

LISTENING TO QUEENSLAND'S YOUTH SECTOR

Report on the findings of the 2012 Youth Affairs Network Qld Consultations with the Queensland Youth Sector to inform the Queensland Government Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services' Youth Sector Review

February 2013



youth affairs network qld

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.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings of consultations conducted by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc (YANQ) in late 2012. These consultations were designed to enable YANQ to produce a sector-driven, evidence-based response to the Queensland Youth Services Review. A total of 282 youth workers and youth service managers across Queensland participated in the statewide consultation process through either attendance at one of 7 regional face-to-face sessions, or through an online survey.

Brief discussion and recommendations about some of the implications of these findings for the Review draw together the consultation findings and data collected through a number of YANQ research projects over the past 2-3 years.

Consultation findings

Whilst some variations existed between regions (in particular, between the more urbanised south east corner (SE Corner) of Queensland, and rural/regional areas) a number of strong themes emerged:

- **The needs of young people:** The highest overall need identified was access to affordable housing. Other priority needs identified were family support/social inclusion, access to youth services, mental health support and education/re-engagement. Access to public transport was also highlighted in several rural/regional areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were consistently identified as the group with the most unmet needs, closely followed by criminalised young people (particularly in the SE Corner), young people with disabilities, young people from small communities and refugee young people (particularly in the SE Corner). There is generally a higher level of unmet needs amongst young people in rural/regional areas.
- **Types of services with the best outcomes for young people:** Respondents overwhelmingly advocated flexible, accessible, multi-functional, community-based services with the capacity to respond to changing needs and/or the different needs of young people and their families/communities in different regions (rather than funding for pre-identified needs or pre-determined services). The single model which was most widely supported was a **youth service hub**, with a variety of services co-located, and the capacity to provide outreach services. Advice varied as to whether it was best to provide larger regional services or smaller local services. Advice also varied as to whether youth housing services should be integral to, or separate from, these hubs. Rural/regional respondents particularly favoured the existing Youth Support Co-ordinator Initiative. Resources to continue to train/support youth workers, link youth workers/services and undertake research/development activities were widely seen as an important component of viable service system.
- **Forms of engagement with the best outcome for young people:** It was overwhelmingly agreed that voluntary involvement in youth programs achieves the best long term outcomes for young people.
- **Primary target groups of young people:** The majority of respondents proposed that youth work should target all young people, not only those who are marginalised - a trend that was accentuated amongst rural/regional respondents. Respondents from the SE Corner were more likely than those from rural/regional areas to prioritise a focus on marginalised young people.
- **Methods of service delivery with the best outcomes for young people** - Respondents overwhelmingly saw individual work with young people (particularly informal interactions) as the most effective method of service delivery. Informal group work to build peer support amongst young people and community development work also rated highly. A combination of formal group work, community education and advocacy for young people were also seen as effective in some situations.
- **Customising service delivery according to target group:** Preventative work, early intervention and individual support for those already facing problems, were considered most useful to young people. Rural/regional respondents tended to emphasise the importance of prevention and early intervention work with a wide cohort of young people. Respondents from the SE Corner placed a greater emphasis on individual post-problem support for marginalised young people.

Overall, respondents were largely agreed on how the available funding should be allocated. Both south-eastern and rural/regional respondents proposed that two-thirds (2/3 - 67%) of the available resources should be allocated to direct *Youth Service* provision and one-third (1/3 - 33%) should be allocated to *Youth Worker/Sector Development*. The only significant variation between the two groups was the greater weight placed on funding of regional services (28%) amongst respondents from rural and regional areas. Both groups proposed that approximately 20% of funding should be dedicated to local services, at least 10% of funding should be dedicated to services in metropolitan Brisbane, and at least 10% of funding should be spent on multi-regional or statewide services for particular target groups of young people (e.g. Murri young people).

Funding of developmental activities was also seen as a high priority - with both rural/regional and SE Corner respondents arguing that between 6% and 8% of the total budget should be allocated to each of the following areas - organisational supervision/mentoring and peer support; organisational reflection/research/evaluation; regional networking/activities; sector-wide research/development; and sector-wide workforce training/development. This is consistent with the findings of the Health and Community Services Workforce

Council (2012:9), which highlighted the importance of development and support, given data that suggests that 51% of youth workers have been in the sector for 2 years or less, and only 40% have access to regular supervision.

Large NGOs that focus on addressing pre-identified needs or providing pre-determined programs, were widely perceived to be the least effective in addressing the needs of young people. Most respondents argued that, whatever the outcomes of the Review, the Queensland Government should invest in existing local or regional services, rather than appointing new organisations to develop new programs and services. This would optimise service efficiency through leveraging on existing credibility and goodwill toward effective existing organisations.

These findings are highly consistent with recent YANQ research studies and consultations. These include the *Youth Sector Workforce Skilling and Training Research Project*; the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Sector Skilling and Training Research Project*; consultations leading to YANQ's response to the Youth at Risk Initiative (YARI) review; *Multiculturalism in Queensland's Youth Sector*; and a series of consultations to answer the question *What is Youth Work?* (See the Bibliography for further details of published reports).

Disclaimer

YANQ greatly appreciates the active contributions of such a large number of youth sector workers and managers during the consultations leading up to this report. We have made our best effort to capture the diverse array of needs and issues raised during the process. Any omissions in this report reflect the limitations of our research methodology. For these, we apologise.

The Recommendations

Effective youth work is an investment in young people's lifelong social engagement and participation. It is essential that the Youth Services Review enable workers and organisations with expertise in the needs of their particular communities to develop and maintain services which will produce the best possible long term outcomes for young people. Given the varied nature of communities and services throughout Queensland, this will inevitably lead to different types of services, addressing different needs, in different regions across the state.

Recommendation 1: That the Youth Services Review adopt a multi-faceted, flexible practice framework which enables service providers to respond to the particular needs of their constituency - including young people, their families and their communities.

Recommendation 2: That the Youth Services Review optimise the unique role and contribution of youth workers to service delivery.

Recommendation 3: That, wherever possible, the Queensland Government continue to invest in existing community-based local and regional youth service providers, rather than appointing organisations from outside the community to develop new programs and services.

Recommendation 4: That the Youth Services Review recognise the critical role of developmental activities when allocating funding - particularly organisational support and development; regional networking and collaboration; and sector-wide workforce development and research.

Recommendation 5: That the Youth Services Review propose that further work be undertaken to identify and respond to the needs of youth people living in remote areas of Queensland.



Photo: Toowoomba Consultation
December 2012

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background

This report examines the findings of a series of consultations run by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc (YANQ) in late 2012. These were undertaken to inform YANQ's submission to the Queensland Government's Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services' review of the youth service system in the state.

YANQ wishes to acknowledge a weakness in its consultation process. Whilst youth workers and managers from isolated areas had the opportunity to participate in the YANQ consultation through an online survey, our process did not provide an equitable opportunity to participate in interactive, face-to-face sessions. Subject to funding, YANQ plans to redress this imbalance through establishing a program in Far North Queensland to establish community engagement and consultation mechanism with young people and communities and undertake action research in the region.

Similarly, YANQ is concerned that the Youth Services Review does not appear to have included remote communities in its consultation. This is a matter of some concern, when the evidence clearly indicates that Far North Queensland, in particular, has the highest rates of needs in critical areas such as health, housing, education and community safety.

Consultation Methodology

Seven three-hour (7 x 3 hr) consultation sessions were held in regional centres across Queensland during November and December 2012:

- ✦ Townsville – 29 November
- ✦ Cairns – 30 November
- ✦ Mount Isa – 3 December
- ✦ Brisbane – 4 December
- ✦ Rockhampton – 5 December
- ✦ Mackay – 6 December
- ✦ Toowoomba – 7 December

These sessions were promoted widely to the youth service sector, with direct emails sent to over 3,500 workers and services. The face-to-face consultations were augmented by an online survey that was also promoted widely across the sector.

Consultation participants

151 youth workers and service managers participated in the regional consultation sessions. An additional 131 responses were received online. In total, 282 youth workers, managers and training providers contributed to these consultations.

Respondents were asked to categorise their geographic location according to their Department of Communities Region. As demonstrated in Figure 1 (below), a high rate of participation was achieved from every region, with the exception of the North Coast.¹

¹ Several workers from the North Coast attended the Brisbane consultation and therefore their answers were included in the Brisbane results.

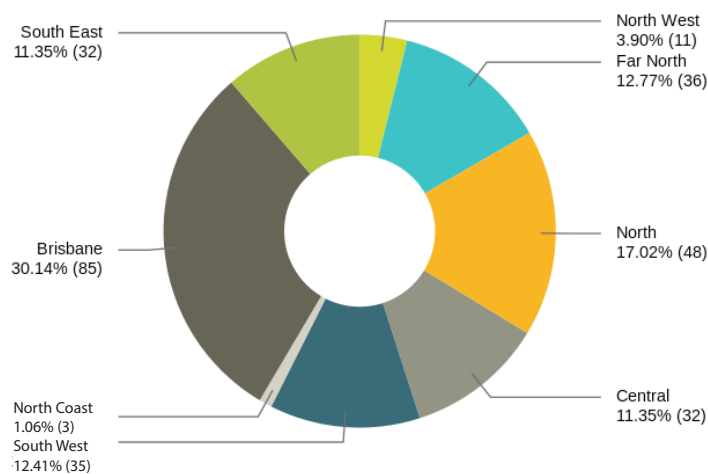


Figure 1. Location of consultation respondents

Consultation questions

Attachment 1 provides a full list of the consultation process. Essentially, the consultation process asked participants to consider the following areas:

- ✦ What and where are the greatest needs of young people?
- ✦ What is the ideal youth service system, and how can we achieve as much as possible with reduced funding levels?
- ✦ What types of services have the best long term outcomes for young people?
- ✦ What form of engagement has the best long term outcome for young people?
- ✦ Which target groups should youth workers primarily work with?
- ✦ Which methods of service delivery achieve the best long term outcomes for young people?

