



youth affairs network qld



ANNUAL REPORT 2022 – 2023



**Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc.
Annual Report 2022- 2023**

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YANQ acknowledges support from:

Individual and organisational member as well as other NGO's that have assisted us financially and supported our work in so many ways. YANQ would also like to thank networks and communities that invited, hosted or worked with YANQ in various capacity during the past twelve months. YANQ will also like to acknowledge that the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs for funding our Community of Practice pilot project.

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

We believe that the primary culture of Australia is Aboriginal. We recognise that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples are 3 separate cultures. We recognise Aboriginal people as the permanent custodians of mainland Australia, including those areas of land whose owners have been wiped out as a result of racist policies and acts. We use the term custodianship in the context of protection and care for the land.



YANQ is committed to respecting Murri communities and individuals. We seek to understand their responses to policies and issues affecting them. We are committed to learning about their understandings of the impact of decisions on them. YANQ apologises for the past and present social mistreatment of Murri and Islander people created by colonisation and is committed to supporting the healing process.

A Summary of YANQ's Values

At YANQ, we believe that everyone is unique. At the same time, human beings share a lot in common, and are essentially social. We envisage a society where everyone lives in harmony. For this to happen, society must both value every individual and seek the best outcome for the community as a whole. There is the same diversity amongst young people as the rest of the community; like everyone else, young people need to feel respected and valued. When young women and young men are treated as important, the rest of society will gain from their insights and experiences.

We aim to contribute to developing a society that genuinely includes all its members. That's why we are committed to promoting multiculturalism (in its widest sense), and supporting and respecting the wide range of cultures that are part of Australian society. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people always have been, and always will be, the first people of this land. Because of their special relationship with the land, indigenous culture will always have a particular significance in Australian society. Focussing on reconciliation with indigenous people is an important starting point toward creating a more inclusive society. It also provides a model for other areas of action, including strategies toward improving the situation of young people.

We believe that the most effective way to achieve constructive social change is for people to work together. Economic, social and political change is happening all the time, and it is critical that we

constantly assess and reassess our strategies if we are to influence change. Both the process and outcomes of change must be fair if sustained, constructive social change is to occur.

We believe that everybody is entitled to have their basic emotional and material rights met. The central role of governments is to ensure that this occurs. Unfortunately, at the moment, governments in Australia focus on supporting global economic interests. Whilst we believe that everyone is fundamentally equal, some sections of our society do not have access to their fair share of society's resources. This includes young people, whose basic human rights are currently not being met. YANQ is committed to encouraging positive discrimination on behalf of those groups which miss out in society so that this type of social injustice will be overcome. It is only when everyone's fundamental rights are fulfilled, and each has the means to fully participate, that it will become relevant to talk about "mutual obligation" between society and its members.

We believe that a range of strategies is required to achieve constructive social change. Governments in Australia appear committed to stopping the voice of those who challenge their misplaced priorities. YANQ is responsible for being a strong public voice which lobbies and advocates on behalf of those young people who particularly miss out in society and of young people as a whole. To undertake this role effectively, it is crucial that we draw on the expertise of those working most closely with issues affecting particular groups of young people - young women and young men themselves, youth workers and youth organisations. That's why networking is another important social change strategy; it enables the youth sector to participate in collective action.

Ultimately, YANQ's credibility is maintained by practising what we preach. Our whole structure is designed to ensure that our values and vision permeate the organisation. We are committed to maintaining an open, flexible, accountable, consistent, inclusive, valuing approach in all our dealings - within YANQ, and in our relations with our members and the wider community. We are committed to applying our values in everything we say, and everything we do.

About the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc. (YANQ) is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland, representing individuals and organisations from Queensland's youth sector.

We promote the interests and well-being of young people across the state by:

- disseminating information to members, the youth sector, and the broader community
- undertaking campaigns and lobbying
- making representations to government and other influential bodies
- resourcing regional and issues-based networks

- consulting and liaising with members and the field
- linking with key state and national bodies
- initiating projects
- hosting forums and conferences
- input into policy development
- enhancing the professional development of the youth sector

We advocate on behalf of young people in Queensland, especially disadvantaged young people, to government and the community.

We promote and support cultural diversity. We encourage the development of policies and programs that respond to the rights and needs of young people.

