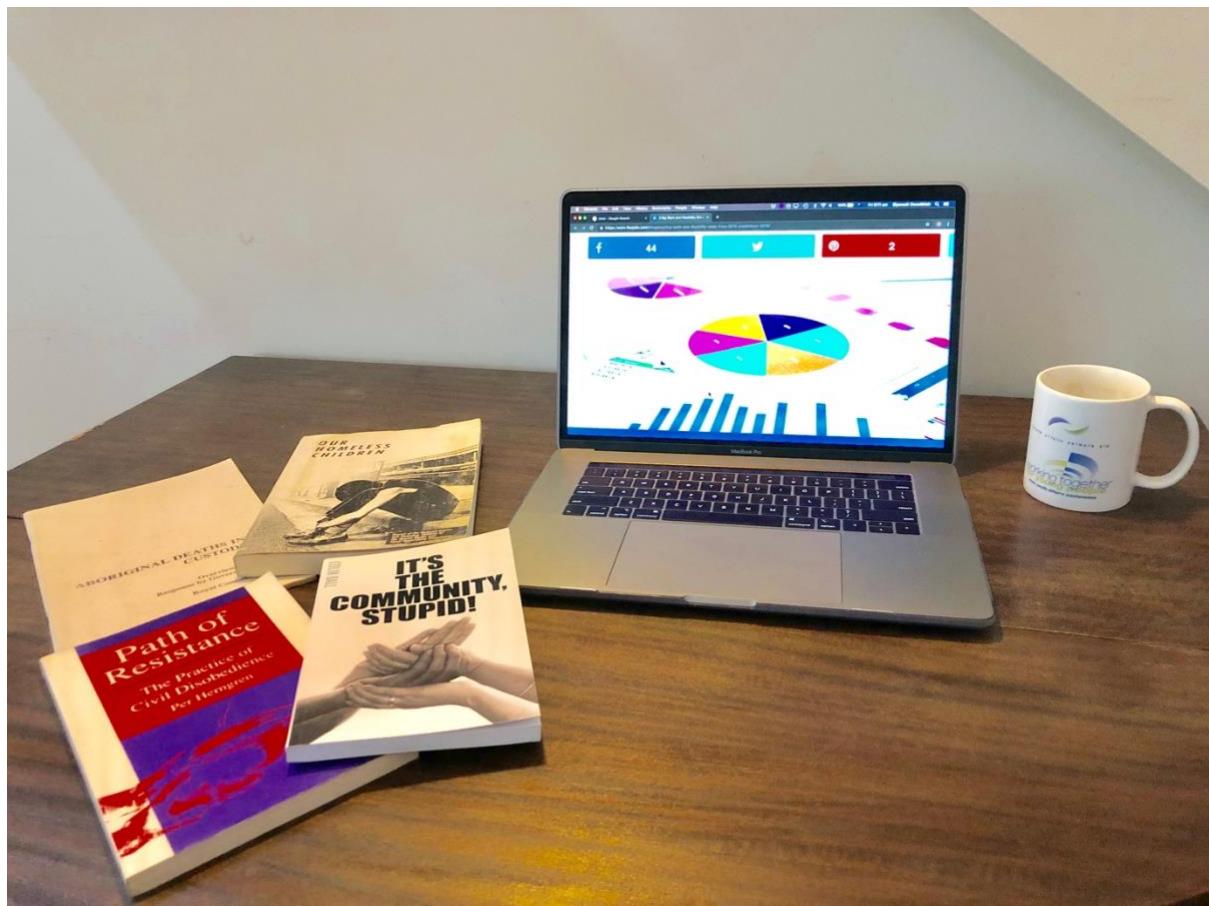


# Youth Sector Policy Development

## Enabling Youth Workers and Service Providers to Influence Policy



### Findings of Online Policy Development Survey 2019



YANQ believes that the Traditional Custodians and primary Culture of Australia is Aboriginal. Aboriginal Lore has always ruled this Land. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) cultures as distinct, separate cultures. We acknowledge Torres Strait Islander peoples as Custodians of the Torres Strait Islands and surrounding waters.