Identical questions were responded to by participants in consultation sessions and those who completed the online survey. Those who attended the sessions worked through the following survey questions in small groups: *What are the top 10 needs of young people in your region?, Imagine the perfect youth service system which would meet these needs ... and How would \$1 million for youth services best be spent in your region?* Session participants completed the remainder of the survey in hard-copy: this was then manually entered into the survey software to include the data alongside those who completed the survey online.

Regional groupings

Early in the analysis of these consultation findings, YANQ compared responses from each Department of Communities region. It quickly became evident that the most significant differences were generally between those respondents in south-eastern Queensland - the SE Corner (Brisbane, South East and North Coast regions) and rural/regional Queensland (South West, Central, North, Far North and North West²

² The Department's North region has been divided into 2. A North West region was created to capture the views of Mount Isa respondents, which differed considerably from other responses from the region.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

regions). Therefore, the analysis below primarily considers this divide, whilst noting any major distinctions between individual regions where these occur.

Needs of Young People in Queensland

The Top 10 needs of young people

Question 2 asked participants: *What are the Top 10 needs of young people in your region?* Clear trends emerged across Queensland, with largely shared priorities between face to-face and online responses. However, there were some variations between regions, which are detailed in Table 1:

Region	Top Need	Notable Variations
Brisbane	Family Support / Social Inclusion	
North	Access to Youth Services	Access to Youth Services and good public transport were considered a much greater need than the average in Townsville / North Region (1st priority from consultations, 2nd priority from online surveys).
South East	Affordable Housing	
Central	Education / Re-engagement	Social inclusion and Access to Youth Services needs lower than average.
South West	Affordable Housing / Access to Youth Services	Access to Youth Services and good public transport considered higher need than average in Toowoomba / South West Region. Mental Health concerns are also much higher than other regions.
Far North	Affordable Housing	Education / Re-engagement considered much lower than the average.
North West	Affordable Housing and Education / Re-engagement	Mental Health needs considered much lower than average.
North Coast	Not enough data	N/A

Table 1: Top 10 Needs of Young People (by Region)

Groups of young people with unmet needs

Question 8 asked respondents to choose which groups of young people have unmet needs in their region, and to rank them accordingly to the level of need. The overall weighted trend showed that there were strong unmet needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, closely followed by those amongst criminalised young people (particularly in south-eastern regions), young people with disabilities and young people from small communities.

While the overall trends between the two regional groupings are similar, one significant difference was the perceived needs of young people from refugee backgrounds. This may be indicative of this population's spread across the state, rather than their level of need. Another difference is that young

people with disabilities are seen as having the 2nd highest level of unmet needs in rural/regional areas, compared with the 4th highest level in the SE Corner. Young people from small communities are considered to have higher levels of unmet needs than those with disabilities in the SE Corner; a level of priority which is reversed in rural/regional areas.

The Optimum Service System to Address Young People's Needs

The ideal youth service system

Consultation participants were asked to *Imagine the perfect youth service system which would meet these needs*. This question deliberately encouraged respondents to *think big* - to describe their ideal youth service system in a perfect world - to provide a context for later, more modest, thinking within resource constraints. This question was also designed to help identify good practice within and between youth service organisations, as well as highlighting effective models of service delivery and sector development.

Youth service hubs

The single most common feature of the ideal service systems proposed by respondents could be broadly described as a *Youth Hub* or *One Stop Shop*. Forty one percent (41%) of south-eastern respondents and forty two percent (42%) of rural/remote respondents described flexible, co-located services, or drop-in centres, with the capacity to address a variety of presenting needs, as a central component of their ideal service system. Brisbane Youth Service, Hothouse, The Haven and Open Doors were offered as examples of where this structure is currently being utilised. This is echoed in the *Funding Approach* section below where respondents overwhelmingly supported flexible organisations, rather than to those working with pre-identified needs. Rural/regional respondents were generally more supportive of larger youth centres in regional cities (6% of rural/regional respondents compared with 0% of south-eastern respondents), with fifteen percent (15%) supporting the provision of on-site crisis housing. Crisis housing was not mentioned at all by south-eastern respondents despite *Affordable Housing / Crisis Shelters* being the number one perceived need across the State (see *Needs* section above). Respondents from the SE Corner were much more supportive of smaller, locally based hubs (a feature which was later echoed in their responses to questions about the best funding approach and spending recommendations). This thinking was well summed up by one respondent:

... keep the city services in the city, suburban youth work has its own practice and identity that doesn't belong in the big orgs.
(Brisbane Region respondent)

Many respondents who supported the idea of a *Youth Hub* went on to elucidate good practice within such a centre.

There was widespread support for a service which:

- ▲ Is easy to find, close to public transport, with 24 hour access
- ▲ Is youth friendly; an informal space with a non-judgemental approach
- ▲ Houses well trained, knowledgeable generalist youth work staff with the capacity to provide structured, one-to-one support and referral to individual young people
- ▲ Provides family inclusive servicing and addresses whole of community needs
- ▲ Offers a range of services and facilities on site, all services housed in the same building
- ▲ Is a presence in the community, with the capacity to provide mobile service delivery
- ▲ Is linked to schools and places where young people are
- ▲ Evidence-based work that is supportive of young people
- ▲ Young people actively participate in service delivery and design
- ▲ Includes facilities such as showers, and a safe place for young people to store their belongings
- ▲ Offers a range of educational and recreational activities

There was some distinction made between an 'all in one' service which could provide all services on site, and a 'hub' with a focus on brokerage which could informally (or, in some cases, formally) link young people with relevant services provided by other organisations. Holistic services that can provide all services on-site were largely supported in rural/regional areas, where respondents talked of young people disengaging from the process if they were forced to 'jump through too many hurdles'. (This is also consistent with the smaller number of services available to accept referrals in rural/regional areas). There was a significant amount of support in the SE Corner (30% of respondents) for a structured case-management approach within the hubs. Support for structured case management was lower amongst rural/regional respondents (10%). This is consistent with the variation in the two groupings' responses to different methods of youth work (detailed below) - where south-eastern respondents tended to prefer a more formal approach, and rural/regional respondents tended to advocate a more informal approach to work with young people.

The following comments encapsulate common themes across responses:

Whole of community interaction, accountability and responsibility over the care, wellbeing, and outcomes of our young people. Whole of family inclusive servicing the needs and activities and support of parents, youth and children through the one service offering employment services, counselling, advocacy, self development and education, training and social opportunities creating a sense of value and belonging as a respected and valued member of a community as a whole rather than isolated individuals feeling that they are isolated in their experiences with little or

no support to deal with the "whole of family" issues that are occurring including generational drug and alcohol abuse.

(Central Region respondent)

A one stop service where young people could access a wide variety of services in one place. Easy accessible and relaxed atmosphere. Friendly and informed staff who can quickly assess and assist young people with a range of issues affecting them. More relevant alternative education programs in place for young people aged 13 and 14 years who are unable to access other RTO's due to age requirements. A more timely and efficient mental health system for young people. Better programs in schools to prevent and educate earlier as well as 'suspension' programs and new legislation on exclusion for under 15 year olds. More behaviour support teachers in schools.

(Mackay group response)

Other important elements of a viable system

Early intervention and support for re-engagement programs was widely supported by respondents from throughout Queensland. Twenty-five percent (25%) of rural/regional respondents spoke positively and frequently about successful facets of the existing Youth Support Co-ordinator Initiative. They particularly mentioned how links with schools, a family centred approach and early intervention are essential to an ideal system. They typically proposed greater investment in prevention and early intervention, as a better alternative to the high levels of individual support which characterise current funding. While being linked to schools was mentioned less by respondents from the SE Corner, there was significant support (19%) for outreach to community, and providing services 'where young people are at'. These trends are reflected in feedback on which service type provides the best outcomes for young people (detailed below).

Respondents from throughout the state were generally supportive of a flexible funding system that prioritised funding a structure, rather than pre-identified outcomes or outputs. They typically advocated a collaborative structure that minimised competition between services. There was widespread support for funding services based on community development models that allow programs to be responsive to local community needs as they arise. Respondents from the SE Corner were particularly vocal about the need for an evaluation system which was either not focused on outcomes, or enabled community control over outcome evaluation (18%). This is consistent with the belief of many respondents, that small, flexible organisations (rather than large services with predetermined outcomes) provide the best outcomes for young people.

Adequate resourcing for youth worker training and support was mentioned often (15% of all respondents). Ensuring youth workers and services were knowledgeable, linked and networked was also considered important.

Mobile service delivery, easily accessible services and programs, the capacity to provide a crisis response and services which were open outside business hours were all important elements of a successful service structure which were mentioned by many respondents.

Back to reality - a lower cost youth service system

After allowing respondents to 'think big', the consultation then brought them 'back to reality' through asking them to imagine a much reduced funding scenario. Whilst YANQ hopes more than this will be available in each region, we asked respondents to consider how \$1 million would be best spent on youth services in their region, in order to encourage them to think in a very practical way. Several respondents from across the state reacted to this question, referring to the existing paucity of funding available, and its impact on the provision of effective youth services, for example:

\$1 million dollars would not go very far in the region. The impact on a wide range of services needs to be considered when offering financial support for the youth sector. To minimise this impact by offering minimal financial support is derogatory to this sector and may as well put it into the health sector as this will be where these young people will end up.