Committee Members

Mr Jude Saldanha (President)
 Mr (Kuot) Elijah Buol (Vice-President)
 Ms Leticia Batista (Treasurer)
 Ms Neta-Rie Mabo (Secretary)
 Mr Jonathan Tapau
 Mr Gavin Tyson
 Mrs Carmen Auer
 Ms Amanda Margerison
 Ms Deb Kilroy (Ex officio)
 Mr Siyavash Doostkhah (Ex officio)

Staff

Siyavash Doostkhah
Director

Lulu Wren
Bookkeeper

Consultants

Karen Mitchell (Accountant)

President's report

2022-2023 was another challenging year for YANQ, the youth sector and more importantly young people across the State. The youth sector remains neglected and as a result highly marginalised young people are not receiving the quality support that they need.

We have a major workforce crisis in youth sector with many organisations struggling to recruit staff with the necessary skills set and experience. It is now over 12 years since YANQ had any dedicated resources to support the workforce development of the youth sector.

Failure of the Palaszczuk Labor government to reinstate YANQ's core funding for the past 10 years has impacted strongly on the wellbeing of the youth sector across Queensland and the provision of quality of advice to the government.

Despite all the limitations, YANQ has been involved in many important projects in the past 12 months. The following report outlines, briefly, YANQ's core activities. Please contact our Director if you would like any further information and/or clarification about any of the issues documented in this report, or if you would like to engage with any of our ongoing work.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thanks to all our members for your ongoing support of YANQ's work. Without its members YANQ will cease to exist. YANQ's membership has exceeded 750. This is one of the strongest levels of NGO membership across the country.

Your financial support, as well as your engagement with policy development and collective advocacy strategies has made us a strong force that, even with no funding, we can achieve positive outcomes for young people and the youth sector.

I would like to thank my colleagues on YANQ's management committee who have supported me in my role as the President of YANQ in the past 12 months. I would also like to thank our staff and volunteers who are doing a great job under very difficult circumstances.

A special thanks to YANQ members who have been supporting us financially and in other ways. We remain committed to representing you at policy and advocacy levels.

Finally, I hope that in the coming year we can continue to build on our strengths in partnership with the sector across Queensland and build YANQ's capacity to become a stronger voice for young people and the youth sector in Queensland.

Jude Saldanha
President
Youth Affairs Network Queensland

Why the government should reinstate YANQ's funding and stop the silencing of young people

In January 2013, the LNP Government ceased funding the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ). This has excluded young people, youth workers and youth organisations from most policy debates on youth issues. Despite this, YANQ has continued to maintain some key functions on a shoestring budget.

YANQ is widely engaged with the youth sector throughout Queensland. Our membership includes over 700 young people, youth workers and NGO's. We have a proud history as the lead youth sector peak in Queensland for over 30 years.

YANQ is a lean, highly networked organisation which can respond rapidly to critical issues affecting young people, particularly marginalised young people (e.g. those impacted by DFV, LGBTI, ice, child protection, terrorism). We offer a rich source of intelligence for government on the changing experiences and needs of young people in rural, remote and urban Queensland.

YANQ promotes the interests and wellbeing of young people in Queensland through:

- Information to the youth sector
- Government committees and working groups
- Policy advice and submissions
- Campaigns and lobbying
- Regional and issues-based networks
- Research and consultation
- Forums and conferences
- Youth sector development and training.

YANQ is distinguished from many other peaks by our innovative, decentralised model – CPLAN. Our highly regional structure enables all Queensland young people and youth workers to play an active role in identifying youth worker needs; engaging in customised, locally-relevant training; undertaking local research and consultation; and actively contributing to State-level policy development.

An investment in YANQ is the most cost-effective means of ensuring government access to sophisticated, evidence-based, solution-focused, practical advice on issues affecting young people across portfolios. Adequately resourced, YANQ could, once again, be a critical conduit of information on all issues affecting young people throughout Queensland.

YANQ At a Glance

Govt invests in YANQ – the Qld peak body for youth issues and the youth sector.



YANQ helps create a vibrant, genuinely state-wide, youth sector which attracts and retains competent youth workers.

Varied groups of youth workers and young people become informed and comfortable engaging in policy processes.



YANQ partners with universities to undertake research on issues affecting young people.

YANQ analyses available research and conducts consultations to provide informed and succinct briefings to government stakeholders.