YANQ supports the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to self-determination. We recognise the capacity of communities to generate their own solutions to the problems imposed on them by continuing colonisation and ongoing pressures to assimilate. Further, we value the wisdom and leadership ATSI cultures can bring to addressing the problems faced by Australian society. We can benefit greatly, at an individual, community and social level, from embracing opportunities to learn from ATSI Culture, Lore, Land and Sea.



All inquiries about relating to this report can be directed to the Youth Affairs Network Queensland (YANQ) director@yanq.org.au Phone:  
+61 7 3844 7713 Web: [www.yanq.org.au](http://www.yanq.org.au)



This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5 License. It can be shared under the conditions specified by this license at  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/au/>

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) has been the peak body representing individuals and organisations from across Queensland's youth sector for over 30 years. In early 2019 the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women contracted YANQ to undertake a research project exploring the possibility of using an online mechanism for youth sector policy development. As part of this research project YANQ utilised Survey Monkey to create an online brief anonymous survey that was circulated electronically through the YANQ newsletter, website and social media to youth workers, organisations and networks across Queensland.

YANQ is highly aware that online processes by themselves are not the optimal method for engaging youth sector members. Historically YANQ invested heavily in hosting face-to-face policy forums right across the State. But since our defunding in 2012 we have been unable to continue this strategy due only to lack of funding by the State Government. However, we do believe that when our funding is finally restored, there is a place for online processes to complement our face-to-face forums and as such we are keen to test and refine this aspect of our sector engagement. This project, we believe, will provide useful information for YANQ and its members in the process of establishing an ongoing state-wide solutions-based policy process.

A screenshot of a Facebook post from the page "Youth Affairs Network Qld (YANQ)". The post features a profile picture of a person sitting on steps with their head down. The caption reads: "Do you want to represent the voices of young people you work with and contribute to reforming the system and structures that impact on young people's lives? This is called policy development and a starting point can be you taking 2 minutes to complete this short survey so we can have a functional state-wide policy process to communicate young people's issues to the government and vice versa. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8NS7T5D>". Below the post are engagement metrics: 1,019 People reached and 115 Engagements, along with a "Boost Post" button.

Figure 1. Example of how the survey was promoted

Overall there were 38 responses to the survey. 26% of responses were from Brisbane, 26% of responses from Gold Coast, 12% from Sunshine Coast, 12% from Ipswich, 5% from Central West Queensland, 5% from Townsville. The other 14% were from Moreton, Inala, Logan, Bundaberg, Dalby, Wujal Wujal, Mount Isa and Switzerland!

66.67% of the respondents completed the survey as individuals and 20.51% on behalf of their organisations. The other 12.82% indicated that they are Supervisor of a Youth Worker, Counselor and Program Coordinator in a youth service.

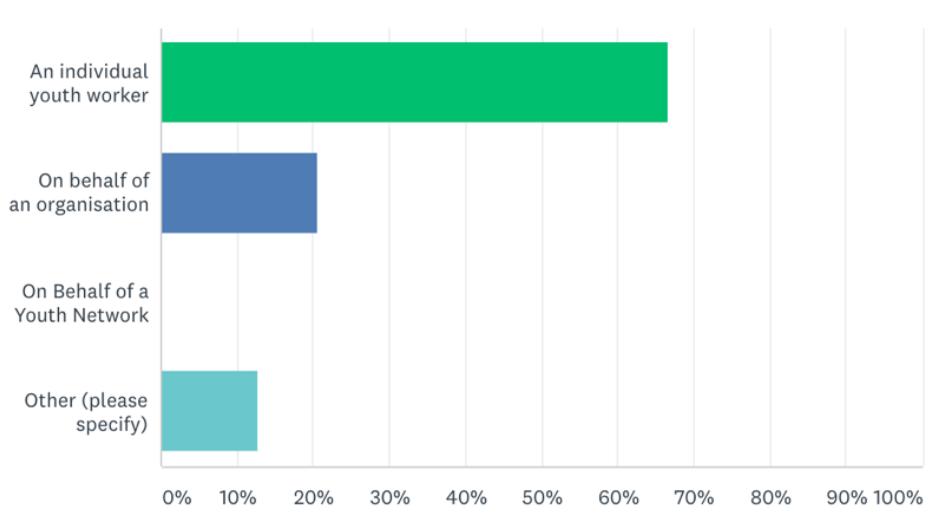


Figure 2. Survey respondents' roles/positions

Not surprisingly, the majority of survey respondents have been in the sector for a while. 68% have worked in the youth sector for over 10 years, 18% between 5-10 years, 10% between 3-5 years and 4% between 1-3 years.