(North Region respondent)

Responses to this question were largely in line with the ideal youth service system, however, more detail was provided about the transition from the current system towards the implementation of 'hubs'.

The priority in all regions was investing in a preventative approach to youth work, rather than crisis management. There was substantial support for well trained workers who could support family and community to 'pull community together' and create life skills programs with a focus on re-engagement with community and education.

There was a significant level of support across all regions for investment in services which were already doing good work in their regions. It was widely argued that the capacity of existing services should be extended to provide a hub (rather than appointing a new organisation to establish a completely new service). This would optimise service efficiency through leveraging on existing credibility and goodwill toward effective existing organisations. Open Doors, Hothouse, Logan Youth Service, Gold Coast Youth Service and Youth Information Referral Service (Mackay) were all mentioned as services which could be further funded to provide a wider range of services.

Respondents from the SE Corner preferred funding existing organisations as auspicing bodies and encouraging the co-location of smaller services within their buildings, to actual amalgamation of services. Rural/regional respondents were more inclined to support service amalgamation. These findings are reflected in the *Funding Approach* section. Many respondents suggested the purchase of buildings, hiring out of meeting rooms, as well as shared IT and administrative functions to reduce overhead costs.

Respondents throughout Queensland were very supportive of flexible, grassroots driven, evidence-based planning for these hubs' work - particularly, giving youth workers, young people and communities a voice in the planning and evaluation process. Approximately fifteen percent (15%) of respondents supported spending some funds on connecting and linking youth services, as well as providing evidence-

based policy and program research. Training and support of youth workers was also seen as important by many respondents.

There was significant support for the continued funding of the Youth Support Co-ordinator Initiative (YSCI) in rural/regional Queensland (almost 50% of rural/regional respondents mentioned this, compared with 15% of respondents in the SE Corner). Several rural/remote respondents proposed that this program should be refunded to the exclusion of all other services. Respondents talked about YSCI as an existing, effective program that can work with schools, young people and families to support students disengaging from education, provide case management and initiate community development programs to address issues. The refunding of the Get Set for Work Initiative was also mentioned several times.

Putting aside the YSCI, there was much support for the idea of providing schools and school based programs with support. Reflecting its position as the most important need for young people, funding for youth housing and crisis shelters was specifically mentioned by around 15% of respondents.

Which types of services best meet young people's needs?

Question 4 asked respondents about the type of service that best meets young people's needs, specifically: *What TYPE of services would best meet young people's needs? What % of youth work in the region should focus on each of the following:*

- ▲ *Prevention - activities that are likely to prevent young people from facing problems, including work with the broader community?*
- ▲ *Early Intervention - activities targeted at young people who are just beginning to face problems?*
- ▲ *Individual Support - work with young people who are already on the margins of the community or facing entrenched problems?*
- ▲ *Group Work - with young people who are already on the margins of the community or facing entrenched problems?*

This question looked at two related issues - the type of service and the target group of young people. *Prevention* focuses on work with all young people; *Early Intervention*, with a narrower group of young people (those beginning to face problems); *Individual Support* and *Group Work* focus on those young people who are already identified as having problems. Individual support or group work may well be utilised as youth work methods, when undertaking *Prevention* or *Early Intervention* work (e.g. as detailed in Table 2 below, informal ongoing support with individual young people and using group work to build informal peer support rated in the top 5 youth work methods for both south-eastern and rural/regional respondents).

Figure 2 below is based on weighted averages of the percentages proposed by participants: the higher the score, the higher the level of support for this type of service. All four types of services were widely supported. The combined scores of all respondents identified *Early Intervention* as the most effective type of service (6.08),

closely followed by *Individual Support* (5.65) and *Prevention* (5.59). *Group Work* with young people already facing problems, whilst clearly the lowest scoring type of service, nonetheless is clearly seen as a viable service approach, with an overall score of 3.96.



Figure 2. Best type of service - all responses

Voluntary or compulsory engagement?

In response to Question 5: *What form of engagement ultimately achieves the best outcomes for young people?* An overwhelming ninety percent (90%) agreed that voluntary involvement achieves the best outcomes (See Figure 3).

Only twenty seven (27) respondents proposed that compulsory involvement was the most beneficial, including 4 of the 7 respondents from the Mt Isa consultation. In general, a higher percentage of respondents from rural/regional areas compared to the SE Corner advocated involuntary engagement, however, these were a small minority compared with those in favour of voluntary engagement.

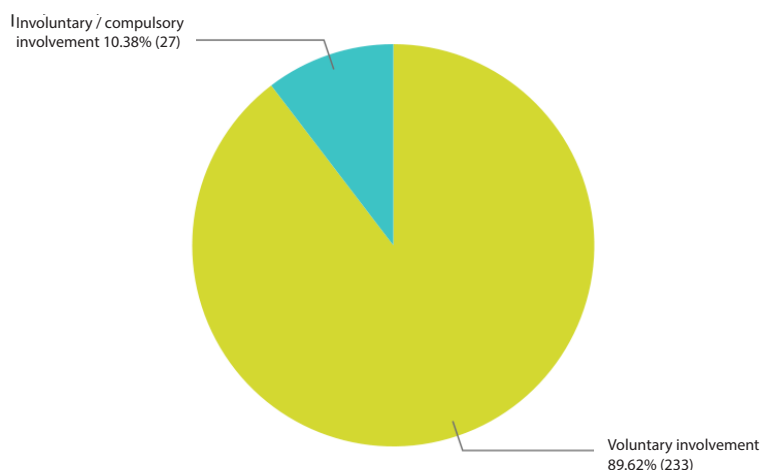


Figure 2. Best method of engagement with young people - all responses

Which groups of young people should services target?

In Question 6, respondents were asked to consider whether youth services should mainly work with - *all young people*, *young people on the margins of society*. Over two thirds (73%) of respondents advocated working with all young people (see Figure 4). This is consistent with the high levels of support for prevention and early intervention with young

people.

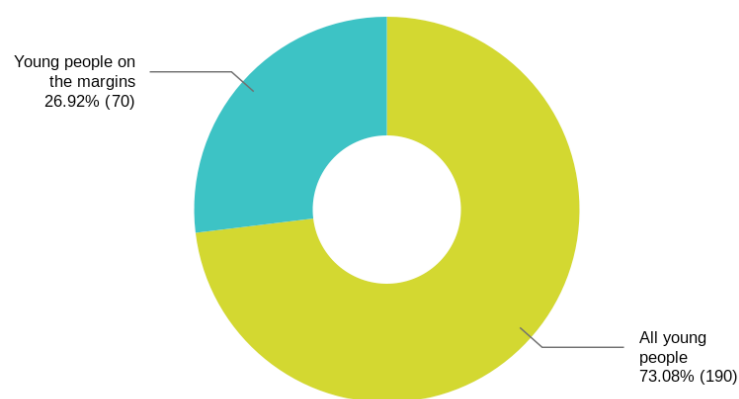


Figure 4. Priority target group for youth services - all responses

However, there were significant regional differences in this response (see Figure 5, page 11). Respondents in the SE Corner were more likely than average to believe that youth services should focus on young people on the margins. (Note the possible bias in North Coast responses due to the small number of responses (3) received from this region.)

Conversely, rural/regional respondents reported higher than average support for youth services targeting all young people.

This difference can perhaps be explained by the rural/regional context, where there are fewer existing services, networks and opportunities to support young people: youth services in these regions are required by necessity to provide services to all young people.

Which youth work methods are most effective?

Question 7 asked respondents to decide whether each of a list of methods was effective in achieving the best long term outcomes for young people. It then asked them to score the following methods according to their level of effectiveness:

1. Individual Work - formal, structured, crisis counselling
2. Individual Work - informal crisis and emergency support
3. Individual Work - formal, structured, case management
4. Individual Work - informal ongoing support
5. Group Work - informal peer support building
6. Group Work - formal structured programs
7. Community Work - community education
8. Community Work - community development
9. Systems Work - advocacy for individual young people
10. Systems Work - advocacy for groups of young people

Answers were analysed by weighted average, and grouped into SE Corner and rural/regional Queensland responses.