YANQ leads strategies to strengthen the capacity of the youth sector workforce.



Government youth policies strategies and programs are better able to make informed decisions in the interests of young people from throughout Qld.



Positive outcomes for young people

The year at a glance



Youth Work Community of Practice (Pilot Projects)

During the 2022 calendar year, YANQ operated a pilot Community of Practice (CoP) made up of workers from residential care and youth justice services in south east Queensland. The focus of the pilot project in 2022 was to enhance youth work skills in order to reduce the number of young people in residential care being criminalised and ending up in the Youth Justice system and youth prisons.

In 2023, YANQ operated a similar pilot CoP but this time the project has been implemented online which has allowed workers from across the State to join in. As part of this project, a new web site was developed in 2022: <https://www.communityyouthwork.org/>

A series of Podcasts were also developed with young people and are embedded in the website and used throughout the 2022/2023 CoP as learning and reflection tools.

The CoP is made up of key stakeholders with theoretical and practice-based knowledge alongside workers in Youth Justice, Residential Care and the broader youth sector who are currently in positions which bring them into contact with vulnerable young people.

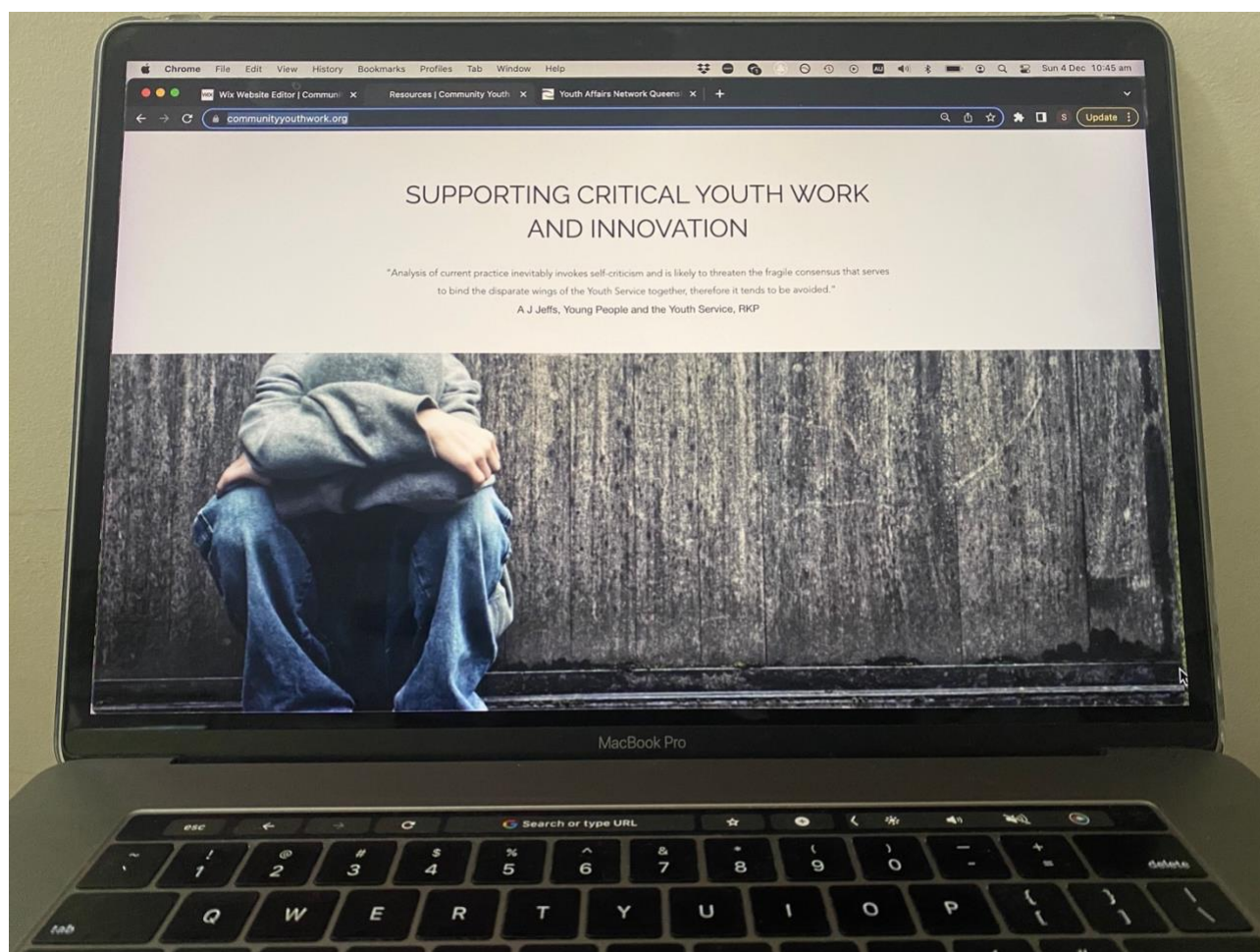
Participants were encouraged to join the Youth Work Qld Facebook Group which has already over 468 youth work members from across the state where they can connect with other youth workers and share youth work related material.