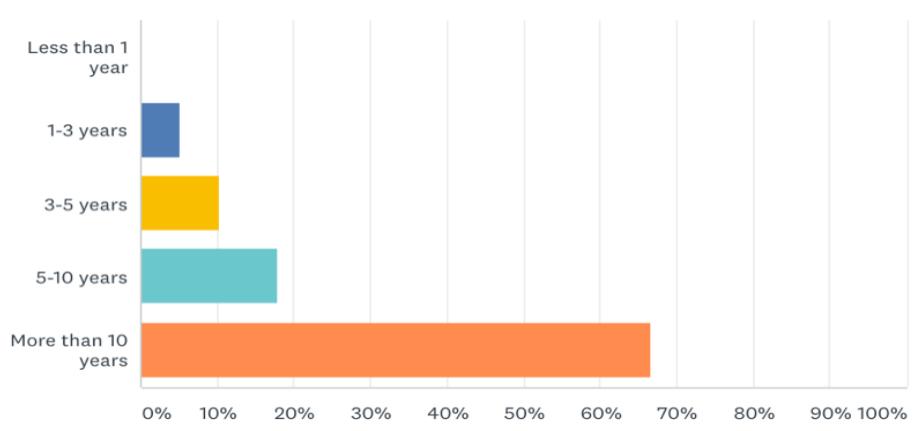


Figure 3: Survey respondents were asked *How long have you worked in the youth sector?*

The data backs up anecdotal information YANQ has been receiving over the past few years indicating that youth workers who have joined the workforce in recent years are less engaged in collective processes such as policy development and advocacy. The youth sector has historically had a high turn around. The last research report by YANQ into the youth sector workforce indicated that the majority of the youth workers have been in the sector for less than two years and that the majority of youth workers do not believe that they will remain in the youth sector for more than two years.

This poses a serious challenge to the sector and requires careful consideration of how we can stop youth work to be a stepping stone for other community work and also, how to involve youth workers in collective actions to ensure that learnings from hands-on youth work informs policy and program development.

It is highly concerning that more than half (55.26%) of respondents have never been involved in any policy development processes. This is not surprising considering that YANQ, as the sector's peak body, has now been without funding for over seven years.

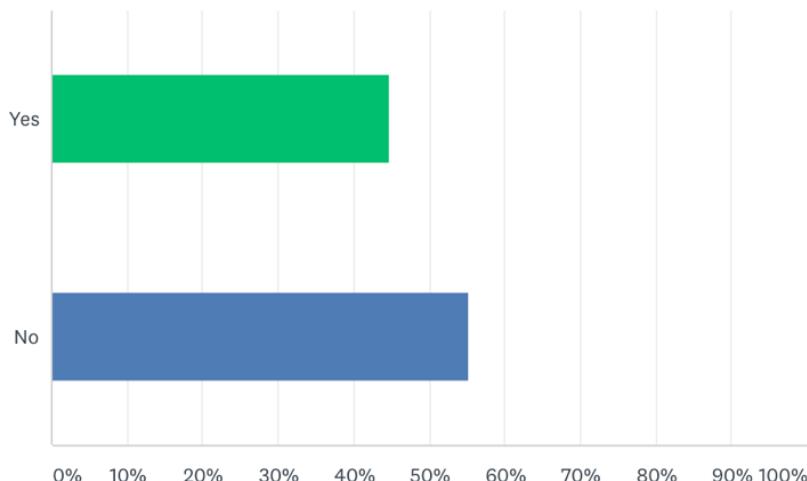


Figure 4: *Have you been involved with any policy development process previously?*