Every methods was seen as having some long term value for young people - with the MOST effective methods being approximately twice as effective as the LEAST effective methods. Respondents had the opportunity to identify as many methods as they wished as "not effective" - any

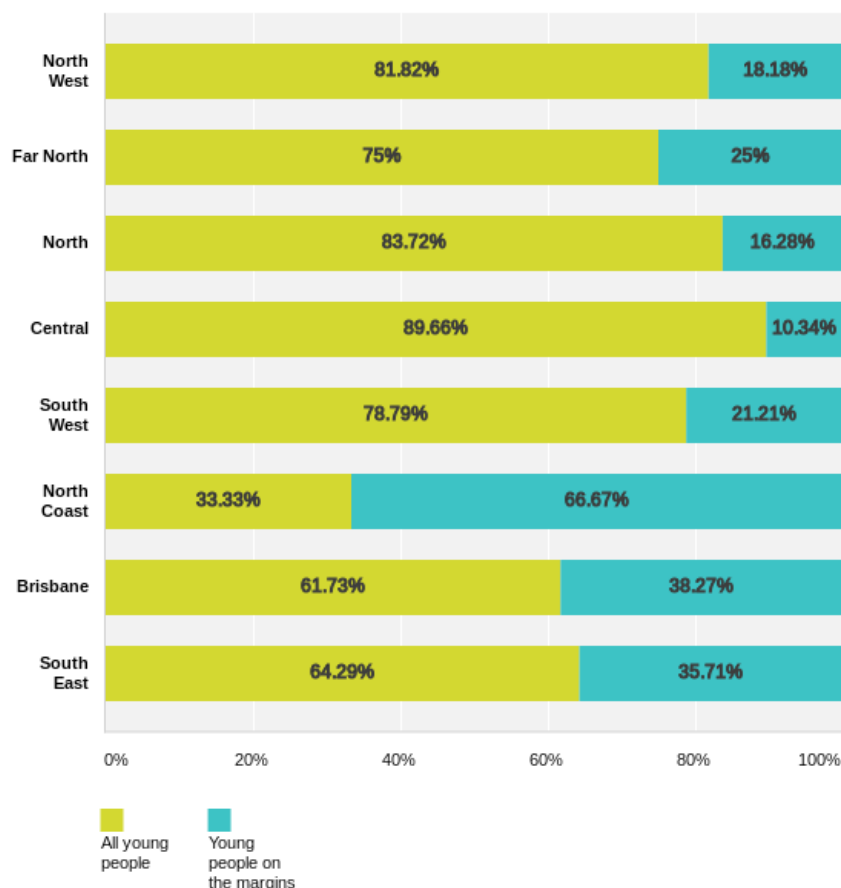


Figure 5. Priority target group for youth services - by region

methods identified in this way was not included in the scoring of the level of effectiveness.

There were more thematic similarities than differences between responses of the two groups - in other words, youth workers across Queensland are broadly agreed on which youth work methods are most effective. (Note that the LOWER the score, the HIGHER the level of support for this method). Table 2 below details these findings, with methods loosely sub-grouped where more than one method received a similar score (that is, a difference of less than .15 between scores).

Individual work with young people was overwhelmingly seen as the most effective approach to youth work by a significant majority of respondents. An informal approach to work with individual young people was amongst the top 3 methods for respondents from both groupings. Similarly, both groupings saw formal case management as a highly valuable method.

The key variation between the groups related to formal approaches to crisis support, which was more likely to be favoured by rural/regional respondents (This approach to individual work was seen as less effective than 3 other, very different, methods by south-eastern respondents).

The two groupings were largely agreed on the next level of methods. Informal work with groups of young people to build their peer support, and community development work were amongst the top 6 methods for both groups of respondents.

South-eastern respondents placed higher value on systemic advocacy on issues affecting groups of young people, but tended to see advocacy for individual young people as less effective, than rural/regional respondents. Nonetheless, both groups saw both forms of systemic advocacy as having some effectiveness. The differences in their responses may relate to their geographic context. In rural/regional areas service providers are more likely to know each other well, therefore individual advocacy may be more likely to produce a positive outcome for young people. Conversely, south-eastern respondents are closer to the systems and decision makers that impact young people's lives at a policy level, and may therefore place greater value on achieving improvements for young people more widely.

Formal structured group work with young people, and educating the wider community, were seen as relatively ineffective methods by both groups of respondents.

Rural/Regional – Most Effective Methods (in order of value)	SE Corner - Most Effective Methods (in order of value)
1. Individual Work - informal crisis and emergency support (3.25)	1. Individual Work - formal, structured, case management (3.52)
2. Individual Work - formal, structured, case management (3.28)	2. Individual Work - informal crisis and emergency support (3.56)
3. Individual Work - informal ongoing support (3.46)	3. Individual Work - informal ongoing support (3.61)
4. Individual Work - formal, structured, crisis counselling (4.16)	4. Community Work - community development (4.34)
5. Group Work - informal peer support building (4.25)	5. Group Work - informal peer support building (4.43)
6. Community Work - community development (4.30)	6. Systems Work - advocacy for groups of young people (4.68)
7. Group Work - formal structured programs (4.45)	7. Individual Work - formal, structured, crisis counselling (4.69)
8. Systems Work - advocacy for individual young people (4.69)	8. Group Work - formal structured programs (4.98)
9. Community Work - community education (4.79)	9. Community Work - community education (5.31)
10. Systems Work - advocacy for groups of young people (5.14)	10. Systems Work - advocacy for individual young people (5.39)

Table 2: Relative Value of Different Youth Work Methods (by regional groupings)

Best structural approach to youth service funding

Respondents were asked to choose one funding approach which would best meet the needs of young people in their region. Overall, there was significant support for those funding approaches which prioritised the flexibility to respond to any or all of the presenting needs of young people, as opposed to services primarily (or solely) dealing with pre-identified service gaps.

Respondents throughout Queensland overwhelmingly challenged the value of services designed to address pre-determined needs of young people - particularly (as evidenced through discussion at the consultation sessions) where these supposed statewide needs are imposed across Queensland. It was clearly evident through discussion at the consultation sessions that large organisations which only address pre-identified needs were widely perceived to be the LEAST effective in addressing the needs of young people. Again, this reflects ideas on *The ideal youth service system* above, which talk of flexibility and 'hubs' that are able to address the needs of any young person that walks through the door. This also echoes the desire of rural/regional respondents to be flexible to the needs of all young people in their region, rather only on those on the margins.

The most notable difference between respondents from the rural/regional areas and those from the SE Corner related to the relative value of flexible regional and flexible local services. Rural/regional respondents viewed funding many small,

flexible, local services (38%) and 1-2 larger, flexible, regional services (37%) as joint priorities (see Figure 6); whereas those from the SE Corner overwhelmingly supported small, flexible, local services (52% - see Figure 7). Both south-eastern and rural/regional respondents saw a limited (24% and 15% respectively) role for funding to address specific service gaps at a local level. This should be seen in the context of widespread comment on the need for these gaps to be locally identified, according to the local situation. In other words, funding guidelines would need to be flexible in terms of the needs which could be covered with pre-allocated funding: local service providers would be required to identify and dedicate a proportion (the figures above indicate 20% - 25%) of funding received to addressing specific local service gaps identified at the time of funding.

It is perhaps surprising that rural/regional respondents are supportive of large hubs, given their geographic size and the spread of young people in their regions. Context is provided by their responses to *The ideal youth service system* which are highly supportive of the existing Youth Support Co-ordinator Initiative, which includes linkages with schools and communities and a focus on mobile service delivery and outreach. Comments at consultation sessions suggest that there is also recognition in rural/regional areas that even if many small, flexible services exist, a large amount of outreach will still be required to cover the region. Given limited funding availability, it is likely seen as a matter of necessity that the funding would best be centralised to ensure sufficient resources were available to provide outreach services.

