

YOUTH SECTOR LEADERSHIP

**ENABLING YOUTH WORKERS AND SERVICES
TO SUPPORT QUEENSLAND'S YOUNG PEOPLE**



Findings of Queensland Youth Sector Survey

2017

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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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) has been the peak body representing individuals and organisations from across Queensland's youth sector for over 30 years. In January 2013, the LNP Government withdrew all funding, forcing YANQ to operate with a skeleton staff and rely on the support of its members.

In 2017 YANQ received interim funding from the Department of Communities to maintain connection with the Queensland youth sector. Consequently, YANQ initiated the *Queensland Youth Sector Survey 2017* to engage with and hear directly from sector workers and organisations what they identify as:

1. The key issues impacting the lives of young people; and the youth workers and agencies that support them; and
2. The support youth workers and organisations require from a peak body.

Survey Monkey was used to create an online anonymous survey that was circulated electronically through the YANQ newsletter, website and social media to youth workers and organisations across Queensland. YANQ engaged the services of an independent/external consultant to analyse the survey responses and to produce the following report. A total of 78 youth workers, coordinators and managers responded to the survey between May and November 2017. The majority of respondents (77%) were from South East Queensland and two (3%) were from New South Wales. Surprisingly, more than two-thirds of respondents were not current YANQ members. Of the respondents who were current members, over half (predominantly managers or coordinators of youth services) had been members for more than 5 years. Non-members were either unaware that YANQ existed or didn't realise that YANQ had continued to be active after being de-funded in 2013.

Challenges facing young people

The survey asked youth workers to identify the top five issues impacting the lives of the young people they support. Youth workers consistently talked about the complex, interrelated needs of young people who are engaged with youth services. There was a similar emphasis between the broad areas social wellbeing (38% of all comments); economic wellbeing (34%); and mental and emotional wellbeing (28%).

Sub-themes captured within each broad area detailed the specific challenges faced by young people accessing support from youth services across Queensland. Mental health issues emerged as the most frequently commented on sub-theme (15%), followed by access to appropriate accommodation (11%); alcohol and other drugs (9%); and relationships and connection (9%).

Other specific issues impacting young people's social wellbeing included experiences of trauma & violence; and problems with the service system expected to support young people. Young people's economic wellbeing was also impacted by financial hardship; difficulties accessing appropriate employment; and educational challenges. Comments about mental and emotional wellbeing challenges also included suicidality and self-harming, although these did not emerge as dominant themes.

Challenges facing the youth sector

Youth services support young people with complex needs, most of who require support over time to achieve sustainable change in their lives. This demands highly skilled workers who can build and maintain ongoing support relationships that respond to each individual young person's unique circumstances.

Responses to the 2017 *Queensland Youth Sector Survey* paint a picture of a sector in crisis. Overwhelmingly, when describing the top five issues impacting youth workers and youth organisations, survey respondents talked extensively about the impact of funding constraints on their capacity to provide quality services to young people, effectively identifying funding policy and models as the key challenge facing the sector.

Survey responses repeatedly identified that services are under-funded and under-resourced to meet the level of service demand (both in terms of intensity of service provision and numerical demand). Funding agreements are overly prescriptive and restrictive, dictating short-term, output-focused service delivery models. As such, services are hamstrung from achieving their full potential to be innovative and respond effectively to the real needs of young people within the context of their individual circumstances.

The combination of funding criteria and competition-based tendering, were seen as creating a sector culture that encourages 'siloed' service delivery. Organisations become inward focused and are increasingly operating independently of other services. Service delivery becomes focused on narrow, specified outcomes at the expense of addressing the inter-related needs affecting young people's long-term outcomes. Funding criteria also effectively preference funding to large NGO's at the expense of experienced, specialist local agencies that typically have a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of local community and youth needs.

Respondents also described the constant change imposed by the lack of funding security inherent in short-term contracts and defunding of programs. This impacts support relationships with young people and inhibits services' capacity to offer ongoing support over time for young people with multiple complex needs. It also fosters a sector culture plagued with uncertainty that makes it difficult for organisations to undertake long term agency-level planning and offer job security to staff.

Queensland youth workers function within a demanding complex, high-pressure and unpredictable professional environment. Yet unpredictable and inadequate funding generates workforce conditions characterised by low wages, a lack of job security, limited access to professional development, and a lack of recognition for the complexity and value of the work. Workers consistently identified feeling devalued and unsupported as a workforce, and at risk of burnout. Consequently, services struggle to attract and retain skilled staff.

Demand for sector leadership

YANQ did fantastic work when fully funded; I have noticed the gap without [YANQ's] presence over the last few years. The voice of young people has been lost and the strength of the youth sector weakened. As a non-youth specific service, it has impacted on our services; engagement with and connection with the youth sector.

The priority peak body roles identified by youth workers, coordinators and managers were

- Advocacy and lobbying;
- Genuine representation;
- Networking and actively engaging the sector; and
- Information dissemination.

Almost one third of survey respondents identified that, prior to receiving the survey they'd been unaware of YANQ's activities as sector peak. A small number of respondents had some concerns about YANQ being out of touch with the sector, especially in rural and regional areas. This is indicative of the significant impact that operating without any consistent funding for the past five years has had on YANQ's capacity to engage with, support, and effectively represent the Queensland youth sector.

Overwhelmingly, responses to the survey depict a sector hungry for strong sector leadership and representation. Comments emphasised proactive engagement as central to supporting the sector to collectively identify systemic issues (from local service delivery experience) to inform advocacy that genuinely represents the interests of all young people and services across the state. Youth workers, coordinators and managers repeatedly emphasised the need for YANQ to proactively engage directly with diverse young people, workers, services and networks across Queensland (not just in the South East corner).

There was significant commentary cross multiple survey questions identifying the need for a structured system enabling frontline workers and services to escalate issues to inform government policies and agendas impacting young people and the services that support them. Rural respondents particularly advocated for YANQ to have greater presence at a local level.

Prior to defunding, YANQ established the CPLAN (Communities of Practice Leaders Action Network) model to support 10 decentralised youth work networks throughout Queensland. This particularly optimised the capacity of members outside Brisbane to engage with YANQ. Just under one third of respondents identified not being familiar with YANQ as the Queensland sector peak and more than half of respondents were not familiar with CPLAN. Despite this, respondents overwhelmingly advocated the need for YANQ to actively engage with and support members; provide sector leadership and coordinate collective action.

Respondents proposed that local inter-agencies (where these exist) could support YANQ/CPLAN to identify local and specialist perspectives on youth/sector issues; facilitate engagement and representation at a local level; disseminate information and promote cross-sector coordination. It was also proposed that YANQ/CPLAN could support local level inter-agencies through coordinating collective action; facilitating pathways for advocacy and lobbying; information dissemination; and providing operational support. These key themes largely describe activities that promote decentralised and coordinated engagement.

Only 2 respondents were consistently critical of YANQ's leadership, processes and values. This was countered by commentary from multiple respondents identifying a lack of funding as the primary factor limiting YANQ's performance as sector peak.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Location

76 respondents (97%) identified their location by providing a postcode, of which 59 respondents (77%) were located in the southeast corner (Gold Coast; Brisbane; Sunshine Coast). 15 respondents (20%) were from rural and regional Queensland and 2 respondents (3%) were from New South Wales.



Figure 1: Respondents by location (CPLAN Regions)

Role & representation

76 respondents (97%) identified their current role. There was an almost even split between those who identified as managers/coordinators (51%) and those who identified as youth workers (49%). Managers/coordinators were significantly more likely than youth workers to identify that they were responding to the survey on behalf of an organisation.

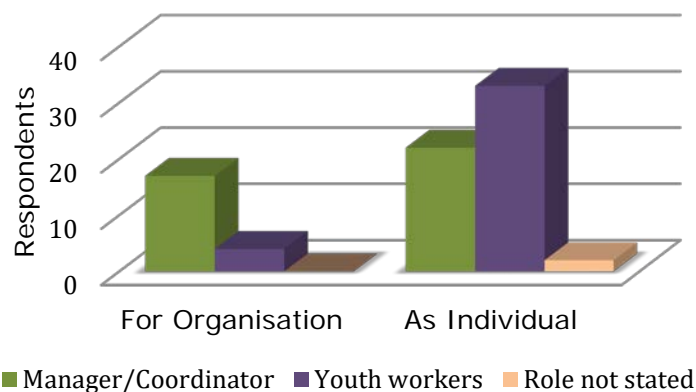


Figure 2: Respondents by role & representation

YANQ members

24 respondents (31%) identified as current members of YANQ. 13 self-identified members (54%) had been members for more than 5 years. Managers and/or coordinators were significantly more likely to identify memberships of more than 5 years.

