



Budget Submission to Treasury

for 2016-17

on behalf of the
Tasmanian Youth Sector



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ynot is the peak body representing the voice of Tasmanian youth



Mission: To work with young people, the Tasmanian Youth Sector, the community and all levels of government, to increase the participation and contribution of young people in the state.

Vision: A Tasmania where young people are actively engaged in community life and have access to the resources needed to develop their potential.

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Introduction

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of the Tasmanian youth sector to the State Government's community budget submission process for 2016-17.

YNOT is the peak body for the non-government youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT represents both the interests of its members and the interests of young people. Integral to the work of YNOT is the youth participation structure, the Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF). TYF is Tasmania's peak youth consultative and participatory body.

Each year YNOT provides the Department of Treasury and Finance with specific recommendations on how we believe the State Government should distribute its resources to ensure that the lives of young people, particularly vulnerable young people, can be improved. YNOT's budget submission to the State Government for 2016-17 represents the key priority areas that YNOT, in consultation with the Tasmanian youth sector and young people, have identified.

YNOT has taken this opportunity to provide recommendations that also benefit the youth sector, and therefore, the young people they work with.

YNOT is conscious of the Tasmanian economic climate, as well as the limitless number of recommendations that could be made. Therefore, in consultation with our members, we have concentrated on providing the State Government with recommendations in areas of highest need or greatest priority at this time.

Summary of Recommendations

Sustainable Community Sector Peak Bodies

Recommendation: That the State Government, at a minimum, maintain current funding and provide continued support for all community sector organisations, in all regions of the State.

Youth Justice

Recommendation: That the State Government fund an early intervention or diversion program for young people under the age of 18 who are at risk of offending or reoffending.

Young People, Housing and Homelessness

Recommendation: That the State Government builds on the development of this north-west supported accommodation facility by allocating funding to ensure the operation and running of the facility.

Recommendation: That the State Government ensures shelters are appropriately resourced to assist young people under the age of 16 and that appropriate long term accommodation options for these young people are funded..

Health and Wellbeing

Recommendation: That the State Government provides sufficient funding to ensure the actions outlined in the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy for Tasmania can be met in order to provide the best service to young people in the state and reduce the rate of youth suicide.

Recommendation: That the State Government continues to invest into proven, evidence based programs aimed at reducing the Tasmanian teenage fertility rate.

Education and Employment

Recommendation: That the State Government allocates additional funding to be used to continue supporting the already established alternate education options and to develop new programs to assist young people disengaged from, or unable to access, mainstream education.

Recommendation: That funding be allocated to create a youth friendly online resource to assist young people looking for work, wanting to maintain work and managing work with education.

Recommendation: That funding be allocated to create a youth friendly online resource to assist young people looking for work, wanting to maintain work and managing work with education.

Safe and Accessible Transport for Young People

Recommendation: That there is an increase in safe, reliable and affordable public transport services available to young people, particularly those in rural and remote areas of the state.

YNOT Budget Submission Recommendations in Detail

Part 1: Youth Peak Priorities

1. Sustainable Community Sector

Community sector organisations play a vital role in the lives of young people living in Tasmania. Unfortunately, many community sector organisations cannot meet the needs of all the young people trying to access their service due to lack of funding and limited numbers of workers. The rates of youth homelessness and unemployment demonstrate the need for services that are accessible for young people. For example, many youth shelters face the difficult task of turning young people in need away because they do not have the accommodation or resources to meet the demand of young people accessing the service.

There is a need for a diversity of youth services in Tasmania. These include direct practice services that work with young people in challenging situations or in crisis and it is their job to be the first responder for these young people, as well as indirect services that provide policy, research or development services. These services are also responsible to areas such as health promotion, ensuring that valuable messages are communicated and that people know where to find help if they need it.