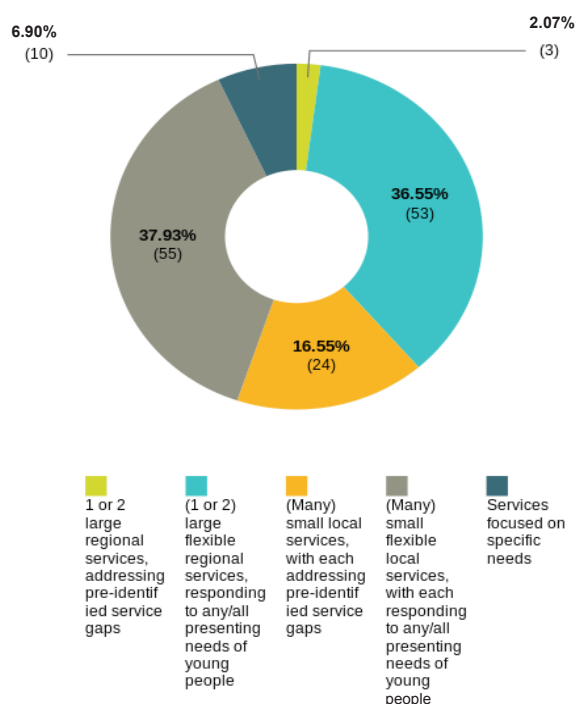


Figure 6. Best approach to youth service funding - rural/regional responses

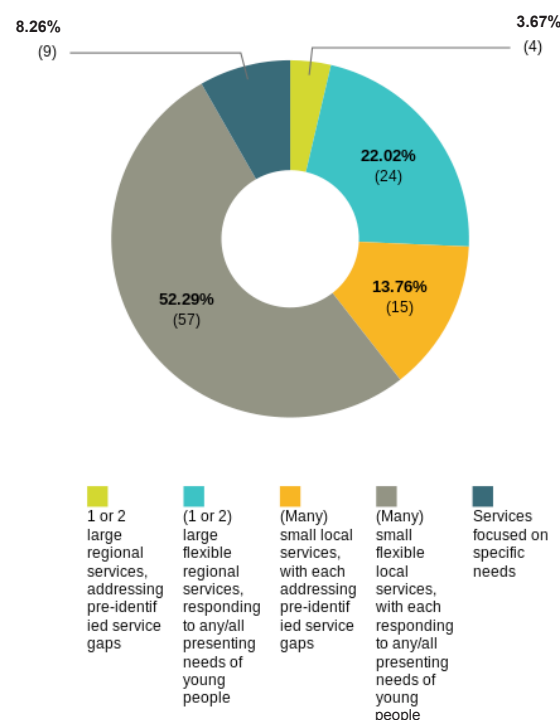
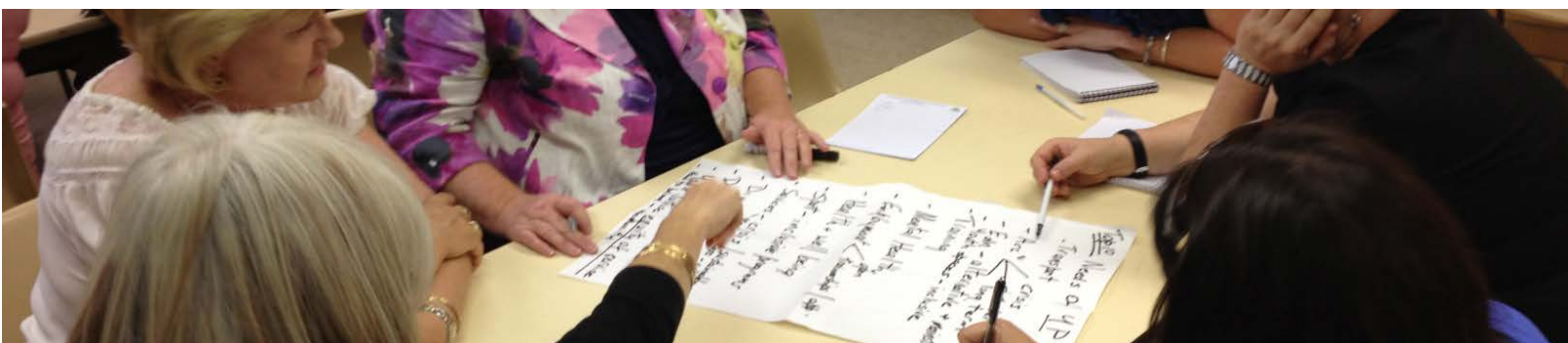


Figure 7. Best approach to youth service funding - SE Corner responses



SPENDING RECOMMENDATIONS

How would you allocate the \$16m?

A hypothetical budget of \$16 million was suggested to encourage respondents to make difficult decisions about funding priorities and provide concrete responses. Respondents were asked to choose what percentage of \$16 million they would allocate to each of the following:

1. Youth Services - Brisbane metro services
2. Youth Services - Regional services (remember to x 7 to cover all regions)
3. Youth Services - Local services
4. Youth Services - Multi-regional/statewide specialist services (e.g. for Murri young people, criminalised young people)
5. Youth Worker/Sector Development - Organisational level - Supervision, mentoring and peer support
6. Youth Worker/Sector Development - Organisational level - Reflection, research and evaluation
7. Youth Worker/Sector Development - Regional networking and activities
8. Youth Worker/Sector Development - Sector-wide research and development
9. Youth Worker/Sector Development - Sector-wide workforce training/development

Figures 8 and 9 below detail the proposed expenditure in each of the 9 categories, according to the regional grouping of respondents.

It was widely agreed that two-thirds (2/3) of the available resources should be allocated to direct *Youth Service* provision and one-third (1/3) should be allocated to *Youth Worker/Sector Development*.

Whilst respondents from both the SE Corner and rural/regional areas agreed that a total of 67% of funding should be dedicated to service delivery, the two groups varied in how they would prioritise expenditure. Rural/regional respondents proposed that more than one-quarter of available funding (28%) should be allocated to regional services, with local services also being seen as important (19%). SE Corner respondents placed similar weight on both regional services (19%) and local services (22%). Both groups advocated that at least 10% of total funding should be dedicated to BOTH Brisbane metro services, and multi-regional or statewide services for particular target groups (e.g. Murri or criminalised young people).

Similarly, both groups agreed that 33% of total funding should be dedicated to *Youth Worker/Sector Development*. There were only minor variations in their priorities for expenditure, with respondents from both the SE Corner and rural/remote areas supporting allocation of between 6% and 8% of the total budget in each sub-category - organisational supervision/mentoring and peer support; organisational reflection/research/evaluation; regional networking/activities; sector-wide research/development; and sector-wide workforce training/development.

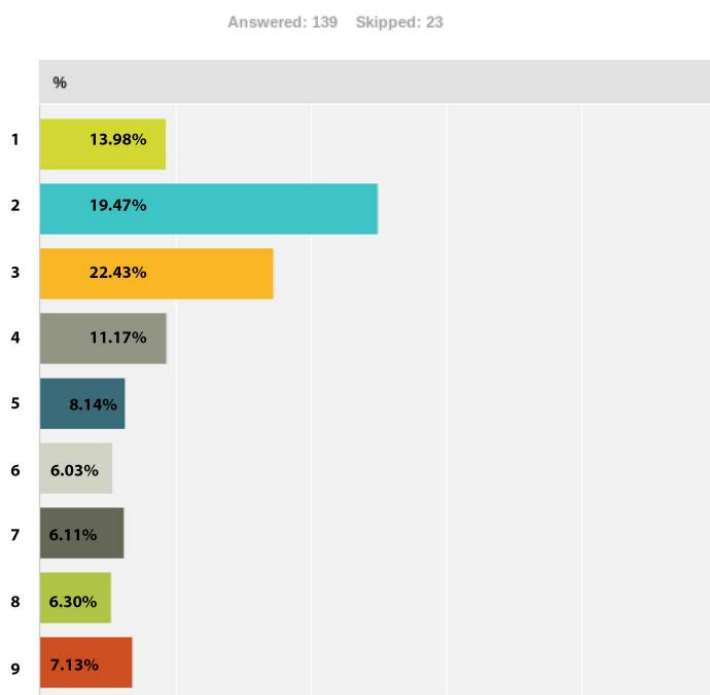


Figure 8 : Youth service funding priorities - rural / regional responses

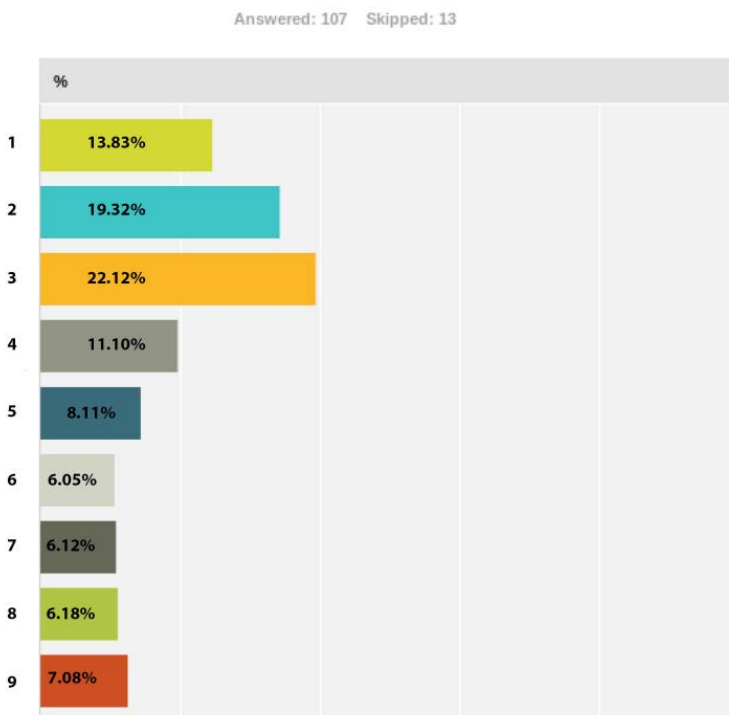


Figure 9 : Youth service funding priorities - SE Corner responses

Assuming a total budget of \$16 million, the percentages in Figures 8 and 9 equate to:

% Allocation	Equivalent \$ Expenditure	Funding category
Youth Services		
10% - 14%	\$1.6 - \$2.2 million	Brisbane metro services
19% - 28%	\$3.0 - \$4.5 million	Regional services
19% - 22%	\$3.0 - \$3.5 million	Local services
10% - 11%	\$1.6 - \$1.8 million	Multi-regional/statewide specialist services
Youth Worker/Sector Development		
7% - 8%	\$1.1 - \$1.3 million	Organisational level - Supervision, mentoring and peer support
6%	\$1 million	Organisational level - Reflection, research and evaluation
6% - 7%	\$1 - \$1.1 million	Regional networking and activities
6%	\$1 million	Sector-wide research and development
7% - 7.5%	\$1.1 - \$1.2 million	Sector-wide workforce training/development

Table 3: Hypothetical - Proportional Allocation of \$16 Million



Photo: Brisbane Consultation

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this consultation are highly consistent with recent YANQ research studies and consultations. These include the *Youth Sector Workforce Skilling and Training Research Project*; the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Sector Skilling and Training Research Project*; consultations leading to YANQ's response to the Youth at Risk Initiative (YARI) review; *Multiculturalism in Queensland's Youth Sector*; and the *What is Youth Work?* project. (See the *Bibliography* for further details of published reports arising from these studies.)

This section explores 5 overwhelming themes arising from YANQ's consultations with the youth sector:

1. Enabling locally appropriate service delivery responses which genuinely address young people's needs.
2. Recognising the unique contribution that youth work can make to the lives of young people, their families and their communities.
3. Optimising efficiency and outcomes through leveraging on the credibility and goodwill of existing community-based services.
4. Acknowledging the critical role of support and development activities to effective service delivery outcomes.
5. Recognising the need for a dedicated focus on understanding and responding to the needs of young people in remote Queensland.