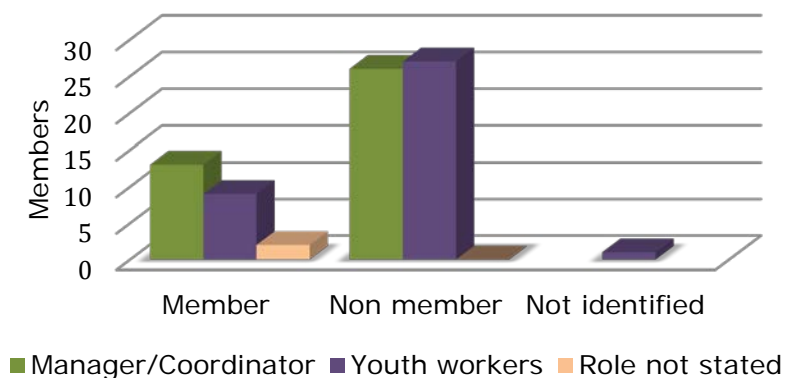


Figure 3: Membership by role

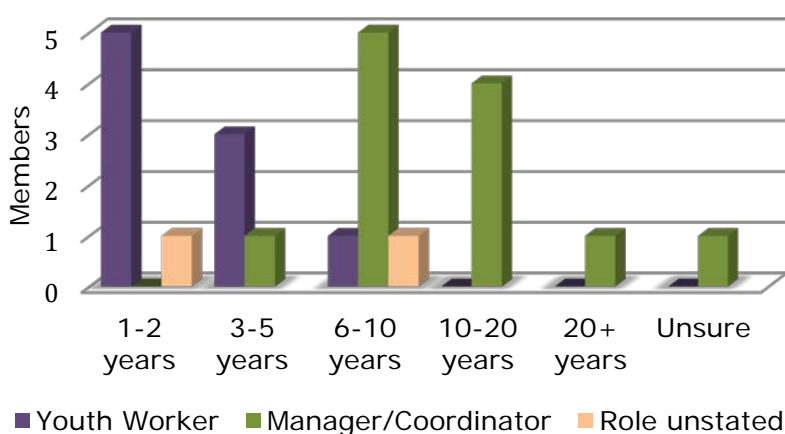


Figure 4: Members by length of membership

Non-members

53 of 78 (68%) respondents identified they were not current YANQ members. 51 respondents (88% of non-members) offered reasons for not having joined YANQ. Overwhelmingly, the reasons reflected a lack of awareness that YANQ existed (49%); that it was still active post de-funding (9%); or that membership options existed (9%). 12% of respondents said they intended to join YANQ. 10% of respondents felt the organisational membership was not affordable, questioned the relevance of YANQ to their current role (8%) or said were not a member due to other affiliations (6%). Only 2 respondents identified a conscious decision not to be a member of YANQ because they didn't agree with YANQ's values.

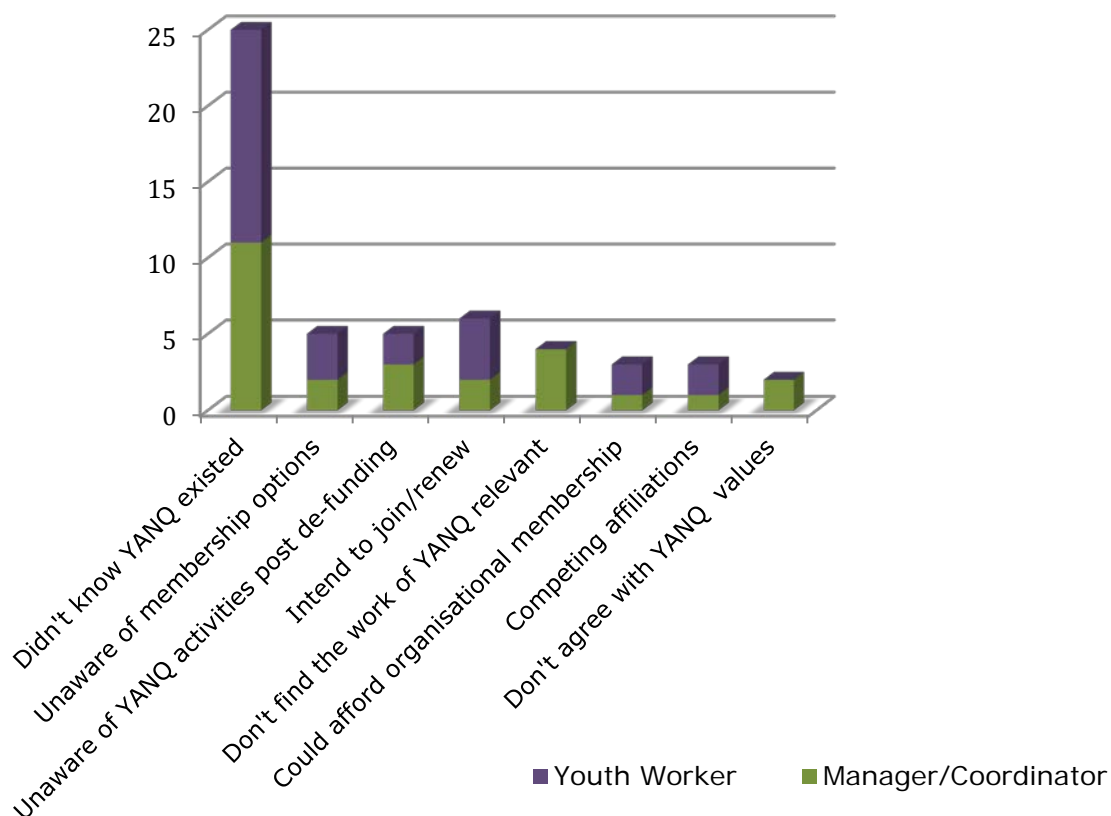


Figure 5: Reasons for non-membership

CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE

72 respondents (92%) made 313 comments addressing the question “What are the top 5 issues impacting the lives of the young people you work with?” Responses identified multiple issues impacting young people.

72% of comments described social determinants of health and wellbeing. Social Wellbeing comments (38%) identified an almost equal emphasis on concerns about trauma & violence; relationships & connection; and problems in service system expected to support young people. Economic Wellbeing comments (34%) captured a primary concern about young people’s lack of access to appropriate accommodation. There was an almost equal emphasis placed on employment, education and financial security. 28% of comments related to Mental and Emotional Wellbeing, capturing emotional wellbeing, mental health concerns, suicidality, self-harming and issues with substance abuse/misuse. Concerns about mental health (15%) was emerged as the strongest sub-theme in any category, followed by concerns about young people’s access to secure accommodation (11%).



Figure 6: Issues impacting the lives of youth service participants

Social Wellbeing

101 comments (38% of all comments) related to social wellbeing. There was an almost equal emphasis on the strongest themes identifying relationships and connection; experiences of trauma & violence; and service system failings. Less prominent themes included social influences and pressures; systemic disadvantage; family breakdown; family and domestic violence; and service gaps.

