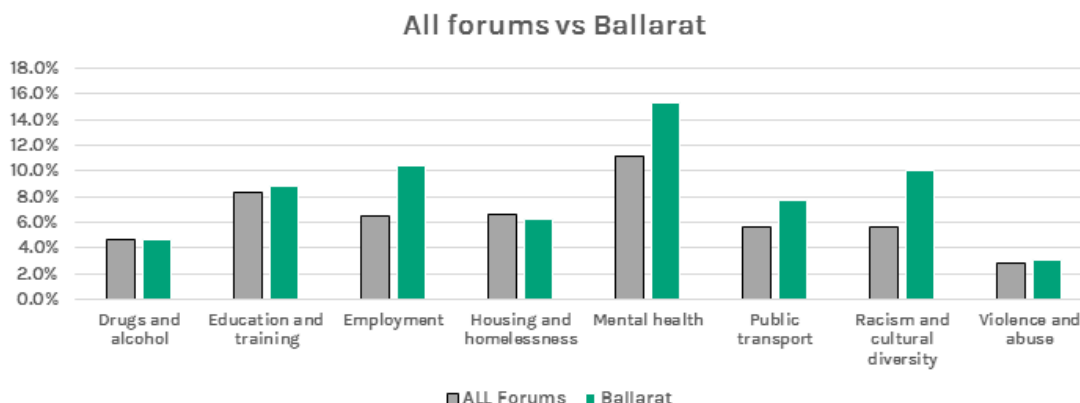
Public Bullying Abuse
Racism homelessness
transport public school Road Engagement climate Rubbish opportunities
education Employment Drugs
Education Youth Respect jobs acceptance Poor Entertainment Small developments Ballarat Housing Seekers support safety
abuse help mental religious self image freedom equal disability gender rural depression schools youth change social
use lack
violence
body
innovation
traffic
refugees
littering
homelessness
health
acceptance
drug
alcohol
activities
transport
unemployment
houselessness
public
school
road
violence
railway
employment
education
people
have
opportunities
work
education
terrifying
drive
roads
especially
young
people."

"The easy availability of illegal drugs is leading to increasing and earlier use of drugs."

"Can't get a job without experience,
can't get experience without a job.
Young people need to get their foot
in the door."

"Bullying is a major cause of many mental health issues in people in today's society. Self-harm and even suicide can be influenced into action due to cyber and regular bullying."

"Homelessness is an issue I am incredibly passionate about. It is ridiculous that we live in a society where people walk past homeless in the street and ignore them like they aren't even people, and like they are somehow different from themselves, simply because these people are facing hardship."



The graph above highlights the broad range of issues raised by those young people who attended the Ballarat youth forum, which were very much reflective of those raised in other youth forums.

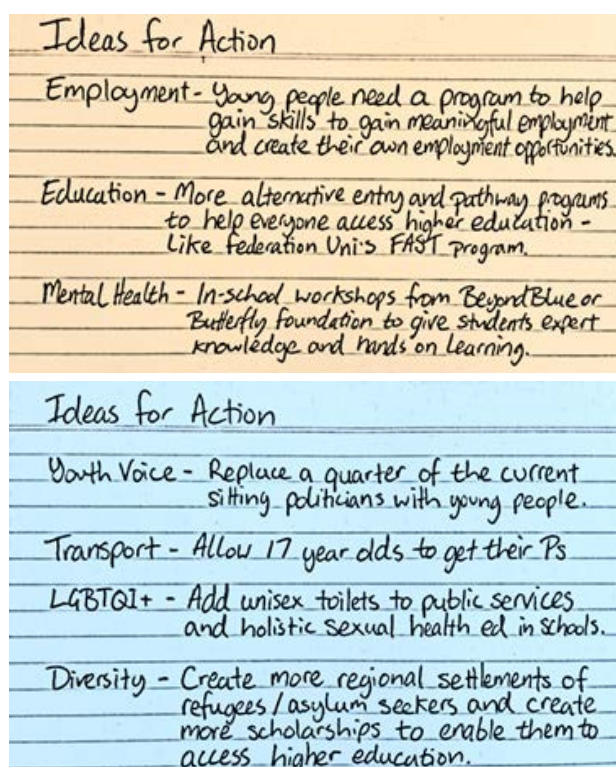
The young people at the Ballarat forum called for better supports for rural Victorians to access further education and have more pathways for young people to enter the workforce.

The need for greater access to and promotion of mental health services, and supports for the LGBTIQ+ community, the refugee and migrant communities and those homeless young people living in the community, were also articulated by a significant number of attendees.

More frequent and reliable public transport and lowering the driving age to 17 were again flagged as critical, along with fixing our country roads.

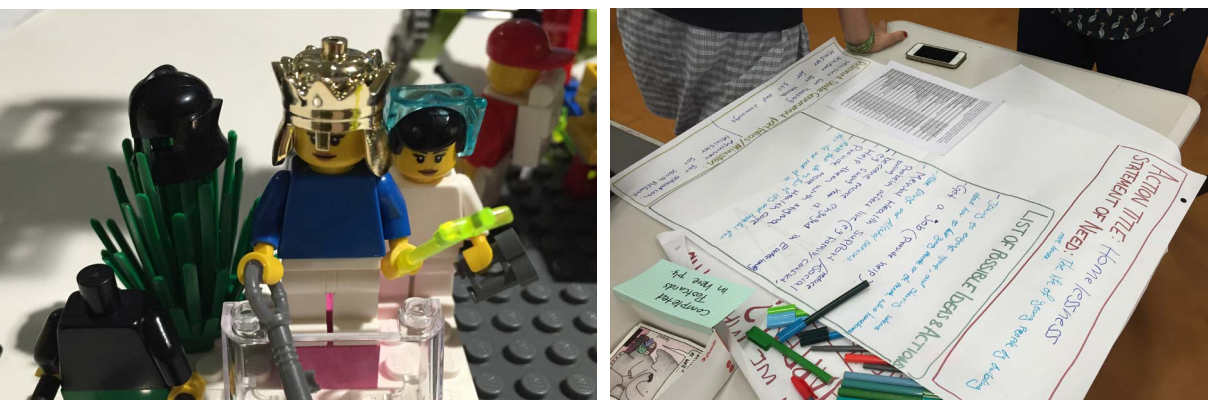
The notecards below showcase some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The issues raised during the Ballarat youth forum were so closely tied to, and representative of, what we heard across all forums that Ballarat didn't rank 1st on any one topic.



Forum Eight – Bendigo

On 23 November 2016, 23 young people travelled from as far as Castlemaine to the Bendigo Library to attend the eighth youth forum, to share their ideas on how to create a better Victoria and to make new friends in the process. In attendance were members of the Victorian Student Representative Council and the local youth council, who added to the high level of conversation in the room and vibrancy of the event. We also hosted Andrew Brough from the Foundation for Young Australians, who spoke about his work in co-creating 'Youth Led Enterprise Hubs in Regional Australia' (#LaunchClubs).



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Bendigo spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"The ever-rising statistic of people experiencing mental health problems needs to be addressed. headspace centres have to be more widespread, especially in regional areas."

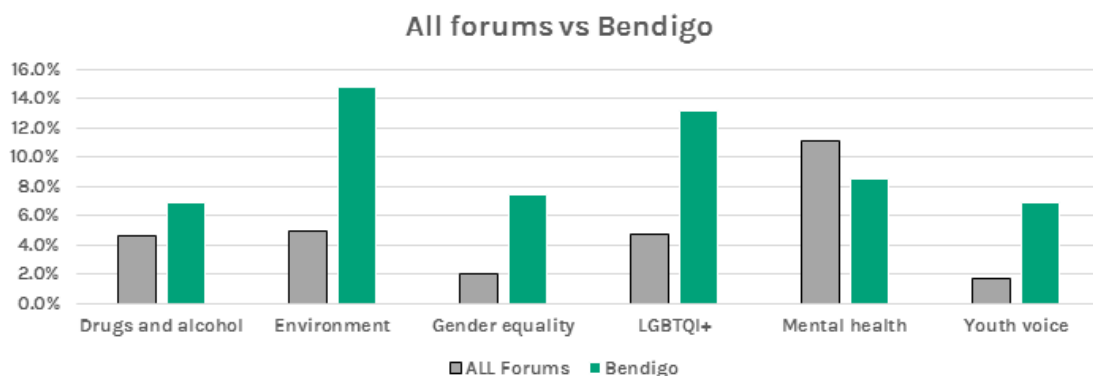
"Women are STILL second-class citizens. We need to break gender stereotypes/roles and empower women to reach high levels in employment."



"The lack of consistent education programs such as Safe Schools in schools causes a lack of awareness and knowledge about the LGBTI+ community."

"The ice issue is one that affects our young community with violence and financial issues ... kids get disengaged from school, the community and friends."

"It's 2016. Hurry up
and legalise gay
marriage already.
Love is love!"



The graph above highlights the issues of importance to those young people who attended the Bendigo youth forum, namely the Environment, Gender Equality, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people and other sexuality and gender diverse (LGBTQI+) people and communities.

Forum attendees were vocal in their desire for same-sex marriage to be legalised, for better sex-education for same-sex-attracted and trans youth, and for better community education about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people and other sexuality and gender diverse (LGBTQI+) people and communities to reduce discrimination and misinformation.

There was support for prioritising the health of the natural environment through investing in renewable energy, increased climate change education and advocacy, and for greater respect of Aboriginal land rights.

Gender-based discrimination was also a hot topic with forum attendees calling for gender equality in schools, the workplace, the home and the supermarket, with one young person citing the fact that women have to pay goods and services tax on sanitary items, which are classed as 'luxury' items as just one example of such discrimination.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of the Environment and Gender Equality were mentioned more during the Bendigo youth forum than any other in our forum series.

Ideas for Action

- Environment - generate jobs that are geared towards renewable energy and innovation.*
- Employment - Lower the age of youth allowance to 15 to help people find work.*
- LGBTQI+ - mandate Safe Schools for all Victorian schools, offer same-sex-attracted gender-diverse sex ed.*
- Alcohol & Drugs - programs to break the culture of binge drinking and educate us on how to support recovery.*
- Identity - programs to foster connection to country, community & self.*

Forum Nine – Dunkeld

On 25 November 2016, 33 young people who were attending the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) Camp in Dunkeld, at the foothills of the Grampians in south-west Victoria, participated in our ninth youth forum. The YEP camp, funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, emerged from a successful program designed to improve employment pathways for young people with supported needs. Camp attendees took the opportunity provided by the youth forum to speak up on issues important to them and advocate for the changes they wish to see in their community and in the rest of Victoria.