To enhance our learning and utilise experience gained by other organisations, YANQ consulted Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection both of whom have been supporting online CoPs for their members for many years. These consultations have been invaluable to us as we can compare the development and growth of our CoP with other sectors and utilise their learnings in our planning.

If workers are to intervene in the lives of highly marginalised young people, build trusting relationships and provide the necessary information and support for young people to make choices that are of benefit to their wellbeing as well as to the wellbeing and harmony in our communities, they need to possess the necessary skills and the confidence in their application in day-to-day work.

The importance of this work cannot be underestimated. All young people have a right to feel safe and supported. Young people have a right to voluntarily engage with a youth worker/youth service and to access relevant information and support required to engage positively in the community and to constructively contribute to our society.

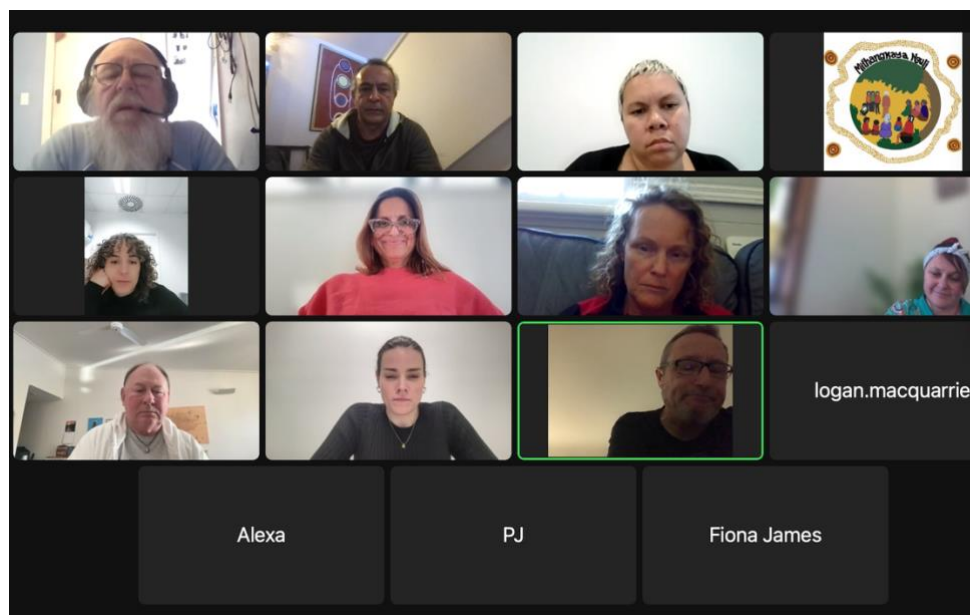
The youth sector can play a key role in reducing demand for the expansion of high expenditure and counterproductive facilities such as youth prisons. Youth work can support young people and enhance our community safety. However, the level of experience within the youth services sector is critical and requires sustainability; that depth of skills and knowledge remain within the sector to ensure the quality of services provided to young people.



Without concerted effort to ensure skills/knowledge transfer from experienced youth workers to new workers in the field, not only will youth workers feel isolated, unsupported and less likely to remain in the youth sector, but also the quality of their work and the young people who they can successfully engage with, will suffer as well.