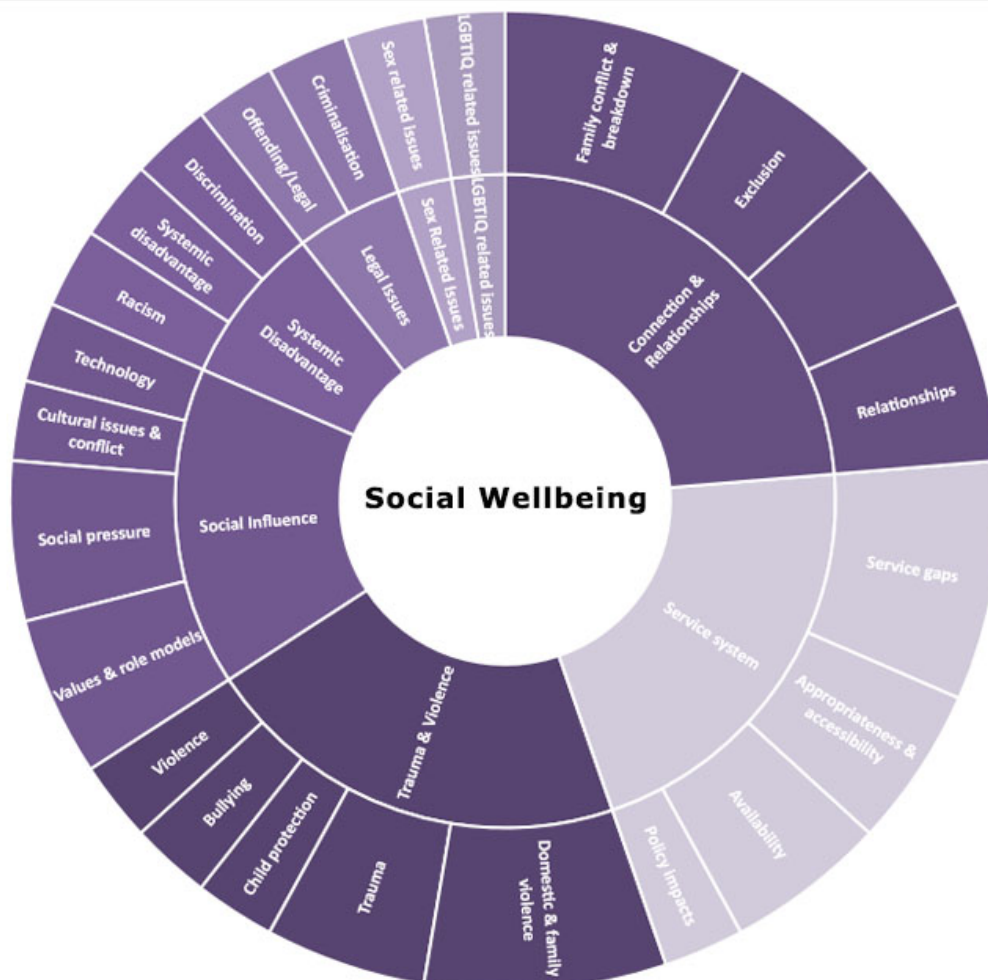


Figure 7: Impact of social wellbeing on young participants

Relationships and connection

9% of all comments identified a need for healthy, authentic relationships and friendships with people that would 'be there for them'. Family breakdown was raised repeatedly. Specifically, this included the impacts of family and domestic violence; dysfunctional family dynamics; conflict; a lack of supervision; involvement of family law; poor parenting; and parental mental illness. The *impact of family breakdown on education, including homelessness & challenges of managing early independence skill building* was also noted.

Comments described the social exclusion experienced by young people that ranged from community attitudes reflecting a lack of respect for young people's views and limited social networks through to a lack of support and intense isolation. Social exclusion was a particular concern in the lives of LGBTIQ young people and was described as *real intense* for sex workers.

Trauma and violence

8% of all comments identified young people's experience of trauma and violence including abuse, neglect, *being placed in care, bullying (including cyber bullying), reproductive coercion, sexual violence, and intergenerational trauma*. There was a strong focus on domestic and family violence, including *family violence perpetrated by young people*.

Service system failings

Workers consistently raised concerns (8% of all comments) about a lack of appropriate, youth specific or youth friendly support services including a lack of

- *Services actually funded to provide one on one support (as distinct from information and referral)*
- *Early years support (8- 12 year age group)*
- *Early intervention*
- *Quality, youth friendly, pro-choice, non-judgmental, affordable health care*
- *Services in rural locations (e.g. counselling)*
- *Abortion care*
- *Alcohol and drug support tailored to support youth*
- *Housing support options for under 15*
- *Intensive support*
- *Hubs or hangout spaces*

Additionally, *difficulties self-advocating within government systems and departments* was noted, as was the issues for young people from culturally diverse backgrounds in overcoming *complex & multiple barriers when navigating western systems*.

Respondents described the accessibility, appropriateness and availability of services for young people. *Systems and services can be unresponsive to youth development needs; focused on trying to save them not giving them tools for harm reduction; and lacking in cultural competency and/or trauma informed practice*. Inappropriate service delivery also can lead to *young people feeling like data not people with needs*.

Several respondents particularly commented on the impact of discontinuation of services on the young people they work with. Child protection services have *continuing intervention in the lives of young people (until age 18) or their children's lives ... and sudden loss of support (lack of transition) at age 18*. Similarly, the *discontinuation of funding to services* also adversely impacts young people through *ending relationships with young people before outcomes are achieved*.

Other social influences

Several respondents identified that *social exclusion and disadvantage* contributes to many of the complex issues faced by young people. Young people face *cultural issues and cultural conflict*; discrimination, racism, homophobic laws; and *state/legal discrimination against their employment (sex work)*. It was specifically noted that systemic disadvantage underpins the *poor outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people [that] continues to get worse*. Single respondents also raised concerns specific to LGBTQI young people and young people with intellectual/cognitive disability.

Despite the public policy and media focus on youth crime, only 5 respondents (6%) referred to legal issues impacting the lives of young people. In particular, concern

was raised about young people being 'criminalised' *often as a result of either homelessness (public nuisance offences) or being in residential care.*

Similarly, 5 respondents (6%) noted that young people face high levels of social pressure and stress *due to the pressures of modern life.* This includes the *pressure to be ready for high school in primary and then ready for work in high school* with an *emphasis on knowing what they aim to do post school.* This can be accompanied by a *perceived pressure to perform at school, work and home* that impacts their *work (school) life balance.*

Other social influences identified include social media and technology impacting how young people engage. One respondent claimed the *age is dropping* for young people accessing support from services. Others identified a need for *positive role models* [to address] a *deterioration of values and behaviour* and/or offset the influence of dysfunctional family environments and *[inter-generation] behaviour.* Concern was also expressed about young people's *access to sexually explicit materials* and need for *sex education.*

Economic Wellbeing

114 comments (34% of all comments) related to economic wellbeing. The primary area of concern was access to appropriate and affordable accommodation, particularly associated homelessness. Financial hardship was identified as an issue by several respondents, and there was a comparable emphasis on access to employment and education – factors which underpin financial security.

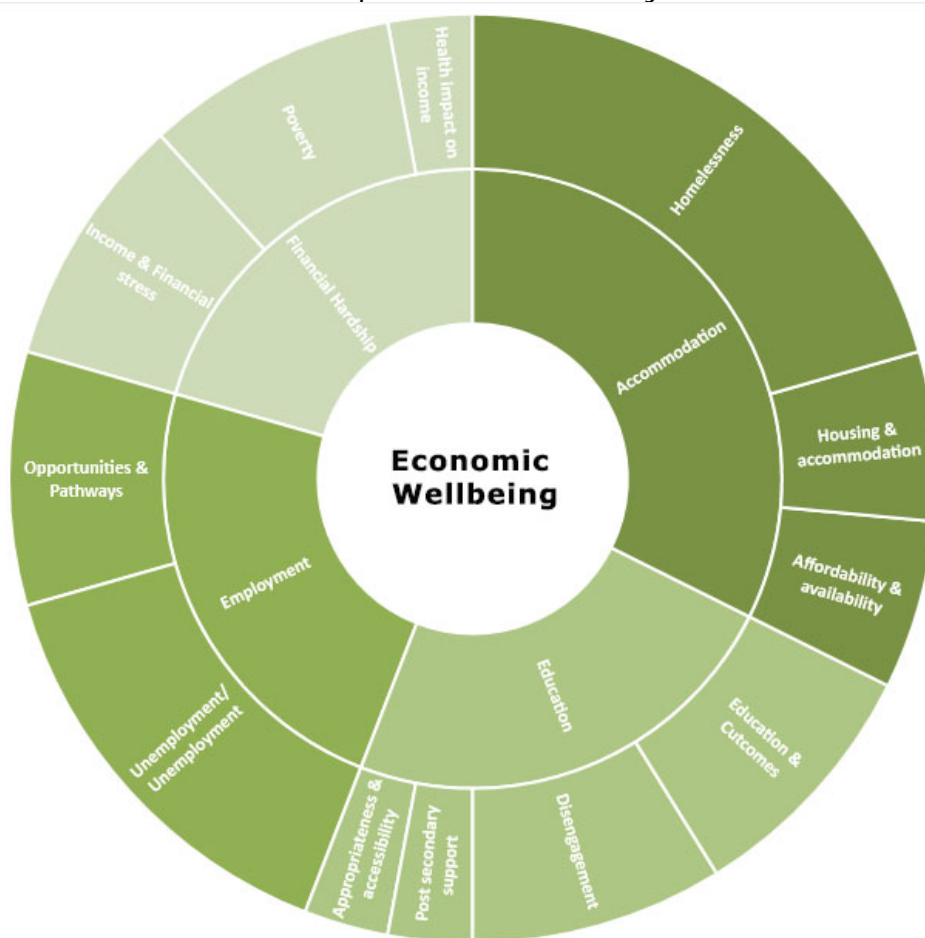


Figure 8: Impact of economic wellbeing on young participants

Accommodation

A total of 11% of all comments identified young people faced challenges accessing appropriate accommodation. Homeless was raised repeatedly (7% of comments). Others comments noted challenges with the availability, stability and affordability of appropriate housing (2%). Specific issues included

- *The impact of health issues on accessibility and affordability of housing, especially for young people experiencing mental health challenges*
- *Access to accommodation for 10-15 year olds*
- *Crisis accommodation that allows sex workers to still work and be empowered/independent finding money/work/clients*
- *Housing that is affordable to young people on Centrelink benefits*

Employment

Comments about employment represented 8% of all responses. Primarily the issues raised identified a lack of opportunities and pathways to access employment - specifically meaningful, permanent employment; employment that leads to greater income; employment in rural towns; and employment for early school-leavers with *very few options for under 16 year olds*.