A sustainable community sector needs a range of services to work at maximum efficiency. It is essential to have both direct and indirect services and it is essential that they are complementary rather than duplicating the services offered. However, a sustainable community sector also relies on collaborative partnerships between the community sector and the Government but also collaborative partnerships between organisations within that community sector.

Recommendation: That the State Government, at a minimum, maintain current funding and provide continued support for all community sector organisations, in all regions of the State.

Responsible Department(s): DPAC, Treasury and Finance

Costing: Uncosted

2. Youth Justice

2.1 Youth diversion programs

YNOT continues to advocate for alternatives to youth detention as research consistently states that youth detention does not effectively deter criminal offending. Early intervention and diversion programs are shown to be more effective at reducing youth offending and literature suggests that a collaborative approach is needed to ensure such programs are most effective. Unfortunately, the availability of early intervention and diversion programs in Tasmania is limited with the highly successful U-Turn program being defunded recently. The defunding of U-Turn and the closure of Training Opportunities and Options for Learning (TOOL) has left a significant gap in the Tasmanian youth justice space and will disadvantage young people who would previously have had access to these programs.

While it is encouraging to see Back on Track has been funded to provide a program for 18 to 25 year olds, there remains a gap in early intervention programs for young people under the age of 18. Currently, there are no programs that specifically fill this gap left by U-Turn and TOOL and it is concerning that young people under the age of 18 will not have access to early intervention programs or a diversion program which research consistently states is more effective the earlier that young people can participate in these programs. These programs provide young people with activities that engage their interest, teach them new skills and provide them with worker contact that can assist to get young people into work or school and away from the youth justice system. Many young people, who have not engaged with programs or organisations in the past, have not only engaged with the U-Turn program but have thrived in it and have not gone on to reoffend. The gap left now that these programs aren't available is significant for those young people who haven't been engaged in other services.

Recommendation: That the State Government fund an early intervention or diversion program for young people under the age of 18 who are at risk of offending or reoffending.

Responsible Department: Justice, Treasury and Finance

Costing: Uncosted

3. Young People, Housing and Homelessness

3.1 Operation of the Youth Accommodation Facility in the North West of Tasmania

Securing long term, safe and affordable accommodation in the North West of Tasmania can be a challenge for young people. This is particularly challenging for young people who are

vulnerable, require additional support and are on a low income. YNOT applauds the commitment by the Tasmanian Government to build the new supported youth accommodation facility for young people in the North West with \$6 million allocated in the most recent State budget for this project. This facility will be the State's third supported youth accommodation facility, following the success of Thyne House in Launceston and Trinity Hill in Hobart.

It is suggested that when completed in 2017, the new Devonport facility in the North West will provide 25 independent units with communal facilities for young people, with five of these units specifically designed for young people living with a disability. While funding has been allocated to purchase land and build this facility, funding specific to the operation of the facility has not been confirmed to date. As such, YNOT now advocates that the commitment to this facility be continued and funding be allocated to ensure the facility is operational and staff can be employed to support the young people who will be residing at this facility.

Recommendation: That the State Government builds on the development of this North-West supported accommodation facility by allocating funding to ensure the operation and running of the facility.

Responsible Department: Health and Human Services, Treasury and Finance

Costing: Uncosted

3.2 Children under 16 years of age in shelters

YNOT understands that appropriate housing for young people is a complex issue in Tasmania. For young people under the age of 16, in particular, there is a gap in the appropriate accommodation available to them across the spectrum, from crisis to long term. This has been a long standing item for the Tasmanian Youth Housing and Homelessness Group which is a collaboration between YNOT, Shelter Tasmania, and representatives from youth shelters and services from each region of Tasmania.

Access to secure and long term accommodation is difficult for young people under the age of 16. Although young people under the age of 16 can access income support through the Unreasonable to Live at Home (UTLAH) where they are deemed to be independent as living at home would place them 'at risk', they are unable to access safe, secure and appropriate accommodation because of their age. Often, this results in young people under 16 to access crisis accommodation in a shelter. YNOT does not dispute that young people under 16 living in shelters is less than ideal. YNOT strongly believes that staying in a shelter should only be

viewed as a short term solution and that people under 16 need this short term solution available to them when they cannot return home or to out of home care.