Most of the highly marginalised young people are currently lost in a service delivery chasm. We cannot continue turn the other way and brand these young people as “too hard to work with”. The cost to the young people as well as more broadly to our society is far too great to be ignored. Highly skilled youth workers can bridge this gap and YANQ’s piloting of the CoP in 2022/2023 has been a significant step in building a necessary support structure to enhance the capacity of the sector and achieving this goal.

We hope that in 2024 YANQ can utilise learnings from past two years and put in place an ongoing State-wide CoP for the youth sector.



Youth Justice

It has been a particularly bad year on the Youth Justice front. The State Government under relentless pressure from LNP, right wing media and ill-informed and racist community members, bowed to their demands. The start was in March 2023 when the Government suspended the Human Rights Act in order to pass through changes to the Youth Justice Act to make Breach of Bail an offence.

Many experts warned the State Government that these changes were not only in breach of the Human Rights Act and are damaging to young people, but that they will also result in overcrowding in the Youth Justice system. Unfortunately, the Government ignored this advice and proceeded with their plan.

By August the Youth Prisons were over the limit with their capacity and the State Government rushed [amendments to the Youth Justice Act](#) through parliament (without due Parliamentary Committee Process) to exempt it from litigation for detaining young people in adult police watch houses.



Art work by Net-Rie Mabo (YANQ Committee Member) installed at the centre of Queen Street Mall

The State Government's strategy to neglect the youth sector and instead pour money and other resources into youth prisons and the so-called Youth Justice system is highly questionable. The Government is well aware that the 'tough on crime' rhetoric does nothing to reduce crime and make our communities safer. They knowingly adopt this 'we are tougher than the other side of politics' approach as a strategy to win conservative votes. They see their actions as pragmatic for holding on to power but this strategy of appeasing the Murdoch press readers will no doubt backfire. We saw that in the federal election earlier this year and we also saw it when Labor under Anna Bligh tried to be more conservative than the conservatives.

Queensland is now looking at wasting more money by building more youth prisons. This will cost hundreds of millions to build and hundreds of millions to manage. And the real tragedy is that all it will achieve is the destruction of more young lives and reduce the safety of our communities.

YANQ has repeatedly approached the Government and highlighted the key role that the youth sector can play in crime prevention. The Youth Justice strategy developed by Bob Atkinson who is a previous police commissioner, lacks an understanding of primary crime prevention and although it uses the language of prevention in some parts, it only focuses on early intervention.

Despite a growing chorus of advocacy organisations demanding the Queensland Government raises the minimum age of criminal responsibility, the State Government has failed to implement this well overdue reform which can free up resources currently wasted and divert it toward prevention.

Reinstatement of YANQ's core funding and Pre-budget Submission

Once again, we submitted our pre-budget submission to the Treasury arguing that funding YANQ will ensure a focus on youth sector workforce development that in turn will enhance the quality and reach of youth services provided, therefore value adding to the Government's current and future investments in the youth sector.

An investment in YANQ is also the most cost-effective means of ensuring Government access to sophisticated, evidence-based, solution-focused, practice-tested advice on issues affecting young people across portfolios. Adequately resourced, YANQ could once again be a critical conduit for information on issues affecting young people throughout Queensland. The Queensland Government has a valuable opportunity to reinvigorate this unique resource and benefit from YANQ's contributions.

We also made a number of other recommendations for enhancing funding of existing services and for investment in new youth services across the State. Here is the summary of the list of recommendations YANQ made to the State Government in our pre-budget submission:

Recommendation 1: That the State Government reinstates YANQ core operational funding, enabling YANQ to fulfill all its peak body roles.

Recommendation 2: That the State Government provides funding for YANQ to fully operationalise its decentralised policy and sector development model.

Recommendation 3: That the State Government provides ongoing funding for YANQ to stage a bi-annual State Youth Affairs Conferences.

Recommendation 4: That the State Government increases funding of existing youth support services by 30%.

Recommendation 5: That the State Government supports a pilot, community-driven Justice Reinvestment Program in 10 Aboriginal communities.

Recommendation 6: That the State Government invests in funding 40 new youth services in high need areas of the State.

Recommendation 7: That the State Government review and update the Youth Sector Workforce development plan and provide short/long term funding for implementation of its findings.

Key Meetings

YANQ continued to meet with other state's youth peaks on a regular basis.

YANQ continued to participate in the Queensland Peaks Network.