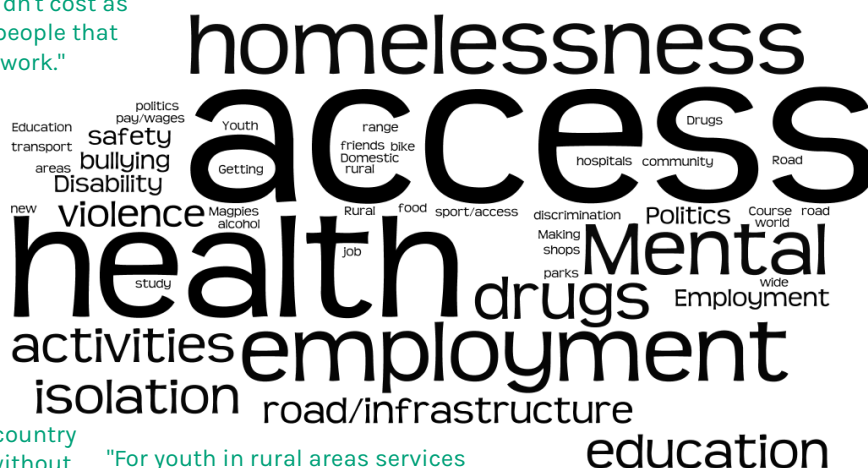


The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Dunkeld spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"We should be able to get our P plates at the age of 17."

"Drugs and alcohol is a big problem for young kids because they get addicted."

"TAFE shouldn't cost as much for people that don't work."

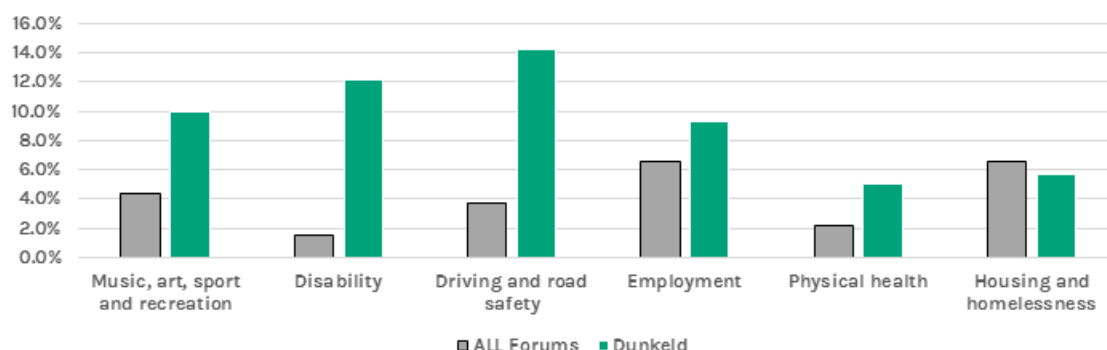


"No NBN in country areas, life without NBN is extremely boring."

"For youth in rural areas services such as the hospital can sometimes be unavailable to them. They're not able to have the same opportunities as cities or bigger towns."

"Young people can have trouble with getting a job because some people need some more help than others."

All forums vs Dunkeld



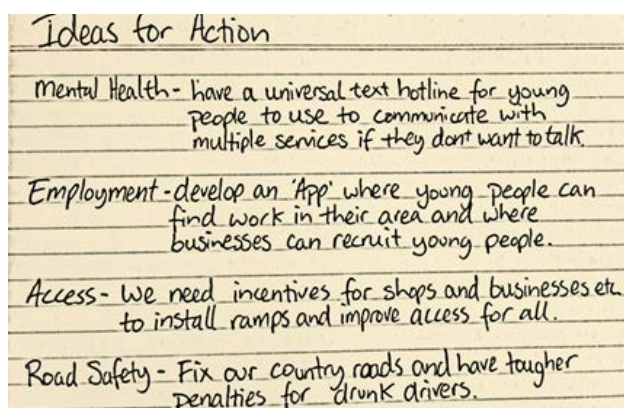
Driving and Road Safety was the most popular topic of this forum, with calls to fix country roads and make them safe, by filling potholes properly and widening sealed roads in sections, for young people and their families to drive on. Young people also called for the driving age to be lowered to 17 so young people could be more independent, access work opportunities and social events, and not rely upon infrequent or non-existent public transport options.

Disability was also a major focus, with forum attendees articulating a need for all facets of community to be more accessible for all young people. This included a strong emphasis on providing ramps, lifts and appropriate equipment for people in wheelchairs as well as greater provision of equal opportunity employment and supports for all young people looking to enter the workforce within a small job market.

Employment was highlighted as another issue for attendees and young people in country Victoria, with attendees calling for a greater emphasis to be placed on the creation of jobs for young people and an increase in training and pre-employment programs to support young people looking to enter the workforce.

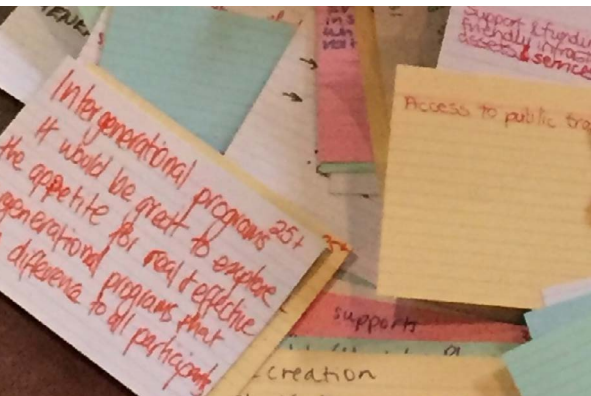
The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of Driving and Road Safety, and Disability were mentioned more during the Dunkeld youth forum than any other in our forum series.



Forum 10 – Wangaratta

On 30 November 2016, 18 young people attended the 10th youth forum at the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre, with young people travelling from as far as Wodonga, Glenrowan, Moyhu and Chiltern to participate. The forum provided a great opportunity for attendees to meet like-minded young people from the area and make connections through discussing the issues that matter most to them, as well as putting forward their ideas for a better Victoria.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Wangaratta spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

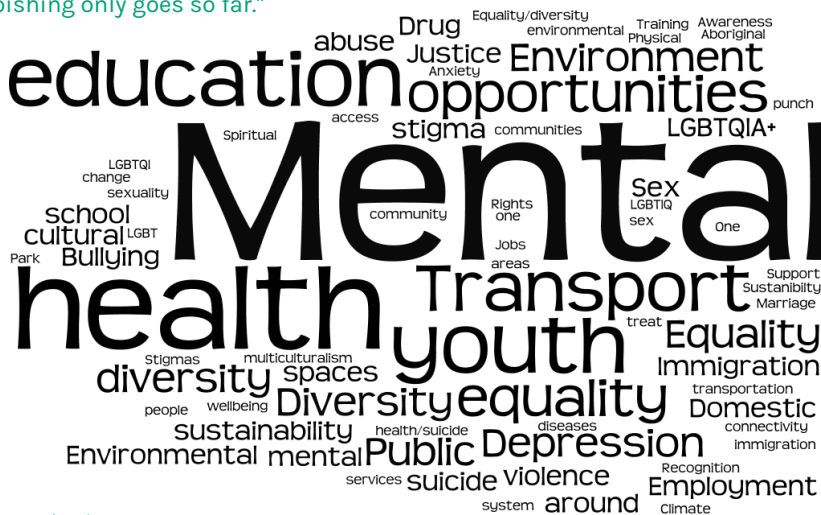
"The state of the V/Line service is disgraceful. The fact that people rely on the service to get to and from school and it gets delayed or cancelled is bad. It happens so often it is beyond a joke. Youth tend to rely on this because some don't have a licence. The fact the trains are crap and falling apart - refurbishing only goes so far."

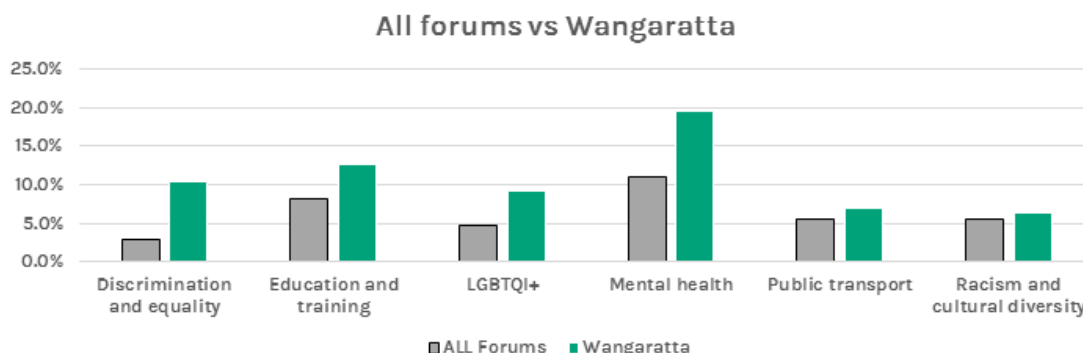
"Times are changing. We live in a world where everything changes nearly every month; however, the one thing that never evolves is the education system."

"Instances of suicide skyrocket once you get to the country because of isolation and lack of access to services."

"Internet access is the gateway to information, socialisation, and entertainment. The NBN is shockingly inadequate and not even available to a large amount of people. Educate. Connect. Inspire."

"Wangaratta has no queer-friendly places. It was hard for me growing up here because there was NOTHING. I want more inclusion. I want a pride day. I want a committee. I want Safe Schools!"





Mental Health featured heavily during the forum, with attendees talking about the high rates of youth suicide in rural and regional areas and the need for more services in schools and the community that are easily accessible.

Bullying was flagged as a contributing factor to the high rate of youth suicide in country Victoria. As was the stigma around mental health and accessing mental health services in small towns.

The young people at the forum also called for greater equality, advocating for same-sex marriage to become legal and for steps to be taken to ensure all young people feel safe at home, school, work and in the community.

The need for greater promotion of good news stories featuring young people and for more to be done to eliminate the negative stereotypes of young people were also features of this forum, as young people in the room called on both the community and decision makers to take young people seriously.

In regards to education, forum attendees highlighted the difficulty for rural and regional young people to access higher education because of the financial cost of moving away from home and the poor level of public transport connecting rural cities such as Wangaratta to Melbourne and Albury.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topics of Discrimination and Equality were mentioned more by young people at the Wangaratta youth forum than in any other of our youth forums.

Ideas for Action

Equality - legalise gay marriage. As a first world country this current inequality is pretty embarrassing.

LGBTQI+ - Make Safe Schools compulsory in all schools.

Mental Health - More supports like headspace where young people can access immediate support and crisis intervention. Plus more education in primary school to encourage youth to speak up about personal issues.

Transport - Improve public transport for school and uni students and other dependant populations.

