



Tasmanian youth forum

‘Hey Good Lookin’!’ Statewide Forum on Health and Wellbeing

Introduction

On 1 December 2011, around 60 young people (aged 12-25 years) from across the Tasmania gathered together on World Aid’s Day to discuss their concerns about health and wellbeing issues as experienced by young Tasmanians. The ‘Hey Good Lookin’!’ Forum was held at YouthARC in Hobart, and was facilitated by TYF members, with the support of Maree Fudge of RDS Partners.

The aims of the forum were to:

- Provide an opportunity for young Tasmanians to discuss health and wellbeing issues such as mental health, sexual health and body image, as experienced by young people.
- Provide an avenue for young Tasmanians to take their main issues and priorities in relation to health and wellbeing to Government and other interested groups.
- Assist young Tasmanians in developing their own strategies to promote healthy choices in their communities.

At the start of the forum participants discussed what ‘health and wellbeing’ meant to them, including participating in an anonymous survey. Participants also heard from Mental Health advocate Lucy Lester, took part in a Red Aware ‘condon-brooch’ activity for World Aid’s Day, and participated in a Hip-Hop dance workshop.

Participants also participated in workshops around particular issues relating to health and wellbeing, including sleep, body image, sexual health and exercise. In these groups participants discussed their concerns in relation to these issues, as well as the impact unhealthy habits can have on the lives of young people. The workshops were facilitated by TYF members, as well as members of community groups relevant to the topic. These ‘community experts’ were from organisations such as Headspace (South), Mission Australia, Pulse Youth Health Centre, Drug Education Network (DEN), the Flourish Foundation and The Link. We would like to thank these organisations for their support, as well as workers from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Community Development Division (DPAC), and various other individuals who assisted during the day.

The TYF ‘Hey Good Lookin’!’ Statewide Forum on Healthy and Wellbeing was supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Community Development Division, the Flourish Foundation and Hobart City Council.

This communiqué outlines the main ideas and issues raised by the young Tasmanians present at the forum. It also outlines some of the practical strategies and initiatives proposed by participants to promote healthy habits. It also includes an analysis of the anonymous survey participants completed during the day.

Brainstorming and Vision Casting

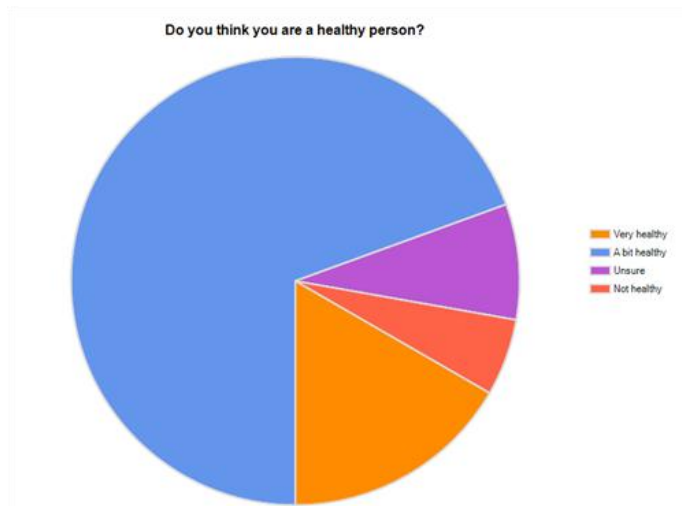
At the start of the forum participants were invited to reflect upon health and wellbeing issues, and their potential impact on the lives of young people and the community. This session included participants completing an anonymous survey.

The results of the survey provided many interesting insights into the lives of young Tasmanians. Firstly, it should be stated that 44.7% of the participants identified as 12-15 years, whilst 28.9% identified as being 16-18 years. Also worth noting is that there was a higher rate of responses from females with 65.8%, as well as comparable numbers of participants from the North West, South and North of the State. Particularly interesting was that there was a high proportion of participants from Geeveston.

One of the questions (Q4) asked participants to describe, in their own words, what was meant by the term 'healthy'. There was a lot of commonality between participants, with most explaining discrimination in terms of

"Someone who eats well and is fit"
"Right body size, good diet, is happy and good mental state and relationships"
"A person who has a balance of mental, physical and emotional health"
"A healthy mind, body and environment"

Fig 1.0 Q6. Do you think you are a healthy person?