YANQ continued to attend Peaks meeting hosted by Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

YANQ participated in a meeting of key stakeholders of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition with Anne Aly, Federal Minister for Youth.

Anne met with Aly, the Federal Minister for Youth.



Other Activities

YANQ was invited to join a reference group for an Australian Research Council funded project headed by UQ and QUT titled 'Young People, Schools and Communities Working Together to Improve Student Engagement'. The project brings together multiple stakeholders and invites new perspectives to transform the way we think about, and address the problem of student disengagement. The project will focus on two schools in Ipswich, no doubt we will have some discussions with you Amanda.

YANQ continues to be member of a number coalitions working on important campaigns including, Raise the Age, Make Renting Fair Alliance and A Right to Learn.

YANQ participated in an advisory group for a project titled 'Enabling Child & Youth Global Citizenship Literacies & leadership'.

YANQ met with the Benevolent Society about a prevention and early intervention project they are going to implement in Caboolture.

YANQ met with Sarah Ramantanis who is the Co-Chairperson of Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) giving her some background information on the history of AYAC and how it used to engage with state peak bodies and lead national policy development process.

Once again, YANQ join the executive judges for the 2023 Young Achievers Awards. It is always so inspiring to see young people undertaking amazing work in various fields. Congratulations to all the nominees and category winners. And a special big congratulations to Myiesha Yoelu who was last awarded the 2023 Queensland Young Achiever. Amongst other things, Myiesha has engaged with young people to strategically plan how the government can approach youth. Myiesha was Chair of the Gudang Yadhaykenu Aboriginal Corporation, where she advocated for the transfer of eight unallocated islands previously owned by the Department of Resources back to their rightful owners. She was also part of the Negotiation Committee that fought 362,000 hectares of Traditional Owned Land from Jardine National Parks which were handed back in September 2022.



YANQ Director, Siyavash Doostkhah with Myiesha Yoelu, Queensland Young Achiever 2023

YANQ's Communication

YANQ's membership has increased to over 750. The majority of our members are from outside of South-East Queensland.

YANQ continued to have a presence in print and digital media. YANQ is highly respected by various media outlets and is the number one organisation for media to approach on most youth issues. Topics we work with the various media outlets included 'over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the Youth Justice system' and 'chroming'.

YANQ's Facebook page followers has increased from 1379 to 1611 this year. YANQ also manages two other Facebook pages for specific campaigns. They are 'Celebrate Don't Medicate' and 'Prison Not Suitable for Children'. We also have a Facebook Group Youth Work Qld which has provided a platform for the youth sector to have direct communication on various youth issues. The group's membership has grown from 300 to 484 this year.

YANQ's web page continues to be classed as Tier One which is the category for sites with the highest traffic; equivalent to the websites of large national organisations. During the year YANQ's website had approximately 19,000 page views by over 10,000 unique visitors.

YANQ also continues to send out periodic email bulletins to over 1000 recipients.

Links to YANQ's website, three Facebook pages, the new Facebook Group and Twitter feed:

- www.yanq.org.au
- <https://www.facebook.com/youthaffairsqld/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/youthworkqld>
- <https://www.facebook.com/Celebrate-dont-Medicate-1770560583170393/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/Prison-not-suitable-for-children-1728727917243786/>
- https://twitter.com/news_yanq?lang=en

Treasurer's Report 2023

It is with great pleasure that I present our Accountant's Report for the year ending 30th June 2023.

Our financial records show that the association has book keeping processes in place to adequately record the association's income and expenditure and dealings with its assets and liabilities.

Unfortunately, the State Government has not reinstated YANQ's core funding yet. Operating without core funding or any funding at all for the past nine years has had a detrimental effect on YANQ's work and more broadly on the work of the youth sector.

In 2023, we mainly operated based on income from one project which was for delivery of online youth work training for workers in residential care, youth justice services and broader youth sector. However, despite the funding situation YANQ continues to be a strong voice for the rights of young people in Queensland and has led many important initiatives which are outlined earlier in this Annual Report.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all YANQ members and subscribers for their financial contribution to YANQ. Our current membership stands at over 750. I would also like to thank everyone who has contributed to the work of YANQ. Your support has helped maintain an independent voice for the youth sector in Queensland.

If you would like further any information, please contact our office.

Leticia Batista
Treasurer



Beware



the non-profit
industrial complex.