Forum 11 – Shepparton

On 1 December 2016, 42 young people attended our 11th youth forum at Casablanca Pizza & Pasta to speak up on issues that were important to them, and discuss ideas about how they could be addressed at both local and state level. We appreciated that Minister for Youth Affairs the Hon. Jenny Mikakos MP could also attend to deliver the forum's opening address and speak about the Victorian Government's commitment to young people. Independent Member for Shepparton Ms Suzanna Sheed also attended, along with local youth and community workers, to listen to the young people in the room.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Shepparton spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"We want a swimming pool for women and girls because most Muslim girls and women can't swim in front of boys and men."

"Education in rural areas continues to hinder students especially in VCE from achieving their true potential."

"Bullying is not OK. It lowers self-esteem. It makes people feel horrible about themselves. I want bullying to stop. So should you."

"People all around are affected by drugs. It's not always their choice. It's not always their fault."

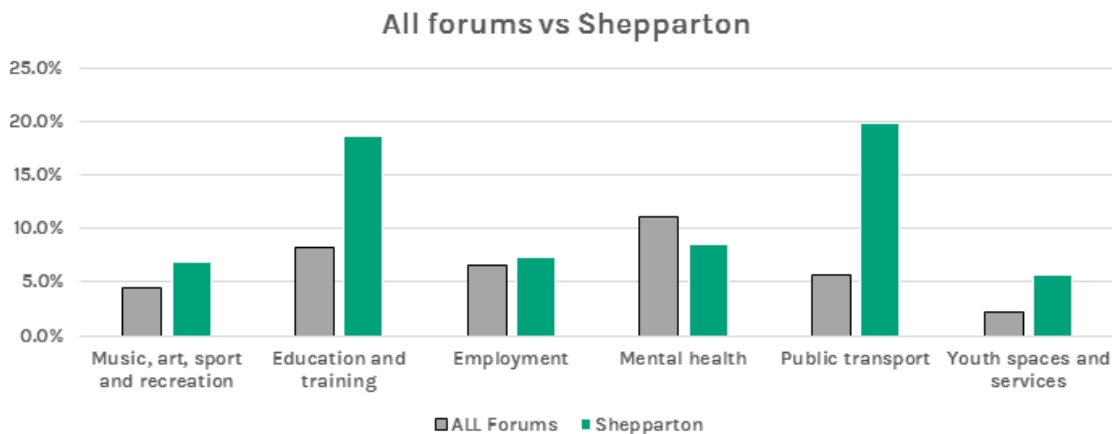
transport
Education

Mental Health
Public health
Homelessness
employment
youth
pool
unemployment
swimming
opportunities
University
Technology
park centres
things
sports
shopping
friendly
issues
homelessness
youth
space
alcohol
Drugs
Hospitals
services
Bullying
local
education
services
gender
equal

"We need more unis in Shepparton because it is a huge hassle to finish high school here and want to remain here, but there are not many choices."

"A more flexible and accepting schooling system (primary and secondary) to give more students the ability to grow and learn their own way. Classroom learning does not suit all students."

"Make public transport viable in regional areas."



Public Transport was a major topic, along with Education and Training, at the Shepparton youth forum.

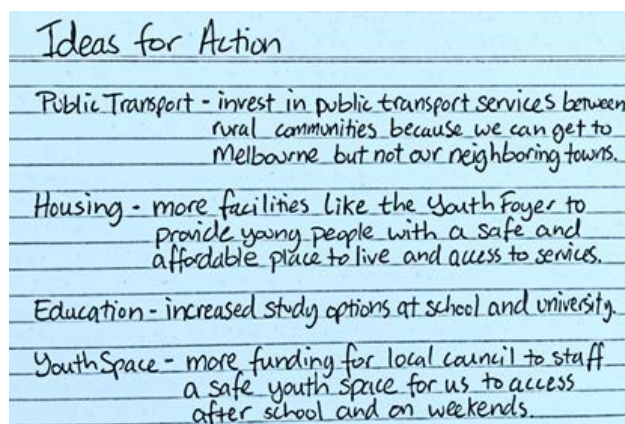
Attendees expressed concerns about the reliability and frequency of current public transport services and called for more youth-friendly services, with increased bus times and routes so that public transport could be a viable option for young people living in rural and regional Victoria.

Similarly, discussion around Education and Training focused on improved service provision for rural and regional communities through increased study options at both secondary and tertiary levels, allowing country students to study what they want in the country and not have to travel or move to the city.

Other hot topics included providing more safe spaces and affordable housing for young people, greater access to mental health services and culturally sensitive spaces for young people to hang out on weekends and after school.

The notecard below showcases some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topic of Education and Training was mentioned more by young people at the Shepparton youth forum than in any other of our youth forums.



Forum 12 – Port Fairy

On 7 December 2016, 76 days after the first youth forum was held, 110 young people attended the final youth forum in sunny Port Fairy. Numbers for this forum were so large that in the week before the forum we had to change venue to accommodate everyone. Attendees travelled from as far as Portland, Casterton, Coleraine and Camperdown. This forum was held in the last week of school, which allowed us to run a longer forum and hold it during the day as opposed to after-school hours. Moyne Shire Deputy Mayor and Port Fairy local, Councillor Jordan Lockett gave the opening address for what was one of the more vibrant youth forums in our series, with attendees eager to add their voice to the conversation and share their ideas for a better Victoria.



The word cloud below represents the topics youth forum participants in Port Fairy spoke about, with the larger text highlighting the most popular topics discussed during the event and direct quotes added.

"There are a lot of people still being discriminated against for their sex, race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation. This needs to stop!"

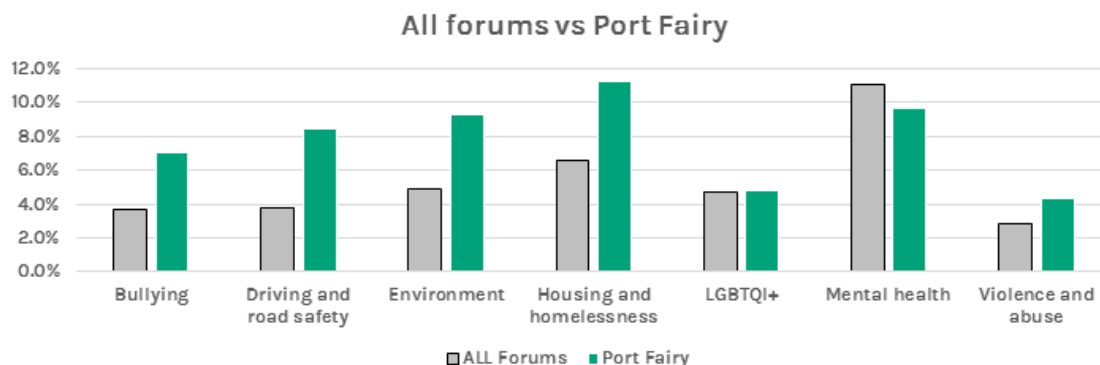
"People are alone and feel stigmatised - stigma around mental illness deters people from talking about it."



"The process of transitioning is already a tough, expensive and lengthy process for transgender youth. The addition of the Family Courts into the process adds unnecessarily to the cost, financially and emotionally to a transgender youth, their family, and the family court system."

"Unemployment is a major issue facing young people in this country. This is destroying young people's lives and leads to homelessness."

"Bullying is a big problem because it is causing depression amongst youth and suicide numbers are rising because of it!"



In Port Fairy we saw a diverse mix of issues being raised that was somewhat representative of what we had heard from young people across the state.

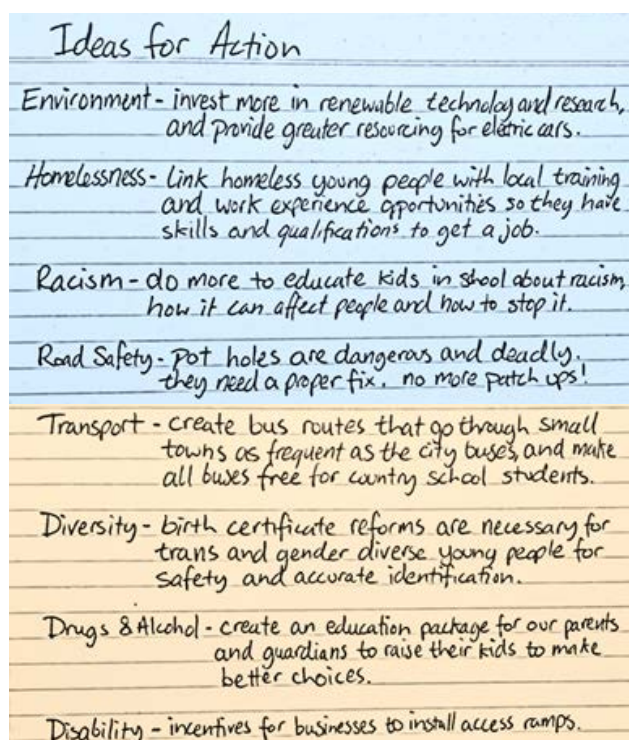
Attendees spoke passionately and from personal experience on issues such as Mental Health, Homelessness, Driving and Road Safety, and the Environment and presented great ideas for a safer and more accessible Victoria.

Bullying was identified as a concern with young people talking about its prevalence both online and in school, and the impact this is having on the mental health and wellbeing of young people in their community. It was agreed that more needs to be done to support victims of bullying and to enforce anti-bullying policies in school and the community.

There was also a shared concern for the environment with young people expressing the need to take climate change seriously and to invest in renewable energy and move away from fossil fuels.

The notecards below showcase some of the great ideas raised that will be shared at the Victorian Youth Summit and fed into the Victorian Youth Congress in 2017.

The topic of Bullying was mentioned more by young people at the Port Fairy youth forum than in any other youth forum.



Report by Topic

This section of the report explores the top 12 topics most frequently mentioned by young people as important to them across the series of youth forums. Each of these topics was mentioned over 100 times. As detailed in Appendix 1 (page 64), these topics have been identified by sorting and coding the 3,053 individual statements of need or ideas for action produced by young people during the forums.

The table below shows both the forum locations and the 27 topics used to code the data and inform this section of the report. A larger-scale version of this table can be found in Appendix 2 on page 66.