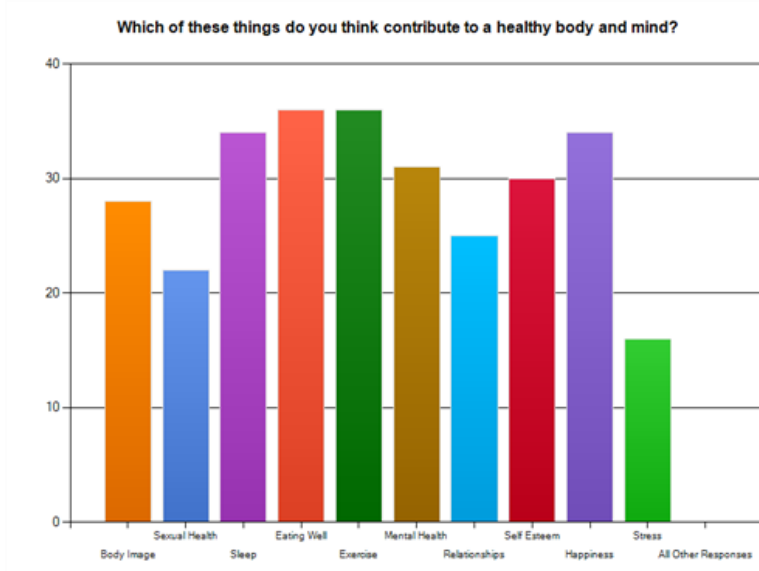


One of the interesting issues raised by the survey was that 69.4% of participants suggested that they only believed they were 'a bit healthy' (Q6). Fig 1.0 denotes this.

Also interesting were the factors that participants believed to contribute to good health. In question 7, as expressed in Fig 2.0, participants highlighted happiness, eating well, exercise and sleep to be the most important factors. Contrary to the findings of Mission Australia's *Survey of Young Australians 2011*, which placed stress as the top concern for young Australians, the participants in the forum ranked stress as

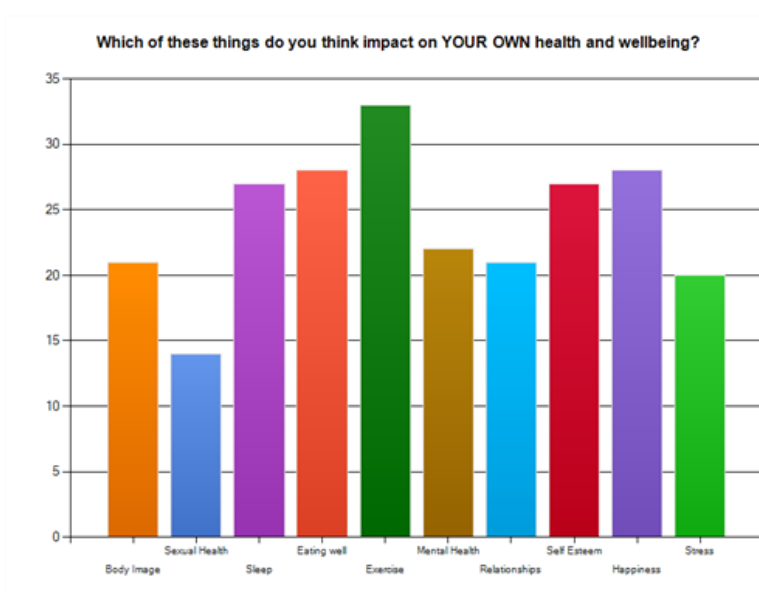
one of the factors least likely to influence their health and wellbeing.

Fig 2.0 Q7. Factors contributing to health and wellbeing



In Question 8 participants were asked what factors had an impact on their own health. This question can be seen below in Fig 3.0. A high proportion of respondents at 86.8% highlighted exercise as a critical factor to their health. The surprising low ranking (36.8%) of sexual health ,as a factor contributing to the young people’s health and wellbeing, can possibly be attributed to the high proportion of the participants being between 12-15 years.

Fig 3.0 Q8. Factors contributing to personal health and wellbeing



Refining Our Ideas

During the next part of the forum, participants were split into workshop groups to focus on certain aspects of health and wellbeing. Participants were introduced to the 'community experts' and TYF members that would facilitate the workshops.

Body Image

Talkin' about our bodies, how we feel we should look, and whether this is realistic

Cecilia Nagy, DHHS

Robyn Lewis (TYF Member)

Keepin' fit!

Why keeping active is important!

Alby Bowerman, Mission Australia,
Youth Beat

Metika Claxton (TYF Member)

Eating right

Let's chat about healthy eating and why balance is key!

Ann Sweeney, Pulse Youth Health
Centre

Briar Walker (TYF member)

Restin' up!

Getting sleep is critical to getting the most out of your life!

Celina Sargent, DHHS

Chloe Turner (TYF member)

Let's talk about sex!

Information about sexual health and making the right choices

Jane Palfreyman, Pulse Youth
Health Centre

Sarah Cartwright, TYF member

Becoming Zen!

Taking stock of all life's issues

Marlyce Harrison, The Link

Caitlin Frost, TYF member

Relationships

Juggling the ups and downs of friends, family and boyfriends/girlfriends

Anthony King, Community
Development Division

Griffin Blizzard, TYF member

Alcohol and other drugs

What is the impact of using and abusing drugs?

Jonathan Pare, DEN

Maddi Charles, TYF member

Mental Matters

Why having a healthy mind is important

Miranda Ashby, Flourish

Lucy Lester, Anglicare worker and
mental health advocate

Nathan Gelston, TYF member

The workshop sessions were structured so that each participant could share their concerns in two topic groups, having around 30 minutes of discussion time in each. The focus of these workshops was for the young people to discuss honestly and openly their concerns about the above topic areas, from personal experience or what they had witnessed in their communities. During the discussion participants were again asked the following questions by Maree:

- Why am I passionate about this?
- What are some of the concerns I have when thinking about this issue?
- In what ways does this issue impact the community?
- How are young people affected by this issue?