A flexible, responsive practice framework

Different regions throughout Queensland have different existing services. The diverse needs of young people between regions, particularly the different needs of urban and rural young people, have been widely documented. Communities and services have unique and divergent histories, strengths and priorities. In order to be effective, the practice framework emerging from this review must enable the maintenance and further development of distinct types of services, addressing diverse needs, in different regions across the state.

Respondents in this consultation overwhelmingly advocated flexible, accessible, multi-functional, community-based services with the capacity to respond to changing needs and/or varied needs of young people and their families/communities (rather than funding primarily focused on pre-identified needs or pre-determined services). The single model which was most widely supported was a *hub*, with a variety of co-located services and the capacity to provide outreach services.

In its recent report on skills and workforce development in the youth sector, the Health and Community Service Workforce Council noted the complexities created when organisations are funded to provide a very narrow band

of services - noting in particular problems associated with *prescriptive* service delivery and the *current focus on crisis response and reactive services delivery* (Health & Community Services Workforce Council 2012:7). According to the Council:

This model of funding can create limitations for service delivery in the youth sector, as funding and policy tends to focus youth work on crisis and reactive services rather than a preventative approach. The evidence consistently demonstrates that individual risk factors largely derive from young people's circumstances – that is, social/ community risk factors.

(Health & Community Services Workforce Council 2012:9)

These concerns echo those raised earlier by YANQ in its response to the (then) Queensland Government's *Youth At Risk Initiative* (YARI) proposal. YANQ's response warned that a narrowing of practice framework would have serious negative implications for services and young people - particularly those young people at risk of involvement with the youth justice and child protection systems. YANQ warned that YARI could be expected to produce *diminished outcomes*, a new group of *at risk* young people (due to the loss of the 'safety net' provided by prevention and early intervention services), *duplication of services* (with multiple government and non-government services working with the same small group of young people using similar approaches) and less responsive services (YANQ 2010:2-6). The current Review provides the Queensland Government with a valuable opportunity to learn from past mistakes, and commit to a wider, more responsive approach to youth service delivery.

YANQ's *What is Youth Work?* project has spent over 2 years progressively refining and articulating the unique role of youth workers, which distinguishes youth workers from other people who work with young people (e.g. child protection or youth justice officers). Youth work recognises and celebrates the integral relationship between young people and their peers, family, community and ultimately, society. In particular, non-Murri young people often identify more strongly with their peer group than with their family or other community members. Youth workers play an important wider social role in helping parents, adults and elders to understand young people (YANQ 2012b). This socially inclusive view of youth work should underpin a new practice framework for government funded youth services in Queensland.

The *What is Youth Work?* project highlighted the particular importance of families and communities as pillars of Murri youth work. Given the implications of trans-generational traumas for Murri young people, it is essential that Murri youth work include strengthening and healing family connections where possible; seeking to involve Elders and extended family; and linking young people with supportive family members. Cultural mentoring is an essential part of

Murri youth work. Murri youth workers play a critical role in modelling appropriate behaviour within communities and often take on a closer relationship with young Murris, including being seen as *Auntie* or *Uncle*. (Archer 2012a:23-24)

The practice framework arising from this Review should be compatible with the pillars of both Murri and non-Murri youth work. It should be based on the 4 groups with whom youth workers connect - the 4 pillars of service delivery which are essential (to varying degrees according to the cultural setting and situation) - to effective, durable, outcomes for both Murri and non-Murri young people:

1. individual young people,
2. their peers,
3. their families, and
4. their community.

These 4 pillars should support a flexible smörgåsbord of service delivery options:

- **Entree:** Youth services should focus on those areas of life which are most needed by young people in their area (e.g. housing, family support, learning, earning)
- **Main Course:** Youth services should use those approaches which are appropriate to their local or regional area (e.g. the services which are, or are not, available) and the needs of young people (e.g. relationship development, support, mentoring, referral, brokering, collaboration, advocacy)
- **Dessert:** Youth services should use those methods which best suit the needs of their local young people (e.g. work with individuals, work with groups, informal services, structured programs)

One way to visualise this framework is as smorgasbord set up on a table - with 4 legs (the pillars) and a variety of options to select from - entrees, main courses and desserts!

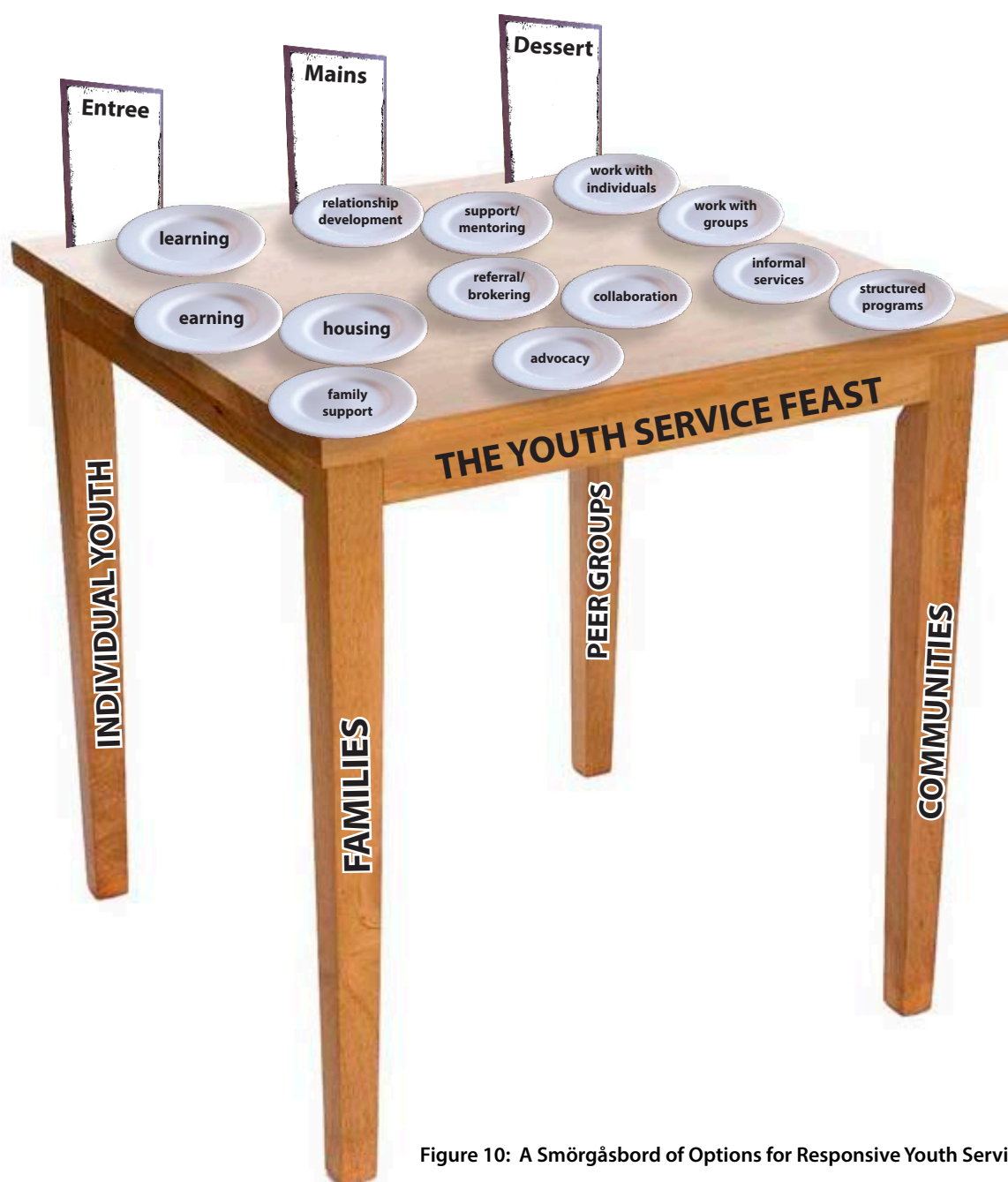


Figure 10: A Smörgåsbord of Options for Responsive Youth Service Delivery

Recommendation 1: That the Youth Services Review adopt a multi-faceted, flexible practice framework which enables service providers to respond to the particular needs of their constituency - including young people, their families and their communities.

The unique contribution of youth work

The single element that most clearly distinguishes youth work from other forms of practice with young people (e.g. teaching, social work) is youth work's informal, youth-centred approach. This approach is more fully detailed in the outcomes of YANQ's *What is Youth Work?* project (Archer 2012a; YANQ 2012b). This approach focuses on building apparently casual (or in the case of Murri youth work, familial) relationships with young people, whilst maintaining a 'watching brief' for opportunities to address young people's needs in a holistic way, as and when these arise. It ensures that marginalised young people have a 'safety net' around them, which they can draw on, when and if they are ready to accept help for problems they face. It is not uncommon for it to take months, or even years, of purposeful informal interaction before young people are willing to accept help. Jeremy Brent, for example, in his landmark work on community-based youth work, recounted the story of a young woman who silently shadowed her boyfriend at a youth centre for about 6 months, before finally smiling at a youth worker for the first time (Brent 2009:264-5) - a scenario which is very familiar to many youth workers. This non-imposing, informal approach to work with young people has characterised youth work for many years.

Historically, non-government youth services have offered a very different, albeit complementary, role to government statutory services. Providing different opportunities and approaches to young people in the education system, or at risk of becoming part of the youth justice or child safety system, is not a matter of duplication: rather, it increases the likelihood that one of a variety of approaches will meet the needs of a particular young person. (YANQ 2010:3)

However, to work with young people using similar models and approaches to statutory workers, would clearly institutionalise systemic duplication of services. There seems little point in youth services duplicating the existing roles of other professions and services through pressuring or requiring young people to engage in formal, directive models of intervention, such as case management. It is not surprising that 90% of respondents to this consultation argued that voluntary engagement with youth services achieves the most durable, long term outcomes for young people. The unique strengths of youth services are best expressed when they can provide alternate means for young people to access support.