	% times mentioned in:												
Topics	ALL Forums	Swan Hill	Marwell	Geelong	Dandenong	Meribyrnong	Bairnsdale	Bellarat	Bendigo	Dunkeld	Wengeretta	Shepparton	Port Fairy
Bullying	3.7%	1.3%	1.4%	6.7%	1.9%	0.7%	6.3%	3.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.4%	1.6%	7.0%
Child Protection Services	0.3%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Community engagement and belonging	2.0%	7.0%	6.9%	0.7%	2.1%	3.4%	8.3%	1.6%	2.3%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Music, art, sport and recreation	4.4%	5.7%	1.4%	26.9%	0.8%	1.4%	5.9%	4.4%	4.6%	10.0%	1.4%	6.9%	1.3%
Disability	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.5%	1.2%	0.6%	12.1%	2.1%	1.2%	1.7%
Discrimination and equality	2.9%	0.6%	0.0%	2.2%	2.1%	7.5%	2.0%	2.8%	4.0%	0.7%	10.5%	0.0%	3.3%
Driving and road safety	3.8%	0.6%	2.8%	2.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%	1.9%	0.6%	14.3%	0.0%	2.8%	8.5%
Drugs and alcohol	4.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.0%	5.8%	1.4%	13.7%	4.6%	6.9%	5.0%	2.8%	3.3%	3.5%
Education and training	8.3%	3.2%	12.5%	2.2%	14.6%	14.4%	2.9%	8.8%	4.0%	6.4%	12.6%	18.7%	4.2%
Employment	6.5%	8.2%	16.7%	3.0%	13.2%	6.8%	3.4%	10.4%	4.6%	9.3%	2.1%	7.3%	1.9%
The Environment	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	3.4%	3.9%	14.9%	1.4%	5.6%	1.2%	9.3%
Family	1.7%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%	3.2%
Gender equality	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%	3.4%	0.5%	0.5%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	4.4%
Physical health	2.1%	0.6%	1.4%	1.5%	2.1%	1.4%	5.4%	0.7%	1.1%	5.0%	2.1%	3.7%	1.9%
Housing and homelessness	6.6%	1.9%	0.0%	16.4%	6.1%	2.1%	1.5%	6.3%	2.3%	5.7%	0.0%	6.1%	11.3%
LGBTQ+	4.7%	1.9%	1.4%	8.2%	7.9%	3.4%	0.5%	2.3%	13.1%	2.1%	9.1%	2.0%	4.8%
Mental health	11.1%	21.5%	15.3%	0.7%	8.7%	7.5%	15.1%	15.3%	8.6%	5.7%	19.6%	8.5%	9.7%
Other	7.2%	20.3%	2.8%	6.7%	8.5%	11.0%	9.8%	4.2%	6.3%	5.7%	4.2%	5.3%	6.3%
Public safety and crime	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	4.5%	0.5%	1.4%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Public transport	5.6%	2.5%	23.6%	2.2%	1.6%	4.1%	6.8%	7.7%	3.4%	4.3%	7.0%	19.9%	2.2%
Racism and cultural diversity	5.6%	1.3%	2.8%	3.0%	7.1%	19.2%	1.0%	10.0%	2.3%	0.0%	6.3%	2.4%	5.3%
City vs Country divide	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	1.5%	2.6%	0.0%	0.7%	2.1%	0.4%	0.6%
Socio-economic disadvantage	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	2.2%	0.3%	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	1.9%
Technology	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.7%	1.1%	2.9%	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Violence and abuse	2.8%	4.4%	0.0%	0.7%	4.5%	0.7%	0.0%	3.0%	0.6%	2.9%	4.2%	0.0%	4.4%
Youth justice	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.1%
Youth spaces and services	2.2%	3.8%	4.2%	3.7%	2.4%	0.7%	8.3%	0.9%	2.3%	0.0%	2.8%	5.7%	0.1%
Youth voice	1.7%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	3.4%	1.5%	1.2%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%

This section provides a quick snapshot of the key issues and ideas within each of the 12 top topics, and not the other 15 topics, because over 100 mentions provides enough data to confidently report on trends. However, data sheets that share what was said on each of the 27 topics and at any of the 12 forum locations are also available from YACVic and can be requested via email to rural@yacvic.org.au.

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As in the Reports by Location, this section uses direct quotes from young people and graphs depicting the frequency of mentions (as a percentage of all mentions during that forum) to report on what was spoken about across the forum series. Due to the variance in number of attendees at each forum, ranging from 10 to 110 attendees, this provides a better representation of the topics rather than just looking at topics by the number of times they were mentioned.

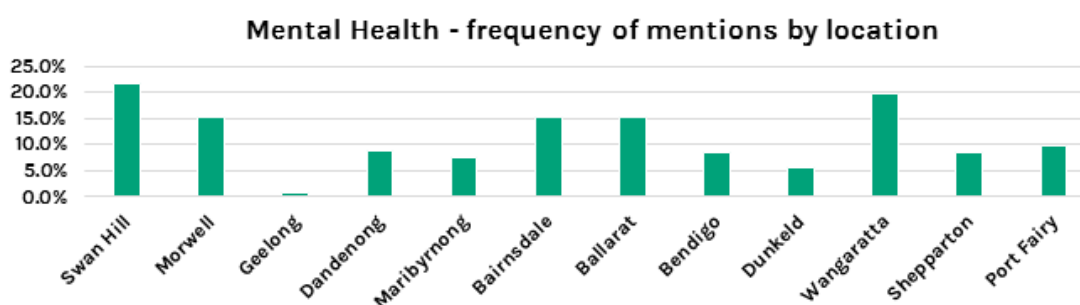
Mental Health

Mental Health was the most prominent topic of the youth forum series, being raised 339 times. It was a top three topic at nine forums and made up more than 10% of discussion across the forum series. When young people talked about mental health they also spoke about anxiety, depression, youth suicide, body image and bullying.

Young people spoke about the need for:

- + education on how young people can care for their mental health, with young people believing that they often aren't given information until they are already struggling
- + increased accessibility to mental health services, including young people calling for headspace to be set up in their area and for reduced wait times and lower costs associated with accessing professional support such as doctors and psychologists
- + more programs, initiatives and campaigns to help reduce stigma around mental health, especially within rural communities.

"There are many stigmas surrounding mental health and many silent sufferers. Young people need help and education in what mental health is and how it can be treated."



Ideas for action included:

- + mandatory mental health prevention programs, aimed directly at young people, to provide education around symptoms and seriousness of mental health issues as well as educating parents and friends of young people on how to best support them, and how to recognise signs and symptoms

"The ever-rising statistic of people experiencing mental health problems needs to be addressed. Headspace centres have to be more widespread, especially in regional areas. Mental healthcare for adults should be more accessible as well. For young people experiencing mental health issues, teachers should also have mental health training."

- + more counsellors in schools, offering school-based social support and conversation groups; ensuring that school confidentiality policies don't include teachers or parents (as this is a barrier to young people seeking support)

"There is a high level of youth suicide within my community, and aside from being destructive for the community I feel it represents only the 'tip of the iceberg' in relation to youth mental health issues. More education in early high school is definitely necessary, possibly like the 'Live 4 Life' program in the Macedon Shire."

- + opening more mental health services to reduce long wait lists, mental health mentoring programs in workplace and educational settings that focus on reducing the stigma around mental illness, and more events and festivals with the theme of good mental health.

Education and Training

Education and Training was a very popular topic, being raised 252 times, accounting for over 10% of the conversations at five forums. When young people talked about education they spoke of the stress involved in studying, the lack of study options in country Victoria, the need for schools to address bullying, the need for more study options and the need to reduce financial barriers.

Young people spoke about the need for:

- + education to be more accessible, citing the cost of education as a barrier, and rural young people's unhappiness at having to travel to Melbourne to access higher education in their field of study

"Youth are leaving their community due to being unable to find jobs or further education."

- + different education pathways and study options to engage young people who don't fit into the current system

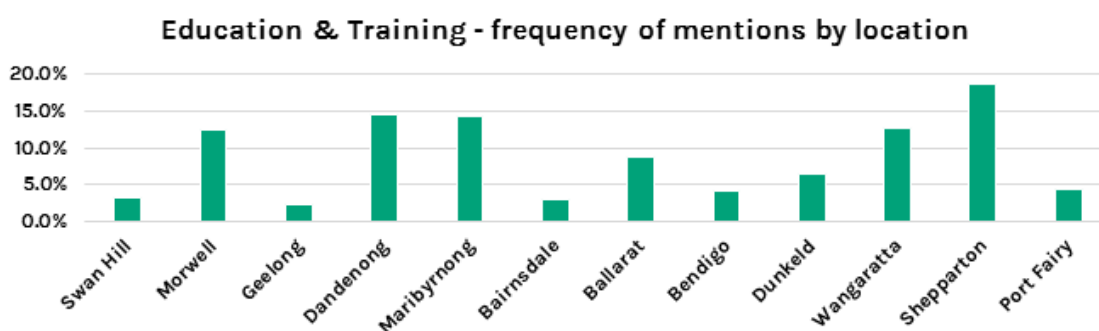
"A more flexible and accepting schooling system (primary and secondary) to give more students the ability to grow and learn their own way. Classroom learning does not suit all students."

- + changes to the school curriculum to include sex positive sexual health classes, Indigenous cultural education, a focus on the use of new technology, and life skills classes such as financial literacy and how to vote

"We need to learn entrepreneurial skills, how to build a portfolio, start a business. We need a wider scope of practical learning."

- + anxiety and bullying in schools to be properly addressed.

"Change the education system so that every young person can enjoy their time at schools ... without the overwhelming anxiety."



Ideas for action included:

- + more funding for higher education opportunities for young people in rural/regional areas. More universities and TAFEs that offer more study options

"Making education accessible to everyone. Knowledge is power and through education young people can find their voice and make an impression/change the world."

- + sex education curriculum to be revamped to become inclusive and sex positive for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, inter-sex and gender diverse young people, and include confidential access to contraception
- + 'life skills' training in all schools, focusing on 'how to be an adult' and topics such as consent, finances, tax, relationships, voting and self-defense
- + better training for teachers to support students experiencing anxiety, depression or other mental health issues.

Housing and homelessness

Housing and Homelessness was the third most discussed topic of the forum series with a total of 201 mentions, featuring heavily at both Geelong and Port Fairy. When young people talked about housing and homelessness they spoke about providing more housing and services for those in need, issues surrounding housing affordability and related topics of drugs and alcohol abuse and safety.

"It is ridiculous that we live in a society where we have such a gap between the ultra-rich and the super poor. People walk past homeless [people] in the street and ignore them like they aren't even people, and like they are somehow different from themselves, simply because these people are facing hardship."

Young people spoke about the need for:

- + more homeless shelters and services that are accessible to all people, with an emphasis on more equitable provision of services across rural and regional Victoria

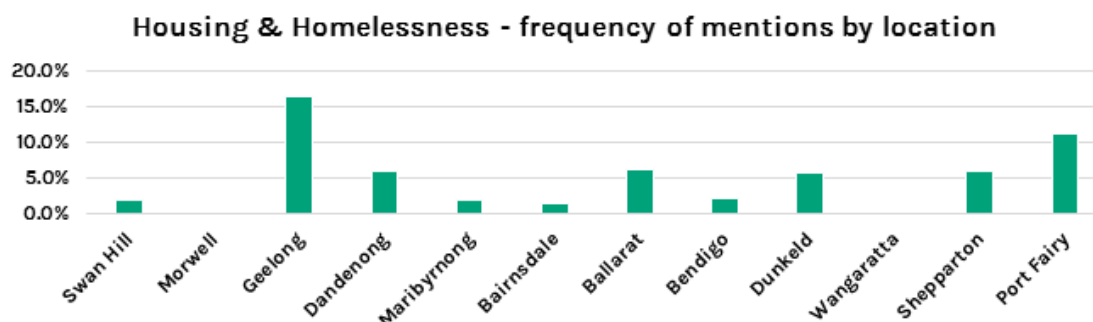
"Not many will experience homelessness, but those who do, need more support."