Education

Comments about education (8% of all comments) focused strongly on young people disengaging from education and training; school refusal; and *high numbers of school leavers in year 10*. It was suggested that efforts should *start in primary school to prevent disengagement*. Specific comments also noted

- *Poor attainment of literacy, numeracy and general study skills that prevent successful engagement in education and employment*
- *A need for access to information for post-secondary options*
- *A lack of connection to post Year 11 and 12 graduates*
- *Disconnect between youth allowance demands to participate versus job active pushing short term poorly delivered Cert EET (employment education & training)*
- *One size fits all approach in mainstream education and training which often excludes disadvantaged young people*
- *Cost of tertiary education*
- *Access to both (education and employment) due to their health - changes/demands/limitations/ongoing appointments*

Financial hardship

Concerns about young people's experiences of financial hardship represented 7% of all comments. Respondents focused on poverty and income/financial stress, specifically highlighting the stress associated with *trying to financially survive on Centrelink payments*. One comment also noted the *financial burden of health experience, with serious impacts on access to employment and education*.

Mental and emotional wellbeing

98 comments (26% of all comments) related specifically to mental and emotional wellbeing including the strong sub-themes of mental health; alcohol & other drugs; and wider emotional wellbeing.

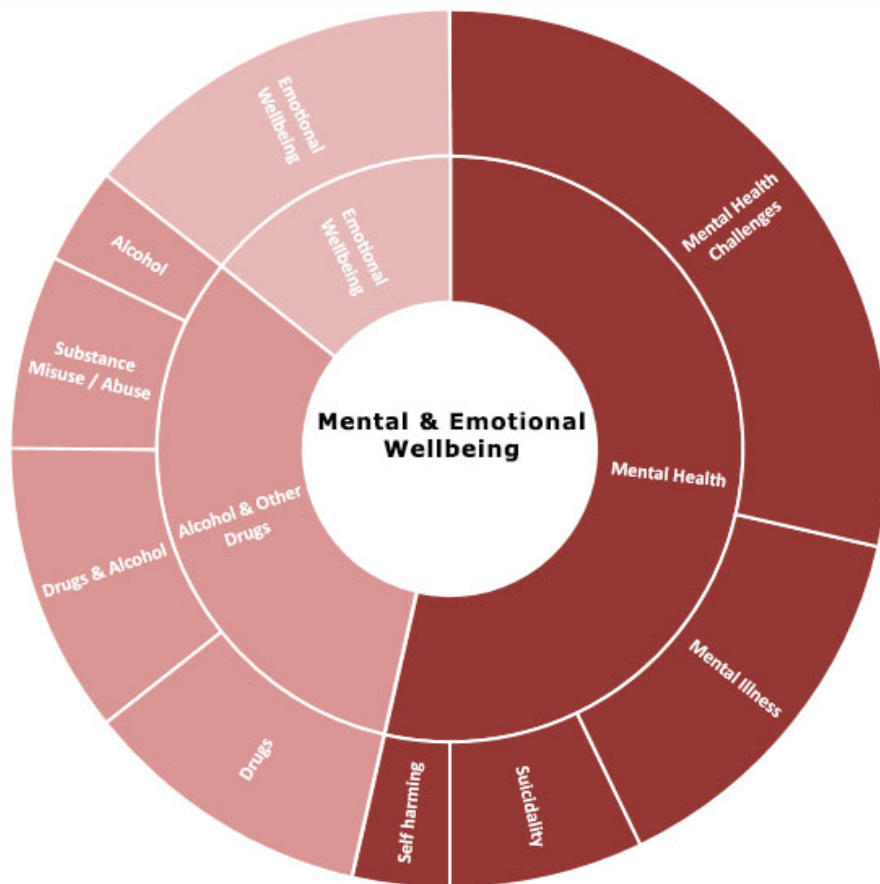


Figure 9: Impact of mental & emotional wellbeing on young participants

Mental & emotional health

A total of 19% of all comments described mental health issues and related emotional wellbeing issues.

12% of all comments identified mental health issues (including mental illness) describing *growing mental health needs, usually as a result of childhood trauma*. Six respondents (7%) highlighted depression and/or anxiety. Seven respondents (9%) identified suicidality, self-harming and *attachment disorders* as high impact issues.

Emotional wellbeing can be viewed as a key component of mental health. 4% of all comments identified emotional wellbeing issues including *anger issues; low self-esteem; sense of identity & belonging; lack of purpose; generational 'learned' hopelessness; stress & anxiety; grief & loss; and risk taking*.

Alcohol and other drugs

9% of all survey responses identified the impact of drug and alcohol issues in the lives of young people. However, addiction was identified as an issue by only 2 respondents. Specific comments also suggest that substance misuse is *starting at a younger age* and *drugs are more readily available*.

CHALLENGES FACING THE YOUTH SECTOR

66 youth workers, coordinators and managers (85%) addressed the question “What are the top 5 issues impacting on youth workers in your region?”, and 59 (76%) addressed the question “What are the top 5 issues impacting on youth organisations in region/s you work in?”

Although the emphasis shifted according to whether the focus was on workers or organisations, the emerging themes overlapped to identify the key challenges facing the Queensland youth sector.

Inadequate funding (17% of all comments) and other impacts of funding policy (20%) emerged overwhelmingly as the primary challenges facing the youth sector. This underpins the other key challenges identified including sector capacity to meet demand for services (11%); and workforce capacity impacted by high workloads (4%), workplace stress & risk of burnout (5%).

Funding Challenges

37% of all comments were focused on the funding environment, including the impacts of funding policies and approaches (20%); and inadequacy of funding and resources (17%).

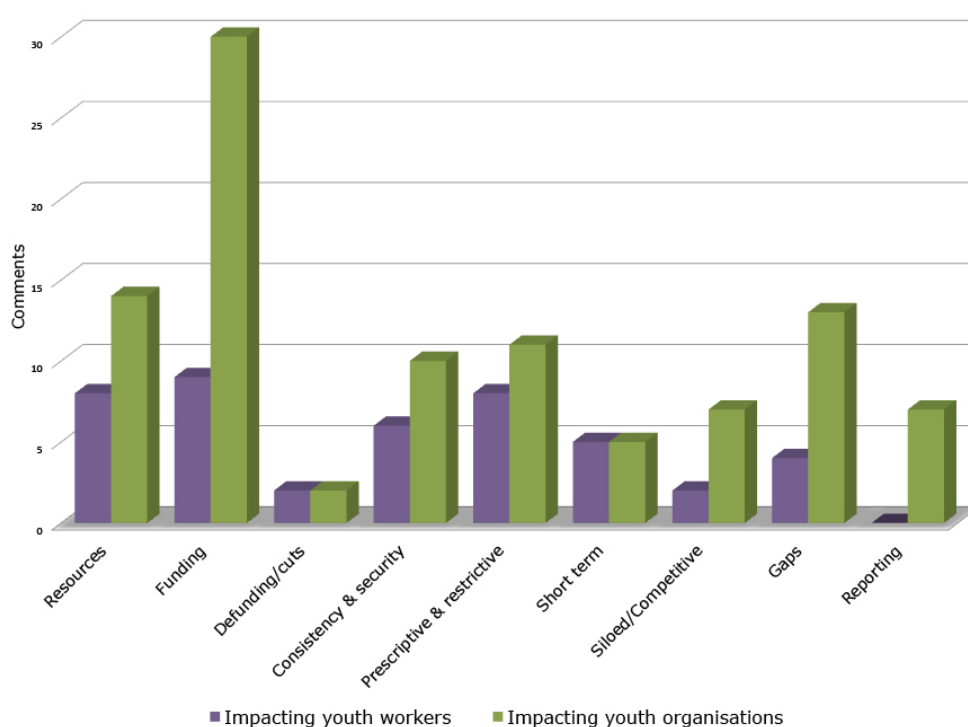


Figure 10: Funding challenges for the sector

Funding policies and approaches

20% of all comments related to the impact of funding policies and models.