Top concerns

The following is a summary of some of the ideas presented to the audience after the first workshop session.

Let's talk about sex!

- Risks - Unexpected pregnancy, peer pressure to have sex, STIs, embarrassed for parents finding out- "even if I am 50, I don't want to talk to my parents about sex", Body image, misinformation leading to confusion, rumours of pregnancy or reputation can be awful , young people don't seek help as worried about confidentiality in schools
- Community needs more education, but sexual health education is not done well in schools well – not allowed in some schools at all

Keepin' fit

- Benefits – it improves overall wellbeing, gets rid of stress, fun, and makes you feel good about yourself
- Concerns - people don't do it enough, it is seen as a burden, different measurements of success are discouraging, government don't spend money or time on issue

Body image

- Concerns – adolescent has normal body changes – need information about this as people develop differently, misinformation about image i.e. media influence, concern that popularity at school is related to image and 'looking good',

Becoming Zen

- Important to just relax and chill out!

- Stress stops relaxing time – pressures of school, stress because of family, bullying, too much work, complicated relationships.

Eating right

- Concerns - balance can be issue, not enough education focusing on engaging young people, obesity is a big issue, people don't know how to cook properly, unhealthy and processed foods, diet can impact behavior (too much sugar), some people don't get enough food – personal choice, money, malnutrition, skip meals, diets

Restin' up

- Concerns - Young people not getting enough sleep – staying up later, having a restless sleep, impact of lack of sleep on study and work and relationships.

Relationships

- Concerns – in small communities news and rumour travel fast, falling out of friendships can be very difficult, need to have good networks of support to talk about issues, family and friends can sometimes be a burden.

Drugs and Alcohol

- o Concerns - Parents and media can influence habits – are social norms appropriate?, underage drinking, drugs and alcohol can cause violence in community and crime, bad combination with sexual health issues – make wrong choices or be taken advantage of, most drugs have a long term impact

Mental Matters

- Concerns – personal experience (young carer, family, relationships), many types of illness – one in five people have MH issue, stigma because of lack of education or understanding, can be caused or made worse by drugs and alcohol, need more community awareness, educating not only family but employers, teachers etc about the costs to society – health industry, knowing how to access services

Positive strategies

Following these workshops, participants listened to an inspiring addresses by Mental Health advocate Lucy Lester. Lucy shared with participants her own personal journey towards accepting and managing her own mental illness After this presentation participants were invited to brainstorm strategies to address the concerns they had highlighted in the earlier workshops, and make positive change in their communities. The ideas were discussed in the same workshop topic groups as before with the leading questions:

- Thinking about the concerns raised in the morning workshops, what do you want to achieve?
- Share a time that you have been treated really well. What were the features of this experience?

- How could your community work together to use these features to make a difference in relation to this topic?
 - Are there any projects or organisations working on this topic that you could work with?
 - Could your school get involved?
 - Could local youth groups get involved?
- If everyone were to work together, what would you like your community to be known for?

The following is a summary of the three ideas presented to the audience after the conclusion of this session. They are presented in the order of the most popular. Ideas were graded depending on the amount of 'dots' they received from participants, and each participant was given three dots, which they distributed amongst the ideas as they saw fit.

Drug and Alcohol (33 dots)

Young people in this group advocated that police needed to stop stereotyping all young people who use alcohol and other drugs as irresponsible and problems, because this stereotype influences how the rest of the community sees us. The group also discussed the need for more education on this topic in schools, particularly in primary schools, as young people can be influenced by alcohol and other drugs from an early age because of family problems or other issues. They thought a good way to discuss these issues would be to organise panel sessions in schools, with panel members being parents and young people with experience of drugs to discuss their issues.

Becoming Zen (30)

Participants in this group thought that there needed to be more emphasis, when discussing youth health issues, on the need for relaxation and having a break from the stresses of school, work, family and friends. They believed that young people needed to demand more opportunities for 'chill time' in their schools and in community youth services, such as participation in activities like yoga, tai chi and mediation in schools. Some services which they thought could introduce such activities were YouthARC,



Mental Matters (23)

Participants in this group thought that mental health issues deserved more attention in the community. They believed that there should be more awareness raising and education around mental health in

school, work places, and even in the health care sector. They thought that a good way to raise awareness about the importance of mental health, and its impact on individuals, would be to support people who have had an experience with mental illness to share their story. They also thought it was important to provide more guidance to young people about where to seek help.



What happens next?

Following the launch of the TYF Statewide Forum on Health and Wellbeing TYF members and YNOT staff will progress the issues raised by participants. This process will include organising meetings with politicians, community organisations and individuals who work in areas relevant to youth health and wellbeing in Tasmania.

If you would to meet with TYF members and YNOT about the Communique, please contact TYF Project Officer Naomi Marsh.

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