- + more affordable housing for young people to rent and/or buy

"As a young person it's hard to afford high rent prices when you're studying or only working part time."

- + more education for young people on why people can become homeless, what services are already available and how to access them
- + free and low-cost accommodation options for young people to access if they are in crisis and need a safe place to stay.

"There are too many homeless people on the streets. They need shelter, food/water and warmth."



Ideas for action included:

- + developing a foster home-like system specifically for young people in need of short-term crisis accommodation and using the internet to make connections
- + establishing 'Rainbow houses' across Victoria to offer housing support services and crisis accommodation specifically for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and gender diverse young people
- + having Centrelink hand out care packs e.g. sanitary items, fresh clothes, food and access to showers for people experiencing homelessness
- + holding social events that reduce stigma and support homeless people in the community
- + restaurants operating an alternate payment system—providing a meal in exchange for washing dishes.

Employment

Employment was spoken about almost 200 times by young people across all forums, and was high on the agenda at the Morwell, Dandenong, Ballarat and Dunkeld forums. When young people talked about employment, they spoke about the high level of youth unemployment, the lack of job opportunities in regional Victoria impacting the whole community, and the barriers that exist to young people getting paid work.

"Unemployment is a major issue facing young people in this country. It is destroying young people's lives and leads to homelessness."

Young people spoke about the need for:

+ more job opportunities for young people, specifically entry-level jobs in rural and regional Victoria

"It is difficult for youth to get jobs in my local shire and because of this they move out of the shire to bigger areas to find work."

"There simply are not many jobs available."

+ better support systems to help young people enter the workforce

"As a job seeker it's extremely hard for me to find a job. Centrelink won't help me because my parents earn too much."

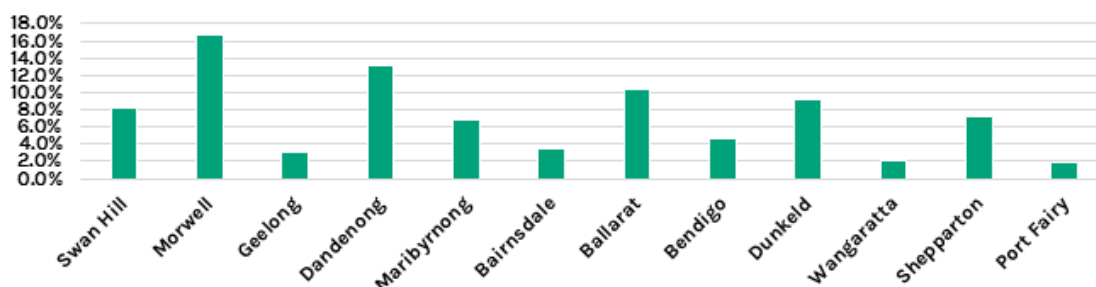
+ better training that can lead to job pathways

"Young people can have trouble with getting a job because some people need some more help than others."

+ more diversity in the workforce and less discrimination in the hiring process.

"Everyone should have equal opportunities to get jobs no matter where they are from."

Employment - frequency of mentions by location



Ideas for action included:

"Create youth employment networks and workshops that encourage local employers to connect and mentor young people in their communities."

"Grant youth services finances to initiate youth-led micro enterprises."

"Change the age of Youth Allowance to 15 to help the people finding employment."

"Give youth the tools and education to be work ready and have every opportunity to be employed."

"Educate employers on how to best handle and deal with youth from different backgrounds and circumstances."

"Give young people training on small business and entrepreneurial skills so young people can create their own employment."

Public Transport

Public Transport was another topic that featured at every forum. It had 172 mentions across the forum series and made up almost a fifth of all conversation in Morwell, and a quarter of all conversation in Shepparton. When young people talked about public transport, they spoke about the lack of services, the lack of reliability of existing services, and how this impacts young people in terms of work, school, social interaction and, conversely, isolation, especially in rural areas.

The topic of Public Transport also overlapped with the topic of Driving and Road Safety, which predominantly focused on calls to fix country roads and lower the driving age to 17 so young people aren't reliant on public transport.

"Those in rural and remote areas especially have trouble with transport, even in their own shires. Because of this, they are less likely to socialise with new and different people and opportunities for work or education can be disadvantaged."

Young people spoke about the need to:

- + invest in more regional public transport services, including transport to and from Melbourne, as well as transport between rural and regional areas

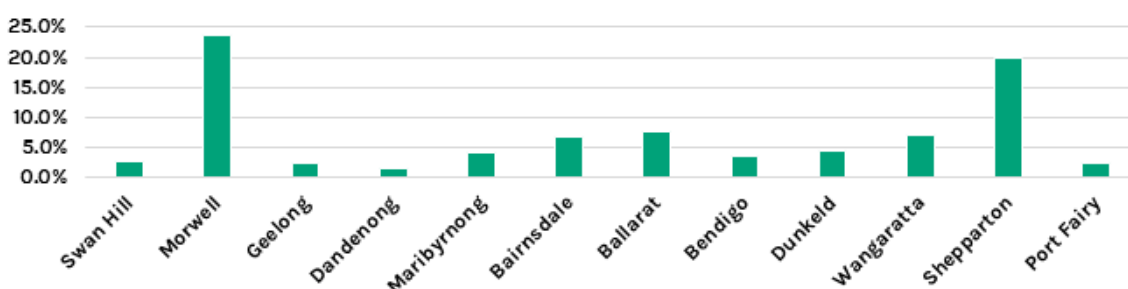
"The current public transport system in rural Victoria makes it impossible for people to travel at night or on a frequent basis. This is an issue when it comes to jobs and family without cars."

- + improve the existing services, which can be inconsistent, unreliable and slow

"The state of the V/Line service is disgraceful. The fact that people rely on the service to get to and from school and it gets delayed or cancelled is bad. However, it happens so often it is beyond a joke. Youth tend to rely on this because some don't have a license."

- + lower the cost and increase safety on public transport.

Public Transport - frequency of mentions by location



Ideas for action included:

- + free public transport travel for all young people under 25, or at least free transport on weekends. No concession cards required, just a State/Fed issued photo ID with age
- + extending public transport services, routes and times in regional Victoria

"By creating a bus route that passes through small towns ... it will increase jobs, improve the economy and make the population happier."

- + lowering the driving age to 17 to be in line with other states and to reduce dependence on the public transport system of family members.

"We need the P [plates] age to be 17 because at 17 a lot of people get a job that requires a car and leave school."

Racism and Cultural Diversity

The topic of Racism and Cultural Diversity was raised 171 times throughout the forum series. While it featured prominently in both metropolitan forums, it also featured highly in our regional forums with Ballarat, Shepparton, Port Fairy and Wangaratta accounting for over 100 of the 171 times this topic was mentioned. When the young people spoke of racism and cultural diversity they talked about the inhumane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, the oppression and incarceration of Indigenous Australians, and often spoke of their personal experiences of being bullied, harassed and abused because of their race, religion or colour of their skin.

"Daily I am hearing racist comments in public areas and down the streets. I don't have ideas for solving this but it disgusts me."

"Everyone deserves equal rights no matter their cultural background, religion or race."

Young people spoke about the need to:

+ reduce racism in school, the workplace, the community and in the media

"Islamophobia – nothing has been done to combat this. Bullying in schools. On the Streets. National newspapers/media spread the fear of Muslims."

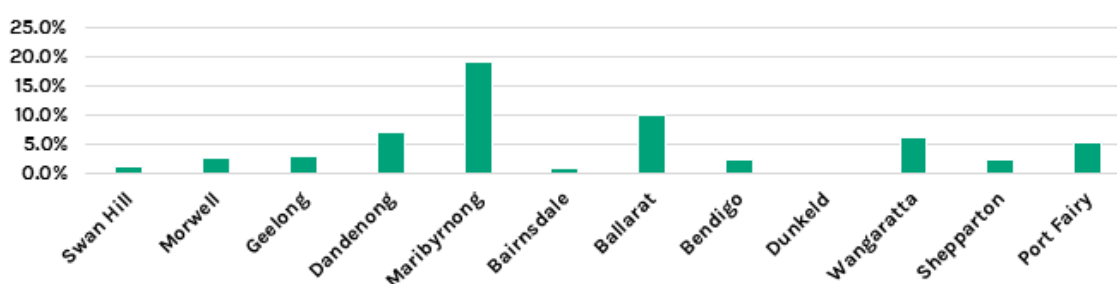
+ educate the community around cultural diversity, including the refugee experience to promote greater understanding, acceptance and social cohesion

"As a teen I see racism as a big issue and there is lots of racism between teenagers at school because they don't know anything about refugees and why they moved to here and it's sad."

+ find a humane solution to help refugees.

"Help the refugees. Why send them back? Australia is breaking international law. They're human too."

Racism & Cultural Diversity - frequency of mentions by location



Ideas for action included:

- + holding community events focused on celebrating diversity and developing a shared understanding of different cultures and religions

"Diversity and a sense of belonging. 3rd culture kids finding it hard to find a place and belong. There is a lack of inter-cultural and inter-faith engagement."

- + finding a humanitarian solution for the settlement of refugees and asylum seekers in Victoria.

"Make space in our country for everyone! Change government policies on detention centres and islands. Treating people this way is wrong."

"More support services aimed towards Indigenous youth in regards to housing, unemployment, cultural diversity, mental and physical health."

Environment

The Environment was raised 150 times throughout the forum series and was a popular topic at the Ballarat, Bendigo and Port Fairy youth forums. When the young people spoke of the environment they talked about the need to invest in renewable energy, to reduce our waste output and pollution, and the need to protect the natural world from forces such as climate change and deforestation.

"We live in a world that is so fast-moving, where everything is sacrificed in the name of progress. But the pollution is not only detrimental to nature, but also to people's health and living environment."

Young people spoke about the need to:

+ reduce the use of single-use plastics

"Why are plastic bags still a thing? I cringe every time I'm given one."

+ reduce pollution, including rubbish and greenhouse gases

"Pollution is a huge issue which is causing major effects in the ocean and our environment."

