

Fact Sheet: Opportunities for Young People in Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery

Information and ideas to explore regarding how young people might contribute to disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts, from participation in Community Recovery Committees, to consulting on issues of concern to young people, to leading community rebuilding projects.

There are lots of different ways you can engage and involve young people in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. These don't have to be limited to formal, structured processes. Creating a range of opportunities will help build relationships with young people and make them feel they can contribute.

Designated positions on Community Recovery Committees (CRCs)

Having a designated position/s for a young person/s on a CRC is important. Young people are not just the future, they have a lived experience of what being a local community member is right now, and bring unique ideas and perspectives.

Young people have direct access to their young peers who may not have the opportunity to contribute to community planning and recovery processes. Excluding young people from community responses can make them feel disconnected and alienated, and lead to a lack of pride and engagement in their local town or area. Finding ways to better involve young people is important for their development and wellbeing, and importantly also helps to build self-worth and civic pride.

Young people may need to be encouraged to put themselves forward, and once selected, should be supported to make sure they feel welcome and equal, and understand the CRC processes and what is expected of them.

[Find your local Community Recovery Committee here](#)

Consulting with groups

Youth Advisory Groups or consultation groups bring young people together to share their experiences, and co-design solutions to the challenges they face, in a safe and supportive environment.

Most local councils in Victoria provide youth services and facilitate a Youth Council or other youth-led and coordinated program that provides local young people with the opportunity to work with local government to meet the needs and enhance opportunities for young people. To find out what exists in your area, first contact your local council's youth services team. They can also give advice for establishing a group yourself.

Youth-led art, music, and cultural events

Hosting public activities and events to bring communities together and attract visitors back is an important step towards recovery for the whole community, especially young people. Centring young people at these events can assist in making them safe, fun and engaging. Whether it's a community BBQ or a youth photo exhibition at your local gallery, young people want to come together and connect with their community.

FReeZA is a fantastic Victorian Government program that gives young people aged 12-25 the chance to organise, lead and perform live music, dance parties and other events. [Learn more here](#)

Volunteering Programs

Junior Programs boost volunteer emergency services capacity in local communities. Many programs exist within the CFA, SES, and Ambulance. Young people receive accredited, recognised training as part of their role, ranging from first aid, general rescue, chainsaw operations, community education, media training and much more. They also gain leadership and teamwork skills, confidence and a greater knowledge and understanding of disasters. Find out more below:

- [State Emergency Service](#)
- [Country Fire Authority](#)
- [St Johns Ambulance](#)

Work Experience

Giving young people opportunities to undertake meaningful work experience adds value to the future of the local workforce and to initiatives regarding disaster preparedness, response and recovery. In these roles, young people need to be given real tasks, treated with respect, and trusted to do the job well. This will give them a taste of working life and help them learn new skills that aren't taught in the classroom, including:

- Solving real-life problems and seeing the impact of their work
- Researching market conditions and learning how they affect businesses
- Communicating with different people with different skill sets
- Learning about new technologies and how they're used in the workplace; and
- Working in different roles to see what they entail on a day-to-day basis

Design workshops and events

Working with young people to design and rebuild community spaces and facilities is key to making them accessible. Young people can have great ideas for municipal planning, footpath development, libraries, local parks and community facilities – not just skateparks! Fun and creative design workshops and events can draw on/engage young people's design skills, artistic and creative abilities.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships provide a gateway to great jobs and real hands-on training in almost any field of employment. Young people earn an income while gaining a real experience and a qualification, and employers receive financial support for taking on new staff.

Young people in YACVic's bushfire recovery consultations have identified the need for skill development and career pathways in local industry, including local government, trades, retail, administrative services, and state government agencies. Apprenticeships and traineeships are an important way to meet this need, and the additional capacity and skills needed during disaster recovery operations provide an opportunity to think creatively about training and supporting local young people.

Young Thinkers in Residence

A Young Thinker-in-Residence is a great way to bring youth perspectives into your organisation or project. Such an initiative supports one or more young people to spend dedicated time 'thinking' about a social, resilience, recovery or preparedness topic of their choosing. It can run for 12-16 weeks, and can include offering Young Thinkers a cosy desk at your HQ, with full guidance of your team and access to extended networks.

The end goal is to support the Young Thinkers to create a piece of research and/or advocacy. This might be a report, a video, a campaign, or something else entirely – any tangible, positive outcome for their dedicated issue. Your organisation can utilise this to inform policy or practice advocacy.

For more information about this model, contact YACVic or [visit the YACVic webpage on the Young Thinker in Residence](#)