Feedback from consultation with stakeholders has indicated that these young people are often directed to services that do not accommodate for young people under the age of 16, such as Better Housing Futures. Therefore, YNOT recommends that shelters are appropriately resourced to accommodate young people under the age of 16 and that specific transitional and long term accommodation options are available for these young people. Having long term, safe, secure and appropriate accommodation for young people is the foundation to ensuring that they remain engaged in education, training or employment. A focus must also remain on ensuring that initiatives for young people aged 17 to 20 in the Affordable Housing Strategy are consulted on and reviewed as they are implemented to ensure their effectiveness and enable young people turning 17 to transition into the associated programs and initiatives.

Recommendation: That the State Government ensures shelters are appropriately resourced to assist young people under the age of 16 and that appropriate long term accommodation options for these young people are funded.

Responsible Department: Health and Human Services, Treasury and Finance

Costing: Uncosted

4. Health and Wellbeing

4.1 Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy

Orygen the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health and the Hunter Institute of Mental Health, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Youth Network of Tasmania, are working to develop the first Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy of Tasmania. This strategy will be released in the coming months and will provide an outline of working to reduce the rates of youth suicide in Tasmania. Rates of youth suicide are a concern in Tasmania and many community sector organisations are currently working in the youth suicide prevention space to decrease the rate of youth suicide in Tasmania. The soon to be released strategy will include direction for future action to ensure the needs of Tasmanian young people are addressed and met.

The development of a youth specific suicide prevention strategy is a great start, however, little will come of a strategy when it stands alone and is not implemented or actioned. It is vital that the work initiated by the development of the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy is continued and maintained. Funding needs to be allocated to ensure the strategy and the

actions can be implemented to ensure the strategy is effective and achieves the best outcomes for young people in Tasmania; with the overall aim of reducing the rates of youth suicide in Tasmania.

Recommendation: That the State Government provides sufficient funding to ensure the actions outlined in the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy for Tasmania can be met in order to provide the best service to young people in the state and reduce the rate of youth suicide.

Responsible Department: DHHS

Costing: Uncosted

4.2 Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy can often be an unplanned experience for young people that is met with uncertainty. Tasmanian's teenage fertility rate dropped in 2014. While this is positive, investment into this area must be maintained as Tasmania's fertility rate is still higher than the national average (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

Government and the community sector have been working on increasing the access to information and services for young people so they can make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) in schools is a key aspect for delivering information to young people around these topics.

For example the Core of Life program is an evidence-based program, with proven results, which is aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy in Tasmania. This program has educated 1100 young people in years 11 and 12 across the State. The funding for this program will cease at the end of the year.

Whilst the School Nurse program has been a welcome investment in this area, there is considerable work to be done outside of their scope. It is important that we do not lose focus on this area in order to continue reducing the Tasmanian teenage fertility rate.

Therefore, YNOT asks that the State Government continues to provide investment into this area, by providing funding to programs with a proven record, such as the Core of Life program, in reducing the Tasmanian teenage fertility rate.

Recommendation: That the State Government continues to invest into proven, evidence based programs aimed at reducing the Tasmanian teenage fertility rate.

Responsible Department: Health

Costing: Uncosted

5. Education and Employment

5.1 Support for alternative education programs

YNOT supports the need for the education system to offer flexible and alternative education options for young people. YNOT recognises the importance of improving our educational outcomes, and part of this is ensuring that the needs of all young people are being met. Flexible and alternative education options are effective mechanisms by which the education system can offer dynamic, and engaging, learning opportunities to students who may not be suited to mainstream learning. YNOT stresses the importance of schools providing these options to young people, and strongly advocated for their implementation in YNOT's submission to *Government's Review of the Education Act* in early 2015.