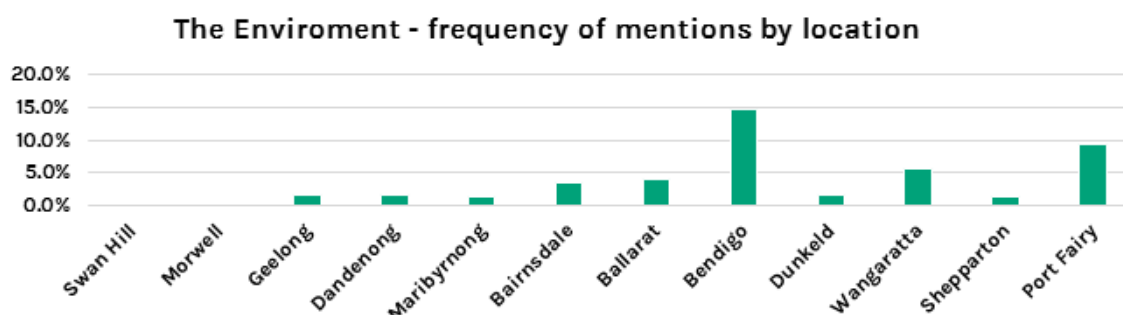
+ educate people about global warming

"I hope to see more encouragement towards protecting and educating people about our beautiful land, and why we need to cherish it!"

+ invest in renewable energy

"Stop investing in fossil fuels and actively invest in renewable research and science."

+ protect the rights of animals, including banning greyhound racing and ensuring eggs are free range, and the provision of better education about how to care for animals.



Ideas for action included:

- + investing in renewable energy, divesting from fossil fuels

"Generate jobs that are geared towards renewable energy and innovation that moves away from fossil fuel consumption."

- + supporting young people to take the lead and help find the solutions to climate change before it is too late

"The environment is dying; we need to educate my generation about it, so we can help. We need programs that have youth involvement."

"Put through a Carbon Tax and use ALL (ensure no corruption) the money towards subsidising solar panels and renewable resources and education to public about sustainable living."

"Introduce tax breaks for electric cars and offer a discount scheme so more people buy electric cars including free solar powered charge stations across Victoria."

- + removing all disposable plastic bags from Victoria.

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Plus (LGBTQI+)

A breadth of issues and ideas relating to same sex attracted and gender diverse people and communities were raised by young people, tallying 145 mentions with the topic most popular at the Geelong, Dandenong, Maribyrnong, Wangaratta and Port Fairy forums. When the young people spoke on the topic of LGBTQI+ people and communities they talked about marriage equality, the need to make every school a safe school, the inappropriateness of services and sex education, and homophobia, discrimination, stigma and abuse.

Young people spoke about the need for:

- + marriage equality now

"Legalise marriage equality. Loving couples currently cannot marry because of their gender. As a first world country, this lack of equality is pretty embarrassing."

- + more Safe Schools

"If I was premier for a day I would also mandate the Safe Schools Coalition for all Victorian public schools."

- + birth certificate reform for trans and gender diverse young people

"Birth certificate reforms are necessary for trans and gender diverse people for a number of reasons, including safety and accurate identification."

- + LGBTQI+ representation in rural areas

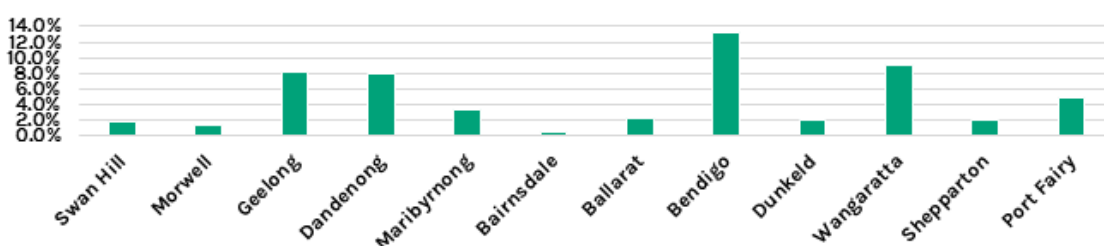
"As a member of the LGBTQI+ community, I know first-hand that sometimes your identity can seem to alienate you. This is especially true in rural areas ... the lack of service and education in rural areas endangers young people, and also helps ignorance spread."

- + education for young people and teachers about LGBTQI+ young people, and more inclusive sex education in schools.

"Not enough knowledge about the LGBTQI+ community. Not just in schools, but in the town and hospital."

51

LGBTQI+ - frequency of mentions by location



Ideas for action included:

- + legalising gay marriage in Victoria and the rest of Australia
- + making Safe Schools compulsory in all primary and secondary schools
- + running events encouraging youth to discuss what they don't know or understand about sexuality and gender diversity and to help bring the community together to fight discrimination, educate everyone and avoid shame, harassment and hate
- + delivering appropriate services and supports to trans and gender diverse youth refugees and the LGBTQI+ community
- + funding organisations and groups led by and for trans and gender diverse people.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Issues and ideas relating to the topic of Alcohol and Other Drugs were raised 141 times throughout the forum series and with over 20 mentions at each of the Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Dandenong and Port Fairy youth forums. When young people spoke of the topic of Alcohol and Other Drugs they talked about the negative impact that ice and other illicit drugs, and Australia's drinking culture, were having on families, communities and schools. An interesting observation is that while the topic of drugs and alcohol was a frequently identified issue by young people, it didn't get much attention in the 'brainstorming ideas for action' section of the forums.

Young people spoke about the need to:

- + curb the binge drinking culture in Australia

"We could use support in not encouraging excess drinking, and a culture based around alcohol. Young people often act under the impression that drinking to get drunk is cool and healthy."

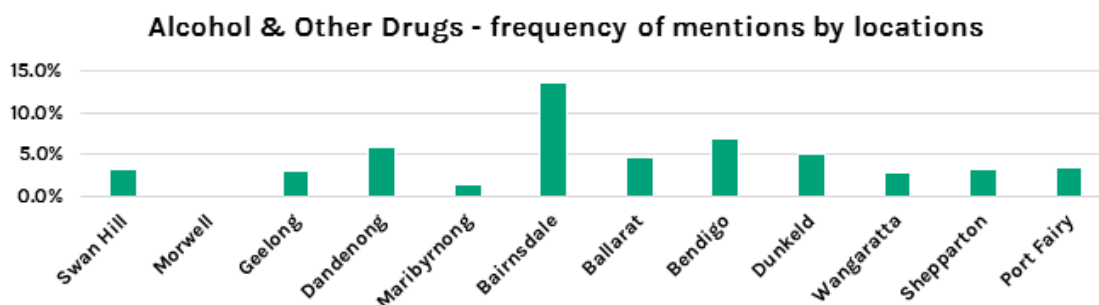
- + stop drugs from being so readily available in schools and out in the community

"The easy availability of illegal drugs is leading to increasing and earlier use of drugs."

"Drugs are everywhere and are also finding their way into schools. Schools are meant to be safe."

- + crack down on ice in regional Victoria.

"The ice issue is one that affects our young community with violence and financial issues ... a large amount of kids disengage from school, the community and friends."



Ideas for action included:

- + increasing penalties, training more specialised police officers and having more rehabilitation facilities in the state (although the majority of ideas for action focused on education).

"Break the culture of binge drinking in Australia, particularly with young people. Educate us on the effects of substances—break the stigma."

"Education for youth on what drugs are, can be and should be in our society could lead to less unsafe use and more support from peers. Safe places for use and rehabilitation are scarce and not funded heavily enough for necessary support."

"Acknowledgement of the fact that a very high percentage of young people come into contact with drugs and illegal substances through different situations and giving them the education and knowledge to make good decisions when it comes to this issue."

"Create more opportunities for young people to discuss and learn about drugs and alcohol. Community perspective-health services, other young people. More information rather than fear and scare tactics."

Music, Art, Sport and Recreation

The topic of Music, Art, Sport and Recreation, which could also quite easily be known as the 'stuff to do' topic, was brought up 134 times across the forum, series with Geelong being the standout with 36 mentions. When the young people spoke about this topic they talked about wanting more youth-friendly activities, events and festivals. They talked about wanting something to do on weekends and after school at low to no cost, so they could explore their passions and interests, develop new skills and make new friends.

"Nothing for the youth to do."

Young people spoke about the need to:

- + provide young people with somewhere to go and something to do on weekends

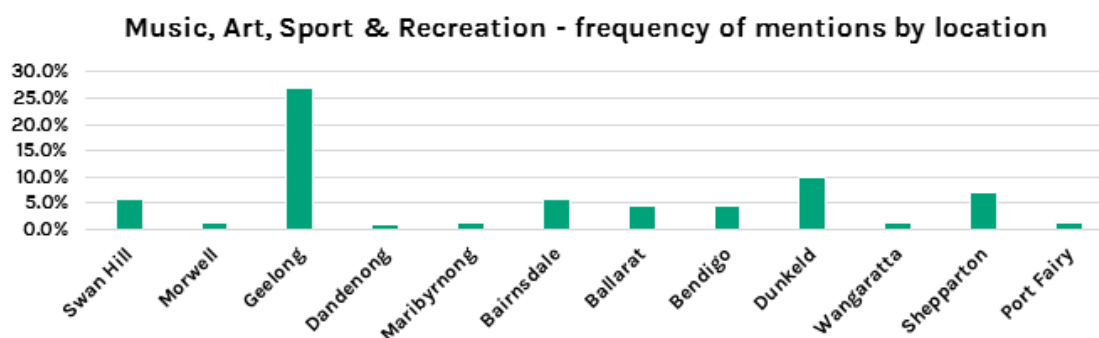
"Rural Victoria has a severe lack of things for kids in small towns to do; therefore, resulting in them drinking and taking drugs."

"There aren't a lot of activities outside of sport. We need to have something for people who don't like sport."

- + overcome the boredom young people experience, especially in rural and regional Victoria, by having more opportunities to watch music, play sport, access the arts or socialise with friends.

"Lack of things on weekends for youth in rural areas. Possible ideas include paintball/laser tag, drive-in movie cinema, restaurants, go-karts."

"Not as many opportunities, e.g. concerts, sports etc. in rural areas. Need more support from artists, sporting bodies and the right advertisement of the activities."



Ideas for action included:

+ more music

"Youth musicians, artists and writers should have opportunities to showcase their creative talents. This would help break down the stereotype that youth are not constructive with their time."

+ more of the arts

"More arts and cultural events. Young people need more opportunities to express/experience culture-related events."

+ more sport

"Make sport free."

+ more recreation.

"More youth centres so people have access to socialise and make new friends. More places and time to have fun."

Driving and Road Safety

Issues and ideas relating to the topic of Driving and Road Safety were raised 115 times throughout the forum series. The topic featured heavily at both the Dunkeld and Port Fairy youth forums in south-west Victoria. When the young people spoke about Driving and Road Safety they talked primarily about wanting the driving age to be lowered to 17, as well as the need to fill in dangerous potholes and fix country roads.

There was also some overlap between this topic and the topic of Public Transport regarding the need to lower the driving age because of the inadequacies of public transport. Similarly, the topic of Alcohol and Other Drugs was also linked to Driving and Road Safety, with some young people identifying drink driving as an issue in their community.