The (44.74%) respondents who have been previously involved in policy development processes listed 'clear consultation' as the most significant element of good policy development process. Other significant elements included:

*...consistency. Everyone has to have a clear understanding and commitment to follow processes.*

*...new initiatives for participation*

*...genuine engagement and input*

*...interactive, informative, challenging, well facilitated, process and outcome orientated*

Only three of the respondents had previous experience with online policy development. They listed the following points as important to a successful online policy process:

*...take in as many viewpoints as possible from all affected demographics, Elders and 'experts in the field'. Then filter out the nonsense to arrive at clear policy statements.*

*...clear concise and defined information, easy to follow process and most important who people can contact for support them in their involvement*

The majority of respondents (89.47%) indicated that they would feel comfortable in participating in an online process.

There are significant demands on youth workers and youth service managers at the service level. These demands have been increasing rapidly in recent years and as a result youth workers find it hard to commit to other significant elements of their work including networking and policy development.

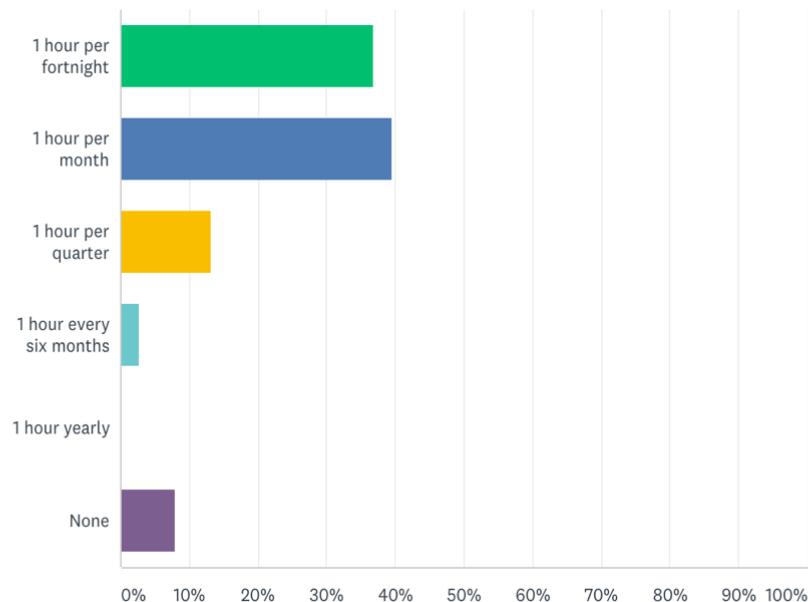


Figure 5: How much time you could possibly dedicate to being involved in youth sector policy development?

Based on what the survey respondents indicated, it would be safe to say that the majority of the sector would be able to commit at least an hour per month to policy development. It is highly important that the participants see clear outcomes from their involvement in policy processes in order for them to continue prioritising their engagement with such a process.

In regards to process, all of the survey respondents agreed that YANQ should use online surveys to gather feedback on issues papers, and then distribute the data to the sector before progressing policy positions on behalf of the sector. The respondents also suggested that YANQ should:

*...use Live feeds from various regions to promote policy development*

*...use Messenger to engage directly with YANQ followers*

*...hosting webinars on policy issues*

*...having a framework and skeleton of the policy ready as a starting point*

*...short and sharp online surveys in order to engage more people in a timely manner*

*...seeking consent from participants*

*...providing transparency with data*

*...where possible combine with face-to-face and peer research*

*...the more engaging the better the impact, involve young people and workers at every opportunity to promote great work in community*

Based on the information gathered in this short survey, YANQ is planning to trial an online policy development process. We will be asking sector members to register their interest in assisting us with this trial. We will document the process used and conduct a review in order to refine the process as well as informing our research project.

We hope that together we will overcome the challenges that the sector is facing. We strongly believe that the collective wisdom of youth workers across Queensland is the only evidence-based source for information on the issues that marginalised young people are facing and more importantly, what is needed to support these young people and their communities.

Finally, we would like to thank all the youth sector members that took the time to complete the survey. We look forward to continuing working with you to improve the health and viability of the youth sector and to ensure young people's rights are met.