Almost 75% of respondents to this consultation argued that youth services should be open to all young people, not only those who are marginalised or facing entrenched problems in their lives. In reality, youth services which are open to all young people tend to disproportionately attract those young people who are at risk of, or currently facing, problems in their lives:

Young people at risk are commonly attracted to youth work programs. Availability of programs to all young people, 'normalises' young people's involvement. Restricting other young people from participating in programs, places the participation of vulnerable young people at risk. It reduces the likelihood that they will even attend services, let alone voluntarily disclose their needs. (YANQ 2010:12)

This group of young people is typically cautious of professionals who seek to intervene in their lives. They are commonly resistant to any formal intervention that reduces their power over their own lives. *This is why services which are responsive to young people's perception of their needs and priorities are most likely to be successful* (YANQ 2010:3 - our emphasis). In particular, young people with a history of involvement in statutory systems are often especially unwilling to seek or accept help from youth workers, until a substantial trust relationship has been established, and young people have become confident about the confidentiality of their interactions with youth workers in a particular service.

Youth workers use an integrated and broad range of models, tools and approaches consistent with providing youth centred, culturally appropriate services and supports. This includes community development and peer based projects as well as personal support. Youth work is characterised by its capacity to provide flexible support for young people outside formal, statutory systems. The youth work approach could be described as 'whatever it takes, for as long as it takes'. For some young people, this simply means linking them with other services and supporting them to access these. For some, particularly Murri young people, it requires family support, delivered in a manner that respects cultural contexts or protocols. For some, it means help with voicing their experiences and needs to their family or community. Sometimes, it means building a relationship with a peer group of young people - the equivalent of their 'family' for some marginalised young people. Sometimes, it depends on modelling appropriate behaviour. For some, it involves providing practical and useful support to address an immediate situation. Sometimes it involves providing more intensive, consistent, longer term support - particularly where young people (for whatever reason) are unwilling use other services and would otherwise receive no service at all. (Archer 2012a:24; YANQ 2012b)

Youth workers specialise in providing informal, youth centred support. This includes *being* there for young people, genuinely caring for young people, working at their pace and providing services in a friendly way. Youth workers provide a customised

service, remaining open-minded about young people's backgrounds and circumstances; unquestioningly respecting Murri cultural contexts or protocols; and treating each situation individually. They also encourage young people to take a leadership role, and support youth participation activities. Ultimately, youth work is concerned with enabling young people's active civic participation and their life-long capacity to make a social contribution. (YANQ 2012b)

Recommendation 2: That the Youth Services Review optimise the unique role and contribution of youth workers to service delivery.

Building on existing strengths

Consultation respondents widely perceived that large non-government organisations which limit their services to meeting contractual obligations to address pre-identified needs or provide pre-determined programs, are the least effective in addressing the needs of young people. Most argued that, whatever the outcomes of the Review, the Queensland Government should invest in existing local or regional services, rather than appointing new organisations to develop new programs and services. This would optimise service efficiency through leveraging on existing credibility and goodwill toward effective existing organisations. Efficiency and effectiveness would also be optimised through retaining local wisdom/experience and the community/organisational memory of staff, Board members and other key stakeholders - providing 'insurance' against repeating past mistakes.

The multi-faceted advantages, and efficiency in real terms, of community-based NGOs have been widely documented. For a detailed account see Voice of SONG - Small Organisations Non-Government (2008). Perhaps these are best encapsulated by Peter Shergold, in an article entitled *Bigger not always better in non-profit world*:

It's ironic that what is generally portrayed as a weakness in the non-profit arena is routinely presented as a strength in the private sector. In fact there are more than 2 million businesses in Australia of which 84 percent employ less than 5 staff and 25 percent have turnover of less than \$50,000 annually.

This world of micro-business and small enterprise is extolled by governments of all political persuasions as the entrepreneurial lifeblood of the nation. Its characterisation as the engine-room of Australia has become a rather tired cliché. Government funding is directed to helping new business get started rather than rationalising those that already exist. Why then, is smallness portrayed as such a problem for NFPs? (Shergold 2010)

This Review could lead the way, nationally, through affirming the value and merits of funding existing small, community-based youth services.

Several participants also raised concerns about complete reliance on a 'hub' model. It is essential that hubs do not function to further marginalise already less visible groups of young people. Specialist services for particular groups of young people (e.g. gender specific services) were originally developed in response to unmet needs, and gaps in the services provided by mainstream agencies. It is essential that the hub concept enables flexible service delivery. This includes identifying and responding to the needs of young people which are not being met within the dominant service delivery agendas and models. This is of particular concern for groups such as young women who fall between the gap between women's services and youth services. It is essential that each hub include services with the specialist competencies required to engage with groups of young people who are less visible and may have difficulty accessing services (e.g. pregnant and parenting young women accessing education), using models which are responsive to their needs (e.g. peer-based models).

Recommendation 3: That, wherever possible, the Queensland Government continue to invest in existing community-based local and regional youth service providers, rather than appointing organisations from outside the community to develop new programs and services.

The critical role of developmental activities

Respondents to this consultation throughout Queensland were largely agreed on how the available funding should be allocated, proposing that 2/3 of the available resources should be allocated to direct *Youth Service* provision and 1/3 should be allocated to *Youth Worker/Sector Development*. Resources to continue to train/support youth workers, link youth workers/services and undertake research/development activities were widely seen as an important component of viable service system. Respondents consistently proposed that between 6% and 8% of the total budget should be allocated to each of the following areas - organisational supervision/mentoring and peer support; organisational reflection/research/evaluation; regional networking/activities; sector-wide research/development; and sector-wide workforce training/development.

Organisational level

YANQ's workforce development project found that 51% of youth workers have been in the sector for 2 years or less (Flanagan & Action 2010:28) and 40% do not have access to regular supervision (ibid:60). In light of this data, the industry Workforce Council highlighted the importance of development and support for youth workers and managers:

This (level of turnover) represents an ongoing loss of skills and experience throughout the sector which has flow-on effects for future management and leadership skills and the resilience of the workforce. ... increasing access to supervision, mentoring and support and providing professional development and support to current leaders and managers may contribute to a more resilient workforce in the future. (Health & Community Services Workforce Council 2012:9)

Youth workers are required to deal with a growing complexity of issues and needs. A broad range of sophisticated competencies are required to provide quality services to young people. Without the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, both youth workers and young people are placed in further vulnerability. Youth workers engage with some of the most damaged members of society. Youth work is not a neutral activity - it can both help, and harm, young people.

Adequate supervision and support are essential to effective youth work. Over the past few years, the Queensland Government has progressively reduced the funding available to organisational management to provide appropriate levels of line management, debriefing, professional development and performance appraisal to front line youth workers. Evidence suggests that this lack of support and guidance for workers is a key contributor to the high attrition rates amongst front line workers across the youth sector.

Similarly, research, reflection and evaluation are essential to quality youth service delivery. If workers and organisations do not have the opportunity to identify and learn from their strengths and weaknesses, effective strategies may be lost and services are doomed to repeat their mistakes. Further, ongoing local research is an important component of keeping up to date with changing youth needs and examining and challenging outdated assumptions about these.

In light of ongoing discussion about the importance of collaborative relationships between organisations, and integrated service delivery to young people, it is worth noting that quality collaborative work also requires adequate funding. As a recent research paper developed for YANQ, entitled *Good Practice in Integrated Service Delivery*, has found:

... that for collaborative relationships and integrated service delivery to be effectively delivered including: effective communication, shared values, shared vision, clear structures, strong relationships, information sharing protocols and accountability and evaluation. (Flanagan 2012:3)

John Flanagan particularly noted the impact of inadequate resourcing on data collection and evaluation. His study found that 63% of integrated service delivery work in the youth sector across Queensland had no embedded evaluation and measurement framework, which examined the effectiveness of the collaboration itself (as distinct from outcomes for young people). This was due to the lack of additional resources for the development and implementation of these systems. (Flanagan 2012:3) In the absence of proper reflection and analysis, the youth sector risks wasting valuable service delivery hours on ineffective or inefficient collaborative activities.

Regional level

Respondents saw regional networking and activities as a valuable contributor to effective service delivery. The needs of workers and services vary enormously across Queensland - according to individual workers' level of experience, the level of worker turnover in the region, the level of practice engagement of youth service managers, the range of generalist and specialist services available in the region, etc.

A negative referral experience can impact on young people's future willingness to engage with support services. It is important that workers meet to develop an understanding of what relevant services provide and identify service gaps and needs. Without personalised connections with other services and an understanding of their often-changing services, significant service delivery hours can be wasted searching out referral information.

YANQ has established ten (10) *Communities of Practice Leaders Action Networks* (CPLANs) in regions across Queensland to enable the sector to identify workforce development needs and sector issues at a regional level. CPLAN facilitators in each Department of Communities Region (or sub-region) are progressively working through a skills set (being delivered by Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE) to ensure provision of quality CPLAN services, including action research to address networking needs within their region (being supported by Queensland University of Technology). This system, which currently relies on sessionally-paid facilitators, could be readily expanded to better support the networking required to maintain quality youth work practice at a local level.

Sector-wide

Respondents supported the allocation of funding to both sector-wide research/development and workforce development/training.