Young people spoke about the need to:

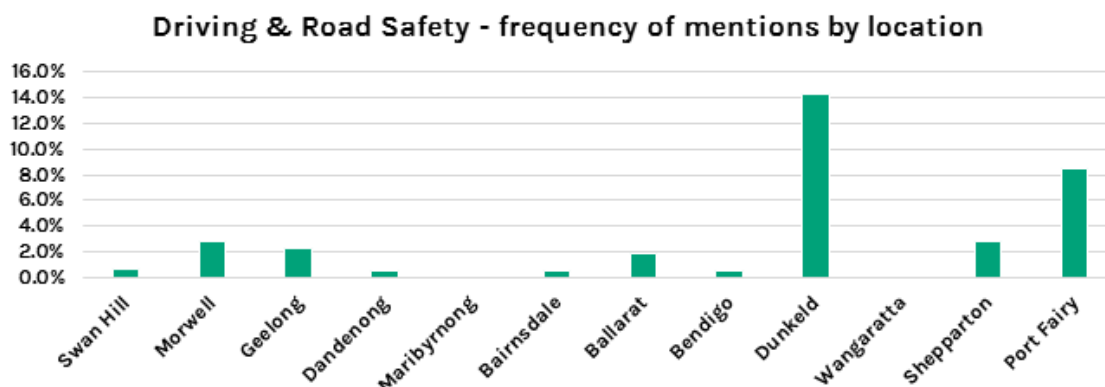
- + take road safety seriously and fixing country roads by filling in potholes properly.

"Fill the damn potholes. It's terrifying to drive on our roads, especially for young people."

"The roads are in a terrible state. There are potholes everywhere. They can cause serious crashes."

"The roads in south-west Victoria are shocking and they are leading to death and serious injuries. We need to protect our loved ones."

"If I was Premier for a day I would fix roads that are in poor condition, ensuring that the quality of the roads are equal for rural and urban areas."



Ideas for action included:

+ lowering the probationary driving age to 17.

"The driving age in Victoria should be 17 like rest of Australia."

"Many opportunities cannot be taken by youth aged 17 because they have no way of getting to places ... this could be changed to replicate the other states' driving laws."

"We need to get our Ps at 17 because at 17 a lot of people get a job that requires a car and leave school."

"Make Ps available at 17 not 18. Start at 15 to get learners so you can get your probationary licence at 17."

Bullying

The topic of Bullying was directly mentioned 113 times throughout the forum series, but there was much more emphasis on it than reflected in this statistic. The topic of Bullying was often referred to when young people spoke about education, mental health, racism and the experience of same sex attracted and gender diverse young people and communities.

Young people said that not enough was being done to take bullying seriously, especially in the school setting where they suggested there is a disconnect between what is talked about and what is actually done when it comes to bullying. Young people also spoke about how being bullied could negatively impact on one's mental health, leading to increases in rates of self-harm and suicide.

"Bullying is a major cause of many mental health issues in people in today's society. Self-harm and even suicide can be influenced into action due to cyber and regular bullying. To prevent such outcomes, I feel that this issue could be addressed more seriously."

Young people spoke about:

+ the impacts of bullying

"Bullying is not OK. It happens to me and the people around me. It lowers self-esteem. It makes people feel horrible about themselves. I want bullying to stop. So should you."

"Bullying makes people feel worthless, and everyone is worth something."

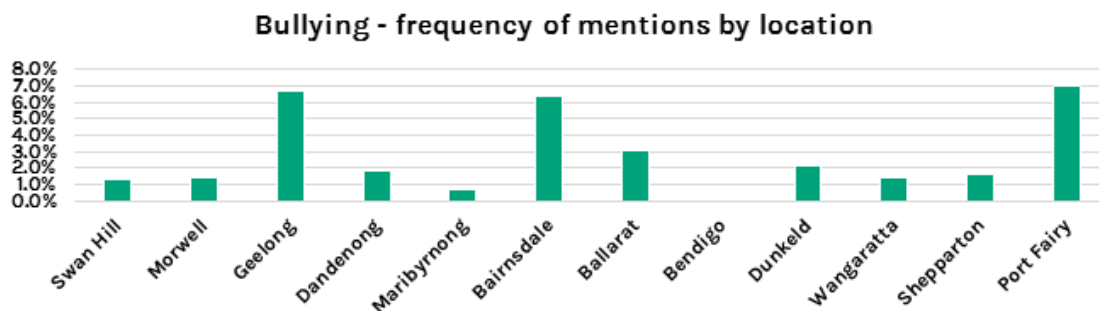
"Cyber bullying needs to stop. It might make friendships break down, people can become suicidal and become lonely and they don't want to talk about it."

"Kids are taking their lives as a result of bullying."

+ the need to properly address the issue of bullying.

"Bullying still happens more than ever and not much is happening to stop it; it leads to depression, suicide, self-harm and more."

"Our current school system says they have a 'no tolerance to bullying system' but yet most cases go unnoticed/unresolved."



Ideas for action included:

"Tighten the laws and create more access to services for support."

"Educate people about the damage bullying can do ... by building it into the curriculum."

"Provide online support."

"Improve monitoring by social media platforms,"

"Bullying must be stopped ... through education, counselling, or protection."

Other Topics

This report has focused on the top 12 topics most frequently mentioned by young people as important to them across the series of youth forums.

The top 12 topics contain 75% of 3,053 individual statements of need or ideas for action produced by young people during the forums; however, the remaining 25% are captured within another 15 topics.

- + **Discrimination and Equality**
- + **Violence and Abuse**
- + **Youth Spaces and Services**
- + **Physical Health**
- + **Community Engagement and Belonging**
- + **Gender Equality**
- + **Family**
- + **Youth Voice**
- + **Disability**
- + **Socio-Economic Disadvantage**
- + **Public Safety and Crime**
- + **City vs Country Divide**
- + **Technology**
- + **Youth Justice**
- + **Child Protection Services**

Next Steps

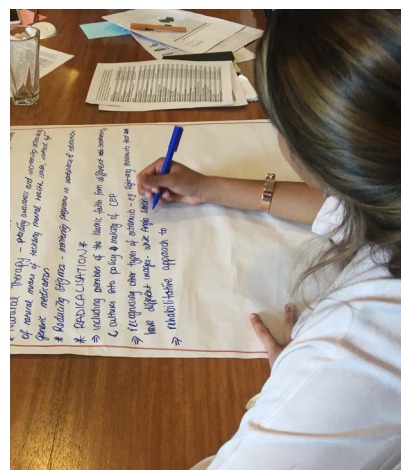
This report and the issues and ideas shared by young people throughout the 2016 youth forum series will be used by young people and the Office for Youth to design the agenda for the Victorian Government's Youth Summit on 31 March 2017.

The Youth Summit will provide a forum for young people across Victoria to come together and decide priority issues that the Victorian Youth Congress will address during its first term, as well as further promote opportunities for young people to have their voices heard.

Young members of the Victorian Youth Congress will meet with ministers and work with government to address these issues, and will report back to young people on Youth Central, the Victorian Government's website for young people.

For more information on the Victorian Government's Youth Policy, the Youth Summit or the Victorian Youth Congress, please visit Youth Central at www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

This report will also continue to inform YACVic's work with, and for, young people, the Victorian youth sector and partner agencies, to ensure young Victorians have their rights upheld and are valued as active participants in their communities.



Final Remarks from the Forum Facilitator

Over a three-month period the Turning Ideas in Action youth forum series has given YACVic, and in particular YACVic Rural, a great medium to continue its work in supporting young people to have a stronger voice in Victorian Government decision making.

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to the 472 amazing young people who took time out of their week to attend a youth forum. It was an absolute pleasure to meet with and listen to these phenomenal young people who had the confidence and conviction to speak up on the issues and ideas they are passionate about.

Despite the inherent difficulties in representing all the issues and ideas raised throughout the 12 forums, within this report we have tried our best to capture and share the major issues and ideas raised by forum attendees.

To do justice to the young people's contributions, we have, where possible, used young people's own words to articulate the need and outline the possibilities for action. Further, to ensure no one issue or idea was left behind, we have developed a set of data sheets to accompany the report on each forum and topic.

Again, I am so very grateful to the young people who turned up and gave voice to what matters most to them, their peers and their community.

I would also like to thank our amazing community partners in each location we visited. Without their help the youth forum series would not have been as successful. We thank them for their support in connecting us with young people in their communities and for assisting us to coordinate the events.

It was fantastic to meet and work with such spirited and committed youth workers and community development workers. I thank you for your support and the important work you do with young people in your community.

Lastly, I would like to thank both the Office for Youth staff and my colleagues at YACVic for their continued support and active participation in the youth forum series. It has truly been a team effort and your contributions have been critical to the success of this project.



Andy Bell
Rural Manager
Youth Affairs Council Victoria

Appendix 1

Tables

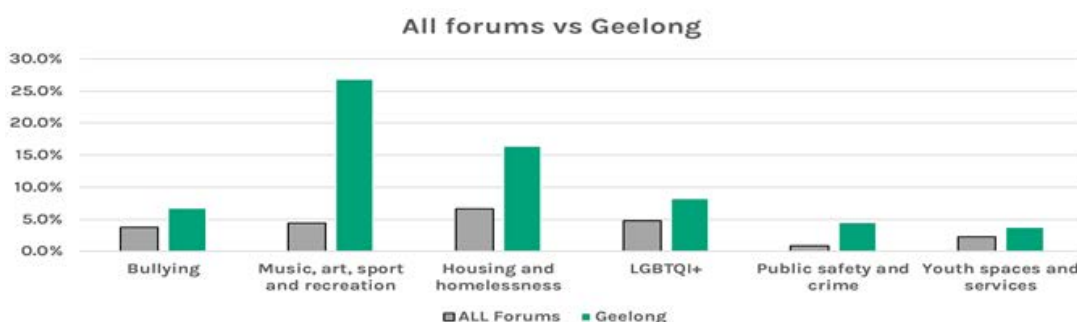
The table below is an example table showing the frequency that each topic was mentioned, at each forum, by forum location (columns) and category (rows) to which the data was coded. This report includes graphs informed by this table, green boxes to highlight topics of significance per forum, and word clouds to convey the issues identified by young people as important to them.