Prescriptive and restrictive

Workers with young people with complex needs are constrained in their capacity to genuinely respond to young people's needs because of narrow, prescriptive models of service and over-valuing of singular short-term outcomes.

Respondents identified issues related to *policy constraints; funding restrictions; the limitations of service agreements; and the inflexibility of contracts that impose outcomes and processes; whereby outputs become more important than outcomes and limit capacity to respond to the real needs of young people accessing services.*

Prescribed models of service were described as *often culturally inappropriate, don't match young people's needs, and reduce*

- *Capacity to respond to complex/varied needs of young people - in particular, to implement culturally appropriate approaches to different cohorts of young people*
- *Ability to respond to young people's needs*
- *Ability to be truly innovative or collaborative*
- *Scope for case management*

Respondents also identified that *capacity building work is less respected by funding bodies with pressure to do individualised response ... [leaving] no room for the capacity building work that really develops both sector, and community response i.e. whole of school response or communities ability to make changes to causal issues. The lack of funded positions for youth/ community development positions to co-ordinate networks, plan youth activities and events and consultations also impacts as currently these activities are unfunded. As a result, time-pressured workers have to meet other outcomes, and [spend] time coordinating networks etc. which is not valued or accounted for in Department funded programs.*

Concern was expressed that the funding models are *outcome based and [provide] less scope for longitudinal work resulting in narrow/inflexible/band-aid models of service that are less about relationships and more about pushing government agendas.*

Specifically respondents expressed concerned about

- *Being limited to working with other young people and not family members, which limits creativity of response i.e. 2 worker models to provide independent support to the young person and a parent*
- *Lack of recognition from funding bodies as to what works (i.e. camps, group programs) and therefore no funding for these activities*
- *Limited funded positions that actually do the work, not just referral to other supports. There are a lot of positions funded to refer to options or support. But no one actually is paid to do the one on one social support, or to run targeted groups to help kids*
- *Funding going to large organisations rather than some of the smaller ones or consortiums*
- *Eligibility restrictions regarding age-group or level of mental illness*
- *Reduction of the target group age from 25 to 18 for Youth Support Programs*
- *Fee for service compromises our ability to advocate for young people in the (school) systems that contract us*

In short, *rigid criteria, service delivery restrictions, and cutting specialised areas* restrict the *type of specific services available for young people*.

Funding Gaps

As a result, service gaps are created. Young people approach *existing youth services who are not equipped to respond to [their] specific needs*. Concurrently, there is *funding pressure to focus on more privileged young people with singular problems, rather than those with complex needs (i.e. easier to achieve 'measurable outcomes')*.

As a result critical gaps have emerged in addressing a range of youth needs, including:

- *Substance misuse (detox and rehab)*
- *Housing support to under 15s*
- *Young parents*
- *LGBTI*
- *Cultural specific programs e.g. Pacific Island Youth*

It was also identified that *census data is expired and the community has rapidly changed but funding rolled out from previous data doesn't reflect current need*. Consequently *population growth is not reflected in allocation of funding and resources*. Specifically this was noted for *the Northern Gold Coast where there has been a huge increase (in) young people and no services are based there*.

Unreliable funding

Respondents were also concerned about inconsistency and insecurity in funding. A *lack of consistent government policy and funding for the sector* creates a *bureaucracy [that is] always changing the goal-posts and expectations, age-groups, eligibility criteria etc*. This results in funding (and ultimately sector) uncertainty, when what is needed is *consistent ongoing programs to support young people*.

Government funding is often short term (with *programs funded for 1 year terms only*) and therefore focused on short-term outcomes. Consequently, service agreements (and subsequent service delivery) focuses on *meeting funding outputs rather than focus on positive outcomes, which takes time based on relationship building*. Short term funding also results in *valuing of short term/singular outcomes over long term/multi-faceted outcomes that promotes an unsustainable, and band-aid approach to youth work*. It also makes it very difficult to *forward plan strategically*; and *precludes long term planning and innovation*. Consequently, the lack of *permanent/recurrent and consistent funding for the sector* creates a *funding uncertainty* and a *lack of funding security* that impacts the *sustainability of programs*.

Funding inefficiencies

Several respondents also raised concerns about the efficiencies of compliance requirements and policy incoherence. *Increased expectations of compliance and bureaucracy, together with different reporting requirements for different departments, create onerous data entry and reporting requirements that absorb a disproportional amount of organisational time*. This results in *redirection of resources from service delivery to data entry, reporting and other 'accountability' requirements*. Further, *competitive tendering and fractured/siloed funding leads to inefficiencies*. The *lack of consistent government policy* results in *constant changes to programs and loss of programs*.

Inadequate funding and resources

17% of comments identified issues relating to under-funding and under-resourcing of youth services. Comments identified a sector that is *resource poor* with a *lack of financial support from government leading to understaffing* and lack of resources to support young people. Services are also *negatively impacted by funding cuts which equals less working hours for some, no vehicles, no training*. Simultaneously, *organisations are facing increased cost of providing service*. Comments identified a *need for greater resources* describing resources available to services as *stretched or limited* and services as being *under-resourced; resource limited and time limited*.

The single exception was a Headspace worker who talked about the value of receiving adequate funding - *we are pretty solidly funded which is great to see and means we can do some deep work*.

Workforce Challenges

36% of all comments were focused on workforce issues, which are largely symptomatic of funding challenges and the service delivery environment. Comments describe Queensland youth workers as largely feeling undervalued and unsupported, and facing a high risk of burn-out as a result of managing increasingly high workloads. Respondents were concerned about the impact of the lack of (affordable) professional development, and repeatedly raised issues related to job security, low wages, and high staff turnover.

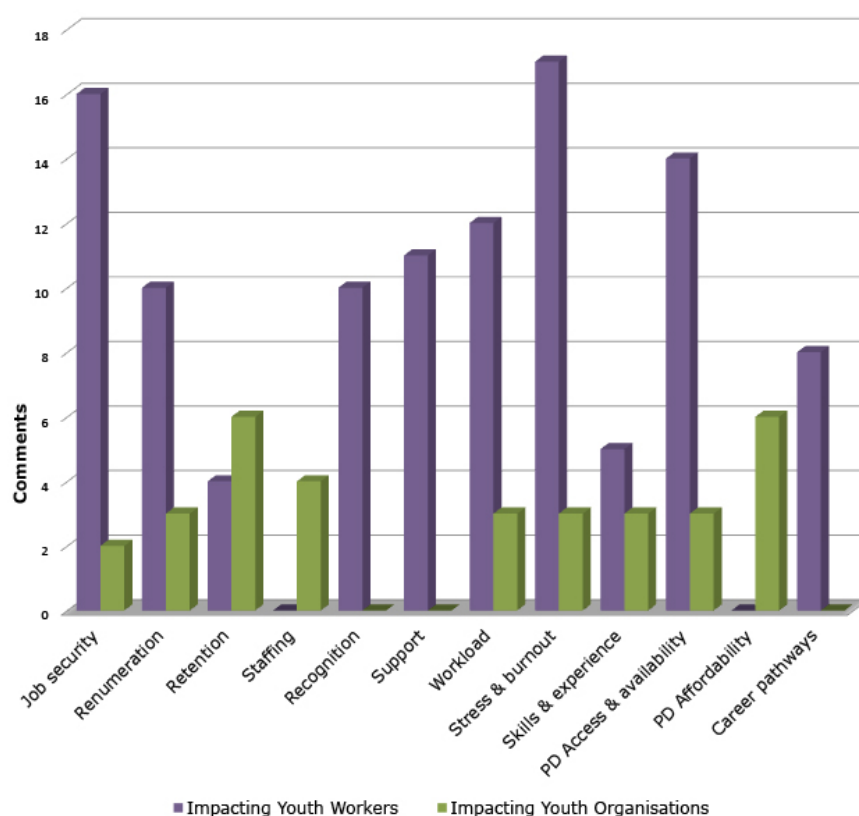


Figure 11: Workforce challenges for the sector

Capacity

Stress and burnout was seen as having the single most significant impact on youth workers (closely followed by lack of job security). Workers repeatedly described *burnout due to demands of the role* including *vicarious trauma, fatigue, and gossip in the workplace*. Several respondents described feeling *over worked* and *time poor*, coping with *high demand in service, caseloads, and large service delivery areas*.