Due to statewide research by a number of organisations and individuals over the past decade, the youth sector currently has a reasonable general understanding of many of the issues affecting young people, youth workers and youth services. However, specific information and research needs are constantly emerging. Changing sector wide research and development needs are directly impacted by the priorities and needs of the government of the day. It is essential that resourcing is available to undertake research and sector-wide consultations; develop policies on issues affecting the youth sector; contribute to government inquiries and legislative reviews; identify issues in relation to the rights and needs of young people; and inform governments on issues affecting young people.

In preparing its report on youth sector workforce development and training, the Health and Community Services Workforce Council consulted with the sector (including YANQ), and drew heavily on recent YANQ research studies and consultations. As a result, the Council articulated a *Five Year Skilling and Workforce Development Outlook* for the sector. The 18 areas for action identified in the report demonstrate the magnitude of work which needs to occur to adequately address changing youth sector workforce needs:

- *Investigate funding models that support travel and accommodation costs for regional and remote workers ...*
- *Investigate the similarities between youth work values and those embedded in the way Indigenous services work in their own communities to increase learning opportunities and ways to connect better between the two parts of the sector as discussed in the YANQ discussion paper Which Wei? Values in Youth Work: A Murri Perspective*
- *Explore articulation opportunities between the VET sector and higher education*
- *Pilot programs which resource organisations participating in vocational placements within the VET sector to improve the learning experiences of new workforce entrants*
- *Increase understanding of traineeship options to facilitate access to the Commonwealth apprenticeship incentive for backfill costs*
- *Establish a training and development plan specifically targeted at Aboriginal communities – base this on the Murri Youth Sector in Queensland (YANQ 2011)*
- *Begin the process to integrate core competencies as defined by 'what is youth work' research into the national training package*
- *Strengthen and support work and actions as identified through the CPLAN process*
- *Pilot VET delivery models which involve collaborative delivery between senior practitioners and VET trainers*
- *Continue with the implementation of various recommendations of the Youth Sector in Queensland and The Murri reports*
- *Provide supervision training for workers in all regions of Queensland*
- *Establish a Murri specific peer support and mentoring structure*
- *Determine youth work competencies and conduct a skills audit and gap analyses of current workforce*
- *Build internal organisational capacity to support and integrate learning, professional development and reflective practice through offering training to managers and experienced youth workers in supervision and action learning and supporting this process through resources and tools on the YANQ website*
- *Investigate training and skilling options in areas identified as future need including mapping to national training packages and actively promote to the sector*
- *Create a 'career map' that shows entry points and qualifications, cross sector opportunities and career pathways to promote youth work and the youth sector*
- *Develop a framework and process for work shadowing and job swaps to enhance learning and*
- *development between the youth sector and the mental health community sector*
- *Investigate and pilot a Portable Long Service scheme within the youth sector*

(Health and Community Services Workforce Council 2012:15)

Workforce development is essential to maintaining the youth sector, and improving its capacity to provide quality services for young people. The Workforce Council list is a worthy starting point to determining future priorities for sector-wide workforce development.

Recommendation 4: That the Youth Services Review recognise the critical role of developmental activities when allocating funding - particularly organisational support and development; regional networking and collaboration; and sector-wide workforce development, research and training.

Responding to the needs of geographically isolated young people

This Youth Services Review is not designed to address the unique needs of remote communities. It is important to note the evidence that young people in remote communities face particularly high rates of needs in critical areas such as health, housing, education and community safety.

The Review is not alone in this omission. It seems that geographically isolated young people have consistently 'fallen between the cracks' of a variety of consultation processes. Specifically, YANQ recognises its failure to look at communities with little existing infrastructure in either *The Youth Sector in Queensland Report* or *The Murri Youth Sector in Queensland Report* - a critical gap when examining the development and maintenance of the youth sector workforce in this state. Similarly, the Health and Community Services Workforce Council recognised its own failure to address this cohort, when documenting sector-wide workforce needs:

In some remote areas of Queensland such infrastructure doesn't exist, therefore these reports do not adequately identify strategies and actions to support youth workforce planning and development in areas which require both infrastructure planning and workforce planning. (Health & Community Services Workforce Council 2012:7)

YANQ has undertaken some early investigation with a view to establishing a program in Far North Queensland. This program would establish community engagement and consultation mechanisms with young people and communities, and implement an Action Research approach to service development in these remote areas. This program could provide a useful pathway for the Queensland Government to take the 'next step' - recognising and responding to the unmet needs of young people living in geographically isolated parts of Queensland.

Recommendation 5: That the Youth Services Review propose that further work be undertaken to identify and respond to the needs of youth people living in remote areas of Queensland.



Photo: Small group discussion at the Toowoomba consultation

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ATTACHMENT 1 - CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. My service is located in the following Department of Communities region (tick)

The Big Picture

2. I believe the Top 10 needs of young people in my region are (list from 1 - 10)
 3. Imagine the perfect youth service system which would meet these needs. Briefly describe it (maximum 150 words)

Models of Service

4. What TYPE of services would best meet young people's needs? What % of youth work in the region should focus on each of the following:

%	Type of service
	Prevention - activities that are likely to prevent young people from facing problems, including work with the broader community.
	Early Intervention - activities targeted at young people who are just beginning to face problems.
	Individual Support - work with young people who are already <i>on the margins</i> of the community or facing entrenched problems.
	Group Work - with young people who are already <i>on the margins</i> of the community or facing entrenched problems.
100%	(Total)

5. Which form of ENGAGEMENT ultimately achieves the best outcomes for young people? (Tick one box only)

	Voluntary involvement
	Involuntary/compulsory involvement

6. Which TARGET GROUPS should youth services MAINLY work with? (Tick 1 box only)

	All young people
	Young people <i>on the margins</i>
	Both groups are equally important

7. Which METHODS ultimately achieve the best outcomes for young people?

Please answer 2 questions:

- **Column 1** - Is this method effective with young people? Yes/No
- **Column 2** - (For "yes" answers only.) Please score these methods according to how effective they are - from *most effective* (1) to *least effective*.

Effective? Y/N	If "Yes" - How Effective?	Youth Work Method
		Individual Work - formal, structured, crisis counselling
		Individual Work - informal crisis and emergency support
		Individual Work - formal, structured, case management
		Individual Work - informal ongoing support
		Group Work - informal peer support building
		Group Work - formal structured programs
		Community Work - community education
		Community Work - community development
		Systems Work - advocacy for individual young people
		Systems Work - advocacy for groups of young people

- **Individual Work** refers to work with individual young people.
- **Group Work** refers to work with groups of young people.
- **Community Work** refers to trying to get local people and structures (e.g. councils, service clubs) to better meet young people's individual or collective needs.
- **Systems Work** refers to trying to get social structures (e.g. government departments, policy makers) to better meet young people's individual or collective needs.

Issues & Needs

8. Which GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE have unmet needs in your region?

Please answer 2 questions:

- **Column 1** - Does this group have unmet needs? Yes/No
- **Column 2** - (For "yes" answers only.) Please score these groups according to their level of needs - from *highest level of needs* (1) to *lowest level of needs*.

Needs? Y/N	If "Yes" Need Level	Target Group of Young People
		School students
		Post-school students
		Young workers
		Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
		Other young people from non-Anglo Saxon backgrounds
		Refugee young people
		Young women
		Young men
		Gay, lesbian, transgender and intersex young people
		Young people from small communities
		Young people with disabilities
		Criminalised young people
		Other - Who?

Back to Reality

Current youth services funding through the Department of Communities totals approximately \$16 million. It is this money which is the subject of the *Youth Services Review*. Given current trends, it is unlikely that any additional money will be made available as a result of this review.

Please answer these last 3 questions **assuming** that \$1 million of this was available to fund youth services in your region.

9. Which FUNDING APPROACH would best meet young people's needs in your region? (Tick one box only)

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 or 2 large regional services, addressing pre-identified service gaps
<input type="checkbox"/>	(1 or 2) large flexible regional services, responding to any/all presenting needs of young people
<input type="checkbox"/>	(Many) small local services, with each addressing pre-identified service gaps
<input type="checkbox"/>	(Many) small flexible local services, with each responding to any/all presenting needs of young people
<input type="checkbox"/>	Services focused on specific needs (maximum 3 boxes):
	<div> <div>Housing service</div> <div>Recreational Activities</div> <div>Housing/tenancy support</div> <div>Employment support</div> <div>Financial assistance</div> <div>Education support</div> <div>Emotional support</div> <div>Training support</div> <div>Peer support</div> <div>Training provision</div> <div>Family support</div> <div>Legal support</div> <div>Family violence</div> <div>Child Protection Support</div> <div>Mental health service</div> <div>Sexual health service</div> <div>Physical health service</div> <div>Other - What?</div> </div>

10. How would you divide up the \$16 million? What % should be allocated to each of the following:

%	Type of service
Services for Young People	
	Brisbane metro services
	Regional services (remember to x 7 to cover all regions)
	Local services
	Multi-regional/statewide specialist services (e.g. for Murri young people, criminalised young people)
Youth Worker and Sector Development	
	Organisational level - Supervision, mentoring and peer support
	Organisational level - Reflection, research and evaluation
	Regional networking and activities
	Sector-wide research and development
	Sector-wide workforce training/development
100%	(Total)

11. How would \$1 million for youth services best be spent in your region? (Maximum 150 words)

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YANQ is the peak community youth organisation in Queensland, representing individuals and organisations from the state's youth services sector.