	% times mentioned in:												
Topics	ALL Forums	Swan Hill	Morwell	Geelong	Dandenong	Maribymong	Bairnsdale	Bellarat	Bendigo	Dunkeld	Wangaratta	Shepparton	Port Fairy
Bullying	3.7%	1.3%	1.4%	6.7%	1.9%	0.7%	6.3%	3.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.4%	1.6%	7.0%
Child Protection Services	0.3%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Community engagement and belonging	2.0%	7.0%	6.9%	0.7%	2.1%	3.4%	8.3%	1.6%	2.3%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Music, art, sport and recreation	4.4%	5.7%	1.4%	26.9%	0.8%	1.4%	5.9%	4.4%	4.6%	10.0%	1.4%	6.9%	1.3%
Disability	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.5%	1.2%	0.6%	12.1%	2.1%	1.2%	1.7%
Discrimination and equality	2.9%	0.6%	0.0%	2.2%	2.1%	7.5%	2.0%	2.8%	4.0%	0.7%	10.5%	0.0%	3.3%
Driving and road safety	3.8%	0.6%	2.8%	2.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%	1.9%	0.6%	14.3%	0.0%	2.6%	8.5%
Drugs and alcohol	4.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.0%	5.8%	1.4%	13.7%	4.6%	6.9%	5.0%	2.8%	3.3%	3.5%
Education and training	8.3%	3.2%	12.5%	2.2%	14.6%	14.4%	2.9%	8.8%	4.0%	6.4%	12.6%	18.7%	4.2%
Employment	6.5%	8.2%	16.7%	3.0%	13.2%	6.8%	3.4%	10.4%	4.6%	9.3%	2.1%	7.3%	1.9%
The Environment	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	3.4%	3.9%	14.9%	1.4%	5.6%	1.2%	9.3%
Family	1.7%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%	3.2%
Gender equality	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%	3.4%	0.5%	0.5%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	4.4%
Physical health	2.1%	0.6%	1.4%	1.5%	2.1%	1.4%	5.4%	0.7%	1.1%	5.0%	2.1%	3.7%	1.9%
Housing and homelessness	6.6%	1.9%	0.0%	16.4%	6.1%	2.1%	1.5%	6.3%	2.3%	5.7%	0.0%	6.1%	11.3%
LGBTQ+	4.7%	1.9%	1.4%	8.2%	7.9%	3.4%	0.5%	2.3%	13.1%	2.1%	9.1%	2.0%	4.6%
Mental health	11.1%	21.5%	13.3%	0.7%	8.7%	7.5%	13.1%	15.3%	8.6%	5.7%	19.6%	8.5%	9.7%
Other	7.2%	20.3%	2.8%	6.7%	8.5%	11.0%	9.8%	4.2%	6.3%	5.7%	4.2%	5.3%	6.3%
Public safety and crime	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	4.5%	0.5%	1.4%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Public transport	5.6%	2.5%	23.6%	2.2%	1.6%	4.1%	6.8%	7.7%	3.4%	4.3%	7.0%	19.9%	2.2%
Racism and cultural diversity	5.6%	1.3%	2.8%	3.0%	7.1%	19.2%	1.0%	10.0%	2.3%	0.0%	6.3%	2.4%	5.3%
City vs Country divide	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	1.5%	2.6%	0.0%	0.7%	2.1%	0.4%	0.6%
Socio-economic disadvantage	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	2.2%	0.3%	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	1.9%
Technology	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.7%	1.1%	2.9%	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Violence and abuse	2.8%	4.4%	0.0%	0.7%	4.5%	0.7%	0.0%	3.0%	0.6%	2.9%	4.2%	0.0%	4.4%
Youth justice	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.1%
Youth spaces and services	2.2%	3.8%	4.2%	3.7%	2.4%	0.7%	8.3%	0.9%	2.3%	0.0%	2.8%	5.7%	0.1%
Youth voice	1.7%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	3.4%	1.5%	1.2%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%

Graphs

The graph below shows the frequency with which topics were mentioned by the young people during the Geelong youth forum. It compares this to the average frequency these topics were mentioned across all 12 youth forums.

This is based on more than 3,000 responses from young people who attended one of the 12 youth forums.



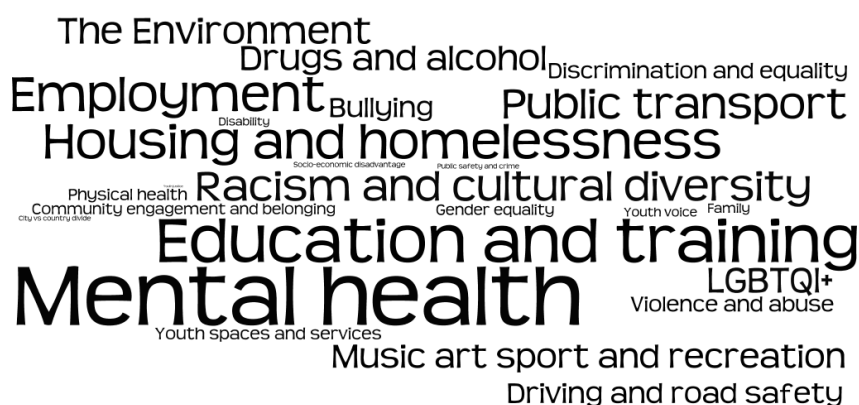
Green boxes

The text in green boxes highlights which categories were mentioned the most at a particular forum. In the example below, attendees of the Geelong youth forum mentioned the categories of Music, Arts, Sport and Recreation, and Housing and Homelessness more than any other forum. For Geelong this also correlates with their two highest bars on the 'All forums vs Geelong' graph, but this is not always the case.

The topics of Music, Arts, Sport and Recreation and also Homelessness and Housing, were mentioned more by young people at the Geelong youth forum than in any other of our youth forums.

Word Clouds

This report also uses word clouds to represent what was spoken about during the youth forums. The word clouds have been created using the raw, uncoded and uncatergorised data, so that it reflects the voice and expression of the young people who were at the forum. These word clouds only show words and phrases that were frequently recorded and using the larger font to show which words came up with greater frequency. The word cloud below is representative of the complete youth forum series with the topics in larger font; eg. Mental Health, Education and Training and Employment were mentioned the most. Quotes from attendees have also been added to the word clouds in the report to provide context in relation to specific themes where possible.



Appendix 2

	% times listed in:												
CODES	ALL Forums	Swan Hill	Morwell	Gee- long	Dandenong	Mariy- rong	Bairns- dale	Ballarat	Bendi- go	Dun- keld	Wanga- ratta	Shep- arton	Port Fairy
Alcohol and other drugs	4.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.0%	5.8%	1.4%	13.7%	4.6%	6.9%	5.0%	2.8%	3.3%	3.5%
	3.7%	1.3%	1.4%	6.7%	1.9%	0.7%	6.3%	3.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.4%	1.6%	7.0%
	0.3%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Community engagement and be- longing	2.0%	7.0%	6.9%	0.7%	2.1%	3.4%	8.3%	1.6%	2.3%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Music, art, sport and recreation	4.4%	5.7%	1.4%	26.9%	0.8%	1.4%	5.9%	4.4%	4.6%	10.0%	1.4%	6.9%	1.3%
Disability	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.5%	1.2%	0.6%	12.1%	2.1%	1.2%	1.7%
Discrimination and equality	2.9%	0.6%	0.0%	2.2%	2.1%	7.5%	2.0%	2.8%	4.0%	0.7%	10.5%	0.0%	3.3%
Driving and road safety	3.8%	0.6%	2.8%	2.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%	1.9%	0.6%	14.3%	0.0%	2.8%	8.5%
Education and training	8.3%	3.2%	12.5%	2.2%	14.6%	14.4%	2.9%	8.8%	4.0%	6.4%	12.6%	18.7%	4.2%
Employment	6.5%	8.2%	16.7%	3.0%	13.2%	6.8%	3.4%	10.4%	4.6%	9.3%	2.1%	7.3%	1.9%
Environment	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%	3.4%	3.9%	14.9%	1.4%	5.6%	1.2%	9.3%
Families	1.7%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%	3.2%
Gender equality	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%	3.4%	0.5%	0.5%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	4.4%
Physical health	2.1%	0.6%	1.4%	1.5%	2.1%	1.4%	5.4%	0.7%	1.1%	5.0%	2.1%	3.7%	1.9%
Housing and homelessness	6.6%	1.9%	0.0%	16.4%	6.1%	2.1%	1.5%	6.3%	2.3%	5.7%	0.0%	6.1%	11.3%
LGBTQI+	4.7%	1.9%	1.4%	8.2%	7.9%	3.4%	0.5%	2.3%	13.1%	2.1%	9.1%	2.0%	4.8%
Mental health	11.1%	21.5%	15.3%	0.7%	8.7%	7.5%	15.1%	15.3%	8.6%	5.7%	19.6%	8.5%	9.7%
Other	7.2%	20.3%	2.8%	6.7%	8.5%	11.0%	9.8%	4.2%	6.3%	5.7%	4.2%	5.3%	6.3%
Public safety and crime	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	4.5%	0.5%	1.4%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Public transport	5.6%	2.5%	23.6%	2.2%	1.6%	4.1%	6.8%	7.7%	3.4%	4.3%	7.0%	19.9%	2.2%
Racism and cultural diversity	5.6%	1.3%	2.8%	3.0%	7.1%	19.2%	1.0%	10.0%	2.3%	0.0%	6.3%	2.4%	5.3%
City vs Country divide	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	1.5%	2.6%	0.0%	0.7%	2.1%	0.4%	0.6%
Socio-economic disadvantage	0.9%	0.0%	1.4%	2.2%	0.3%	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	1.9%
Technology	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.7%	1.1%	2.9%	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Violence and abuse	2.8%	4.4%	0.0%	0.7%	4.5%	0.7%	0.0%	3.0%	0.6%	2.9%	4.2%	0.0%	4.4%
Youth justice	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.1%
Youth spaces and services	2.2%	3.8%	4.2%	3.7%	2.4%	0.7%	8.3%	0.9%	2.3%	0.0%	2.8%	5.7%	0.1%
Youth voice	1.7%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	3.4%	1.5%	1.2%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%

Centrelink
They just mess
and "lose" papers
documents

Use the old of many people
these kinds of people are
being known by others people
being known by others people
being known by others people
being known by others people

Disability
They have to be
able to get to the
education
They have to be
able to get to the
education

Learning
Learning is to be able to
use what you have
learned in a new way
Learning is to be able to
use what you have
learned in a new way

Life more values
Life more values
Life more values
Life more values
Life more values
Life more values

School budgets
School budgets
School budgets
School budgets
School budgets
School budgets

Artists
more places to display
more places to display
more places to display
more places to display
more places to display
more places to display

Access to housing (no rentals available)
The need for new housing to be built
without available financial assistance

Support & funding for youth
financially independent
disability services

Climate change is real
We must act now to protect our
sacred environment and
instead of using fossil fuels and
in which we are extracting
oil from the earth we should
use the resources we have
to use the renewable energy
provided by nature

Access to public transport

Intergenerational programs
It would be great to explore
the appetite for real effective
intergenerational programs that
make a difference to all participants

creation
not as many opportunities
concerts sports etc
in rural areas. Need more
support from artists sporting
bodies & the right
advertisement of the activities

Lack of filtered funding streams
for programs that have real impact

Leaves
in rural
areas or not
in other
rural areas
status
important