Staffing, including accessing suitable staff was another key theme, which particularly impacts on youth organisations. Respondents identified the need for *qualified and experienced staff suitable for certain roles, and diverse representation amongst staff – matched to client needs*. Concern was raised that *people are appointed without necessary skills, knowledge or experience*. Comments described *skill shortages due to low pay and high turnover in staff*. Organisations were described as *not being selective enough during recruitment* and people being *appointed without necessary skills, knowledge or experience*. Consequently *increasing numbers of lower qualified, lower skilled workers [are] expected to work with young people with complex needs*. It is reasonable to conclude that employing less experienced staff into a high-pressure environment that lacks support and professional development opportunities exacerbates the potential for burnout.

Job security, resourcing and support

Despite the complexity of the work supporting vulnerable young people, many respondents identified *feeling undervalued*, and felt impacted by inadequate recognition and support for youth workers. They explained that youth work is an *unrecognised job force* and there is a *lack of recognition of the value of the work*. Comments suggested that a *lack of vision that youth work is a profession with degree qualifications* is demonstrated through *a lack of genuine and meaningful consultation with the youth sector - not valuing us as the experts; there was a lack of validation by governmental staff as professional peers; and that youth work is still viewed as a low job and a stepping stone to other things, due to low pay and low respect. It also attracts people who don't want to put the best work in, which detracts from the amazing youth workers who do put the work in*.

This was closely related to a perceived lack of support for staff. Comments described *a lack of time for workers (across the board) to network with other agencies* creating *isolation of ... youth services*. This is combined with *a lack of support; value on staff supervision, professional development and staff well-being; and a lack of importance placed on self-care and team building*. One respondent advocated that *funding [is] needed for peak services to appropriately support youth workers, standard of support for workers and therefore service users*.

Similarly, respondents aligned *the lack of job security* with the increasing *casualisation of the workforce* and increase in short term, casual and contract roles (that don't enable workers to accrue annual and long service leave) and a corresponding *lack of permanent positions*. This creates a workforce culture plagued by lack of job certainty and security.

Accordingly, issues with *retention* and *high staff turnover* have a significant impact on both youth organisations and young people – resulting in *lack of secure trusting relationships between youth workers and young people*. Other staffing issues identified included *a lack of staff due to funding, skill shortages due to low pay, and high turnover in staff*.

Respondents consistently identified remuneration of staff as a key impact, describing *unreasonable remuneration* that was characterised by *uncertainty* and *low wages compared to education level*. Respondents argued the need for *salary incentives for workers*, describing *downward pressure on wages i.e. we now start a new grad Soc Worker on a SCHADS level lower than we used to, due to unit costings from DS /NDIS)* and *sacking of experienced but higher paid staff*. One respondent specifically referred to the *pay equity joke* explaining

... we achieved pay equity through the courts fair and square and so now, the programs get funded at a lower level so workers are employed at a lower level - talk about glass ceilings!!!

Professional development and career pathways

Limited access to professional development and *opportunities to grow and develop further skills*, was raised by 8% of respondents. Comments identified *a lack of access to appropriate training and development opportunities, other than mainstream schooling; limited low cost and short training opportunities (need more scholarships or benefits for organisations); training for complex needs clients; and a lack of professional and external supervision support*. Specifically, comments described a *lack of affordable training* (especially when staff need to add travel and accommodation costs). When combined with *limited infrastructural funding* this *reduces capacity to be organisationally proactive and undertake professional development with staff (individually and collectively)*. Respondents described a *lack of job opportunities (including work placement) and in rural towns; and a lack of career advancement opportunities*, especially in small organisations.

Service delivery challenges

27% of all comments related to the nature of the sector, emphasising an increasingly complex service delivery environment responding to an increase in the complexity of issues faced young people. Respondents argued that gaps in available services impacts worker morale and adds pressure to find stop-gap measures. This is further exacerbated by the high demand for support and unrealistic expectations (placed on services and workers). A gap of another kind was a lack of good models and cross-agency collaboration to optimise quality youth work practice.

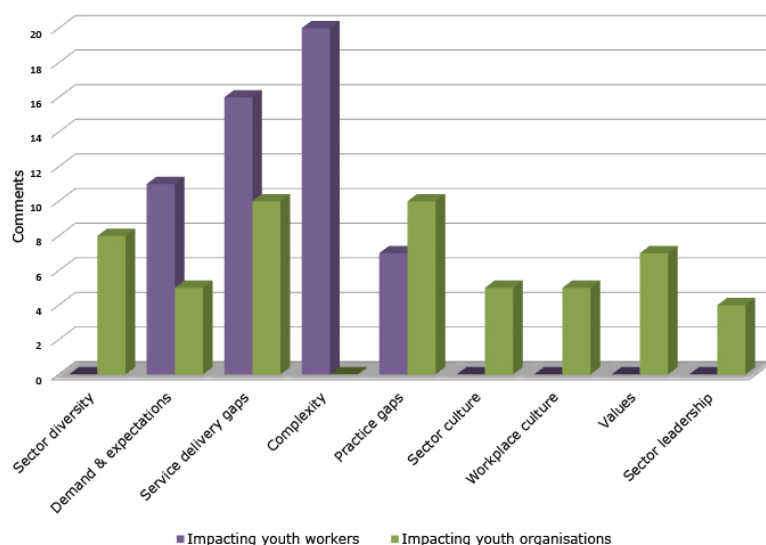


Figure 12: Service delivery challenges for the sector

Complexity of youth needs

The complexity of young people's needs was seen as the issue of greatest impact on youth workers. Respondents described an *increasingly complex service delivery environment* responding to *an increase in complex issues for young people*. Examples offered include

- *Enabling young people to be just that, and not always a patient with cancer*
- *Providing meaningful support and opportunities to articulate the needs, ideas and experiences of young people with cancer*
- *10 - 14 year old who aren't housed by Child Safety*
- *LGBTIQ issues*
- *Drug use by young people*
- *Mental health of young people*
- *Establishing what the needs of young sex workers are and developing a model of education delivery for other organisations on the topic of working with sex workers that is accessible and not too confronting, but is also providing useful information and challenging stigma*
- *Lack of transport*
- *One-size fits all education system*

In regional and rural communities respondents identified that this is further complicated by the impact of a *regional mentality* ("*she'll be right/we'll figure it out ourselves*") and the *stigma around needing* in small communities where there are concerns that *people cannot maintain anonymity*.

Further adding to the complexity of the service delivery environment is the impact of funding policy inconsistency and uncertainty that creates a sector culture characterised by *constant changes to programs... loss of programs and too many negative changes within the youth industry*.

Service system gaps

7% of all comments reinforced concerns about gaps in the service delivery system to address issues that impact the lives of young people. Service gaps *impact on worker morale* when there are *few referral options* and a *lack of flanking services/resources*. *This pushes back on youth workers to find even more ways to assist young people*. The *continued referring on* created a perception for some respondents that there seems to be *too many services offering "case management" rather than support and/or a lack of productive services*.

Specific service gaps identified on include

- *Options to address long term issues especially houses and jobs*
- *A lack of affordable housing leading to a cycling through service system and accommodation services.*
- *Youth specific/friendly drug and alcohol support workers*
- *Youth specific/friendly clinical support*
- *Youth shelters*
- *The child safety system [refer] into the youth sector without any resources follow into the youth sector to support this.*

Concern was raised that this situation may worsen with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). *The transition to NDIS will leave many young people with [undiagnosed] cognitive disabilities, or the advocacy support systems needed to access the insurance system to be supported by the youth system,*

which does not have the longevity of service commitment needed to assist young people with life-long support structures.

Unrealistic demands and expectations

Parents can't do much, police can't do much and at times, child safety can't do much. People look to youth workers to fix the issue and fast.

Respondents described issues relating to high expectations of, and demand for, services. Respondents identified difficulties associated with *meeting department and community needs/expectations, strong demand for services, unrealistic KPIs, and difficulties doing outreach to regional parts of our footprint*. Services are faced with *an increase in unmet need and workers capacity is limited within decreased hours and funding; more referrals than workers, resulting in heavy caseloads and a need [for] more staff to meet the needs of the young people*. Services have the added pressure of entering information into complex data systems to meet *onerous reporting requirements*.