YNOT advocates for stronger ties between the education sector and the broader community to not only improve access to flexible and alternative education options, but also as a mechanism by which accountability of public education is improved. There are multiple community based alternative education options in Tasmania, which are delivered in partnership between schools and services, such as at Youth Arts and Recreation Centre (YouthARC), which has an established reputation for providing students with alternative learning spaces, education options and support to students who may have become disengaged with mainstream learning. YNOT strongly advocates that programs such as these be financially supported and integrated more effectively into mainstream education. These initiatives are relatively cost neutral as many of the resources and locations already exist. These initiatives could be run using reallocation of resources and collaborative partnerships.

Recommendation: That the State Government allocates additional funding to be used to continue supporting the already established alternate education options and to develop new programs to assist young people disengaged from, or unable to access, mainstream education.

Responsible Department: Education

Costing: Uncosted

5.2 Exploring options to ensure all students are able to access post year 10 education

YNOT believes that education and learning needs to be accessible to everyone regardless of their circumstance. YNOT advocates for a public education system that better engages students, encourages participation, and results in positive learning outcomes. As such, YNOT believes that there needs to be reforms in the public education system so that students feel encouraged to learn, are interested in attending school, and are supported to make informed decisions relating to their learning and education, as opposed to being coerced.

YNOT advocates strongly for a public education system that provides strong support networks, including community partnerships, flexible and alternative education options, and early intervention programs that work to prevent disconnection between young people and education. YNOT recognises that the main barrier to students participating in post year 10 education is a lack of interest which stems from disconnection from mainstream education systems. Consequently, YNOT advocates that the public education system needs to prioritise the development of alternative education options for years 11 and 12 that offer students the opportunity to receive tailored and supportive approaches to education that encourage connection and participation within the school system.

YNOT believes that supporting students to identify these possible post year 10 education options that address their needs and interests is also a key aspect of encouraging students to continue study beyond year 10. The gap between Pathway Planners finishing at the end of 2014 and the start of My Education in 2016 has meant that many students have had a lack of support in preparing for post year 10 education and has created a lot of uncertainty amongst students. At the 2014 TYF Youth Employment Forum and the 2015 TYF Learning and Education Forum, young people identified that having a combination of face-to-face support specific to planning for their future and access to online resources was essential for identifying and planning for post year 10 education options (TYF 2014a). YNOT strongly advocates for schools to provide tailored face-to-face support and access to online resources for students to support them to attend and complete post year 10 education.

Recommendation: That the State Government provides funding to ensure all students have access to post year 10 education in a format that best supports their learning styles and needs, with face-to-face support available for young people to identify these options.

Responsible Department: Education

Costing: Uncosted

5.3 Employment resource for young people

There are many incentives that come with employing young people. Young people bring different skill sets and new ideas to the workplace, and are eager to learn new skills and work hard. Unfortunately, youth employment is a concern for many young people in Tasmania. Many employers prefer to hire someone with experience as opposed to hiring a young person who may be new to the job market.

At the 2014 TYF Youth Employment Forum, young people identified that an employment resource is needed to provide them with information about gaining employment and the workplace, as well as how to access opportunities to gain experience and employment (TYF 2014b). This was supported by findings from a Youth Employment Workshop which included the an outcome around the need to support both young people and employers (Colony 47 2015).

Therefore, YNOT suggests a resource be developed to assist young people when they are not only looking for work but also maintaining work. The resource would also include information for parents and employers who are supporting young people who are looking for work or who are working. This resource would need to be youth friendly in the language and format used, and be available online so it is easily accessible for young people. This resource could bring together information and resources that currently exist for young people regarding employment.

For example, as an outcome of the TYF Youth Employment Forum, YNOT developed the *TYF Employment Tips from Employers* which is a document of the ideas young people themselves suggested (TYF 2014b). YNOT also developed a partnering resource for young people looking for work called *TYF Employment Tips for Young People* (TYF 2014c). These are examples of the types of documents that could be included in an online youth friendly resource for young people in Tasmania. This online resource would need to be structured so it complements the My Education program and the Pathway Careers website (Education Services Australia 2015). The online resource could then be used to identify the gaps in information and resources that young people may need and work can then be done to fill these gaps so that work is not duplicated.

Young people also identified that they want a combination of face to face and online resources available to them (TYF 2014a), and highlighted the importance of having a resource that could link them to opportunities to gain experience, mentoring opportunities and access support. Mentoring and work experience opportunities can be invaluable learning experiences for young people. These opportunities give young people who have not yet entered the workforce the chance to gain work experience before entering the workforce.

Many high schools currently arrange short work experience placements for their students. This is something YNOT praises and encourages, however, many young people have identified that they want to access more opportunities for work experience (TYF 2014a). YNOT believes this is something that should be encouraged and could be incorporated with an online resource that links young people to these types of opportunities.

Recommendation: That funding be allocated to create a youth friendly online resource to assist young people looking for work, wanting to maintain work and managing work with education.

Responsible Department: Premier and Cabinet, State Growth

Costing: Uncosted

6. Safe and accessible transport for young people

6.1 Transport options available to access education

One of the biggest barriers young people face when accessing education is the limitation of available transport. Young people living in rural and remote parts of Tasmania are particularly impacted by the limited availability of safe and reliable public transport, especially when they are not yet qualified or old enough to drive independently. When public transport is not available many young people are required to relocate to continue their education. While this is indeed an option, it is not a viable option for all young people and it brings a whole other set of barriers such as finding employment, suitable housing and meeting the basic costs of living.

YNOT is pleased with the expansion of many schools around the state to include years 11 and 12. This enables young people to continue their education without relocating or extensive travel. Distance education has also provided an opportunity to study further without relocating. However, distance education relies on having a reliable internet connection and not all courses of study are available via distance education. This means

that distance education will only be accessible and suitable to some young people. Accessible and affordable public transport is needed in all regions, particularly in rural and remote areas, to ensure all young people have equal access to transport to enable them to continue their education post year 10.

Recommendation: That there is an increase in safe, reliable and affordable public transport services available to young people, particularly those in rural and remote areas of the state.

Responsible Department: State Growth, Education

Costing: Uncosted

YNOT Budget Submission Process

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) is informed and governed by a Board of Governance, responsible for setting the broad directions and priorities of the organisation. General operational management of the organisation is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer via delegation of authority. The Board of Governance members bring with them expertise and knowledge across a wide diversity of youth issues and needs, and contribute their skills and experience when involved in decision making for the organisation.

The current Board members and their link to the youth sector are:

- Ann Davie, Individual Member (Chair)
- Matt Durose, Mission Australia (Vice Chair)
- Miranda Ashby, Flourish Mental Health Action Inc. (Treasurer)
- Damian Collins, Youth, Family and Community Connections
- Troy O’Konnah, National Job Link
- Kate Cross, Rural Youth Health
- Collective Member, Karinya Young Women’s Service
- Simone Zell, University of Tasmania
- Dominique Smith, Cornerstone Youth Services Inc.
- Griffin Blizzard, Tasmanian Youth Forum
- Brett Maryniak, Youth Member

YNOT’s aim is to ensure that recommendations to the State Government are informed by the youth sector and young people. In order to achieve this, YNOT performed extensive consultation with local and regional organisations operating in the Youth Sector, including with the coordinating groups of NYCC (Northern Youth Coordinating Committee), NWAY (North West Action for Youth) and YAP (Youth Action Priorities), as well as through the Statewide Youth Collaborative (SYC) Group (which is co-chaired by YNOT and the Department of Health and Human Services), and with young people through the peak youth consultation body, the Tasmanian Youth Forum. YNOT also conducted a survey open to members, young people and the youth sector in order to inform its 2016-17 budget submission.

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