One respondent identified the impact of the child safety system referring youth people to the youth sector claiming

... it is well evidenced by the Carmody report. However, there has not been any resource follow into the youth sector to support this. There are also limited transitional funds available to young people not in care (e.g. TILA no longer available for young people on Unreasonable To Live At Home Allowance, only if in care and transitioning). So there are gaps in resources available for the young people who don't have a formal care experience and this pushes back on youth workers.

Sector culture, capacity & diversity

Respondents identified gaps in youth work practice including a *lack of good practice models; cross-sector relationships and collaborative work; values impacting practice; and networking restraints* – all of which potentially contribute to *fragmented service delivery across the state*.

The youth sector was described as experiencing a *lack of cohesiveness; collaborative projects / sharing of resources, coordination of services, and access or time to network* with other agencies. A sector-wide lack of coordination and collaboration is likely impacted by earlier comments about inadequate resources and competitive/siloed funding policy. Specific mention was made of the *poor responses from Child Safety and the ability for government organisations (like Child Safety) to work alongside and collaborate with not-for-profit services*.

Respondents described a sector culture characterised by *pressures from government and management; sector uncertainty; an inability to plan/innovate (insecure, changing funding)* and associated impacts in relation to the Human Services Quality Framework. They also identified workplace cultures plagued by *in-house politics; and a lack of management; management structure; time for team building and building good culture for providing culturally safe work environments*.

Similarly, comments expressed concern about the service mix in the sector. This included *big organisations pushing little ones out, resulting in large organisations ... securing all the funding*. Bigger organisations were seen as *taking over little independent services, resulting in loss of diversity*. *Smaller community organisations are losing their community connections and tacit knowledge*. Large organisations

don't find out about the small orgs that have been there for 20 years+; [are] delivering cookie cutter services that aren't effective or cost efficient; and [are] losing that personal approach. And, increased funding of for-profit organisations was also seen as reduc[ing] quality of service to young people.

Overall, concern was expressed about an *absence of clear youth driven values*, and the potential for *disconnect from community due to inadequate resourcing and clear values driven practice*. Emerging values-based tensions were described in comments such as

- *the board have no connection to the work we do*
- *employees not sharing the same vision as the organisation*
- *lack of youth focused policy platforms and no means of communicating [gaps in services] to government, identifying a need for sector development and representation at government level (all 3 government levels)*

THE ROLE OF INTER-AGENCIES

Inter-agency participation

45 respondents (58% of all respondents) participated in local youth inter-agencies and other inter-agency groups across Queensland. 7 of these participated in more than one group.

The most often-cited youth inter-agency networks were Gold Coast Youth Network (9 respondents) and Inner Urban Youth Inter-agency (8). Other networks cited were Ipswich & West Moreton Youth Inter-agency (4), Logan Youth Network (3) and Compass (2). Single respondents were members of inter-agencies in Tweed Shire, Gladstone, Rockhampton and North Queensland.

19 respondents (particularly those in rural and remote areas) were members of inter-agency groups which were not identified as youth-specific networks. These included groups in Dalby, Mt Isa, Noosa, Gympie, Townsville and Sunshine Coast.

3 respondents (from the Cairns, Townsville and Redlands regions) said there was no relevant local inter-agency, with one respondent commenting ... *our council dismantled it but we are currently in the process of creating a local network independent of council; the youth services inter-agency no longer operates in this region; and none for where I work.*

Functions of inter-agency networks

53 respondents (68% of all respondents) addressed the question "What function does that inter-agency network play?" The most frequently described functions of inter-agencies were operationally focused. This included sharing ideas information and resources; networking and relationship building; operational collaboration and support; and professional development. Some inter-agencies also facilitate opportunities for sector development or advocacy & lobbying.

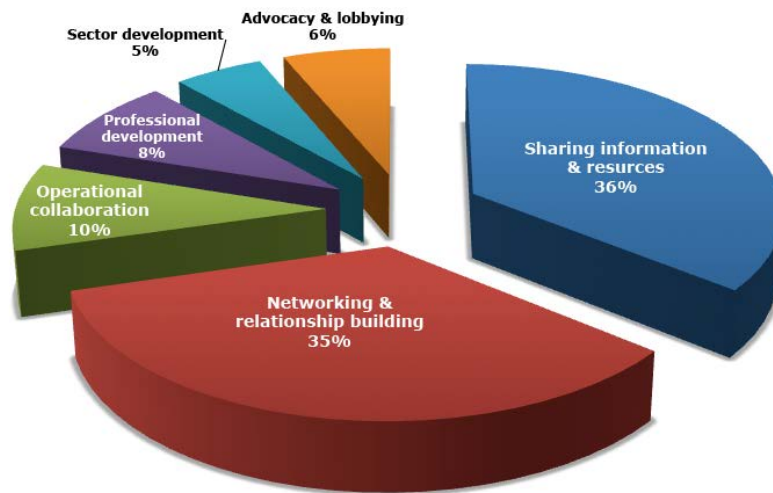


Figure 13: Function of inter-agency involvement

Overwhelmingly, the two key functions of interagency attendance described sharing information and resources (36% of comments); and networking and relationship building (35%).

Information is shared about services, new programs, policy, events, community updates, resources, issues, challenges, shared experiences in the sector and ideas. Some inter-agencies also include guest speakers.

It is great opportunity to gather together with other workers in your local community, hear about current projects and possible collaborations and to be inspired by the amazing work of other organisations that you may not be aware of. Also, it is a chance to hear about policy and government decisions that affect our sector.

Inter-agency networking and relationship building included *bringing together educators, youth workers, young people, legal professionals, health workers, representatives of diverse ethnic groups for the benefit of young people in Queensland; and connecting services and workers through meetings and a mailing list*. Although inter-agency meetings bring services together, one respondent suggested that some networks can *struggle to foster relationships and purpose*.

11% of comments identified that some inter-agency networks play a role in sector development and capacity building, including identifying best practice and promoting sector discussion and sector development. Some inter-agencies facilitate opportunities for services to identify *current issues and the gaps in services to young people and then work together to fill those gaps through advocacy and lobbying*.

10% of comments identified *collaborating on solutions /supporting each other's work; inter-agency resourcing; acting as a referral portal to promote referral pathways; providing and accessing mutual peer collegiate operational and funding advice and support*.

8% of comments said that inter-agency networks play a role in the professional development of youth workers through *deliver[ing] small professional development sessions at some meetings on topics the have been identified by the group as relevant to current issues*.

DECENTRALISED ENGAGEMENT

As part of YANQ's decentralisation across the state, ten Communities of Practice Leaders Action Networks (CPLAN) were established across Queensland. The intent of CPLAN was to create a sustainable structure to enable a consistent focus on policy issues relevant to young people; and workforce development strategies for the youth sector from a local, regional and state perspective. From 2012, YANQ funded an existing youth worker (with employer support) to work in each region as a CPLAN facilitator for 1 day per month. Further details of CPLAN's role and functions are available on the YANQ website.

Familiarity with CPLAN

All 78 respondents answered the question "Are you familiar with YANQ's CPLAN model?" Of these, 47 (60%) said they were unfamiliar and 31 (40%) were familiar with CPLAN.

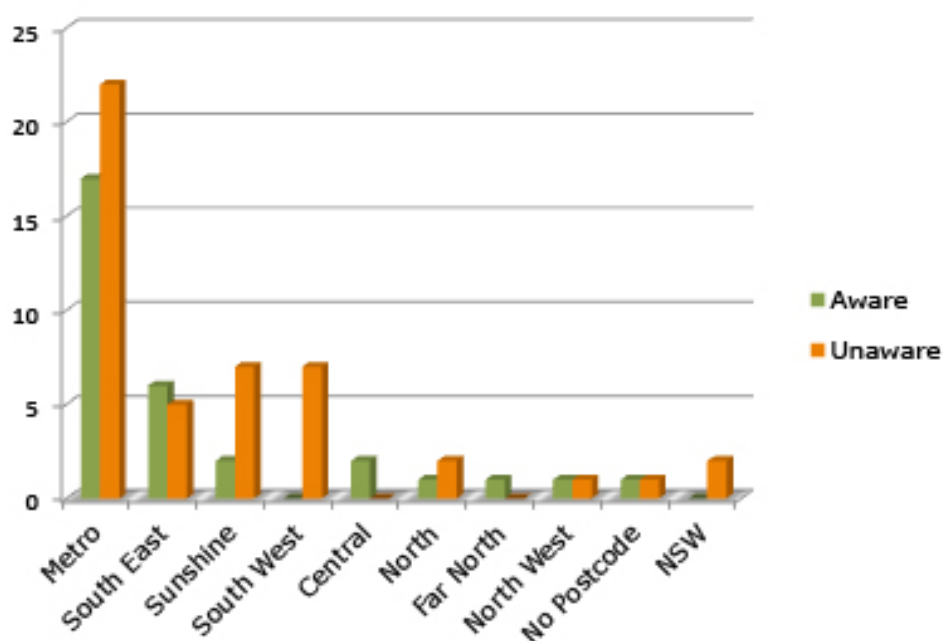


Figure 14: Respondents who were familiar with CPLAN

Operationalising CPLAN

27 respondents (35% of all respondents) addressed the question "Would you like to see this model fully operationalised?" 20 of the 27 responses (77%) were supportive.

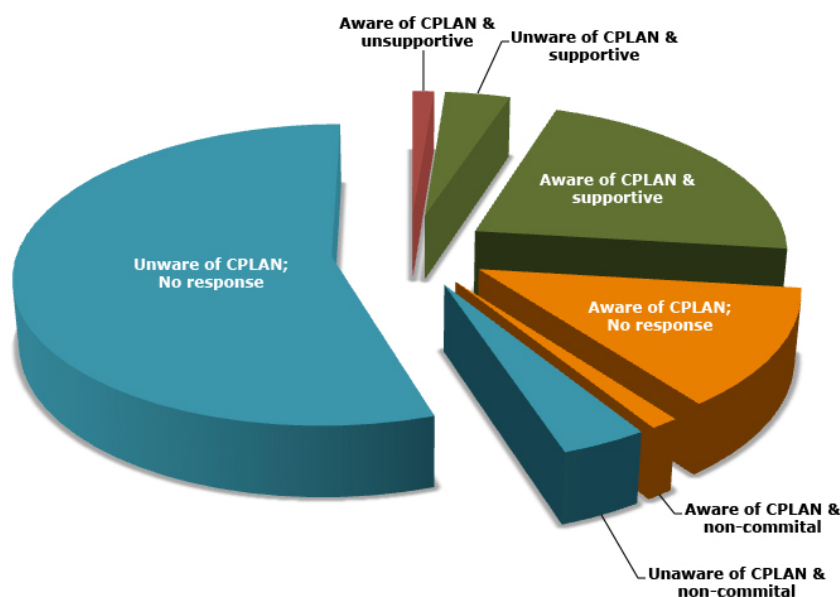


Figure 15: Support for fully operationalising CPLAN

Comments included

- *Absolutely. This is a great way for YANQ to build and maintain a genuinely state-wide body. It is also particularly critical to actively including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in a culturally appropriate way*
- *YES ... CPLAN is a unique model ... very few peak bodies are as successful as YANQ in genuinely engaging with stakeholders across their constituency (including minority and marginalised stakeholders)! This is a model that should be further developed, properly resourced, documented and marketed as 'best practice' for peak bodies nationally*
- *Would be good to see some new faces rather than the usual suspects*
- *It just looks like the standard division of Queensland to me*
- *I was part of it and didn't see any results*
- *Would want to know more about it*

PEAK BODY ROLES AND PRIORITIES

78 (100%) respondents ranked 12 peak body roles to identify priority roles for a Queensland youth sector peak body.

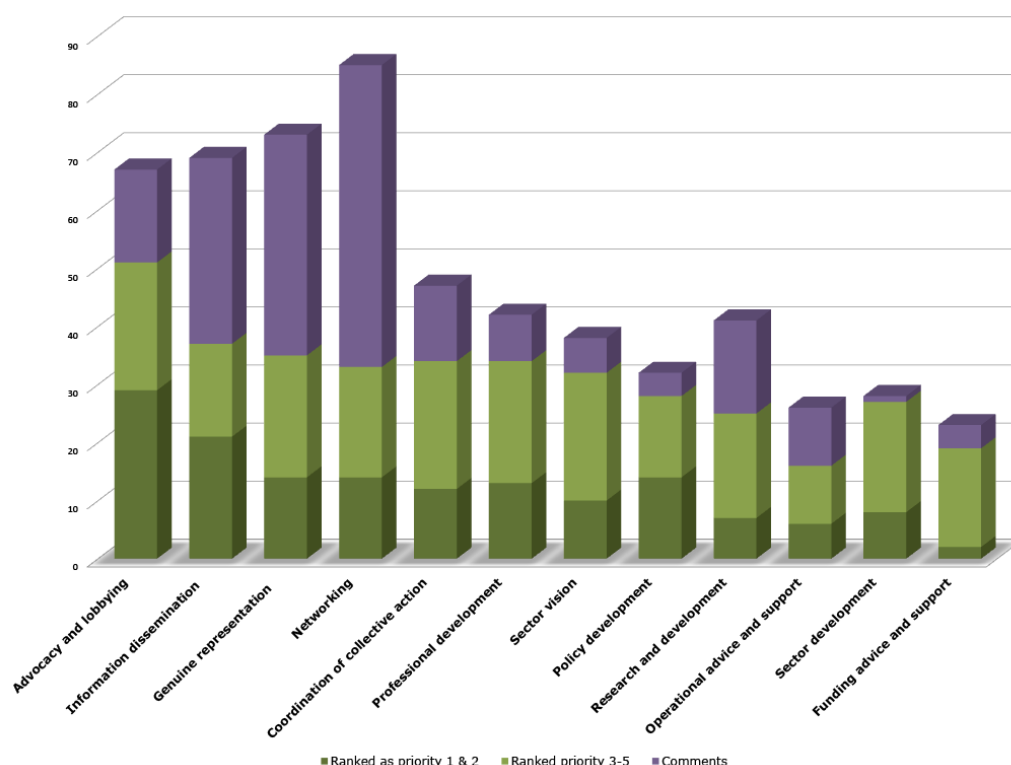


Figure 16: Peak Body Priority Roles

Specific feedback about peak body roles and priorities was provided through comments responding to questions exploring how YANQ can engage with inter-agencies and rural groups; involve members; and maintain currency.

Engaging with inter-agencies

40 respondents (51%) answered the question "How can that local inter-agency network support the CPLAN and YANQ to deliver outcomes for young people and the youth sector across Queensland?" 38 respondents (49%) replied to the question "How can the CPLAN support local youth inter-agencies?"

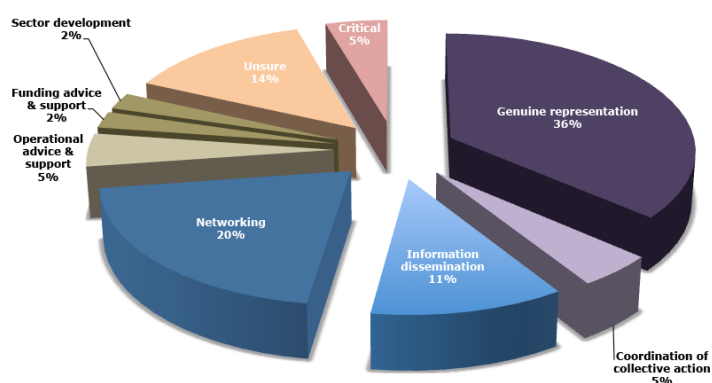


Figure 17: YANQ support for inter-agencies

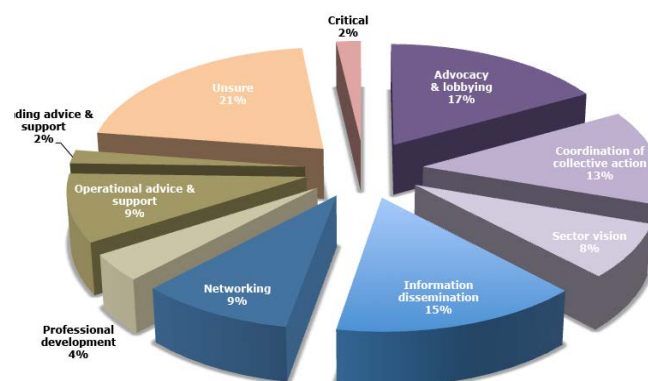


Figure 18: Interagency support for YANQ

Engaging with regional groups

34 respondents (44%) answered the question "How can YANQ build on the positive role played by regional groups across Queensland as the genuine voice for young people and represent these voices at policy and advocacy level?"

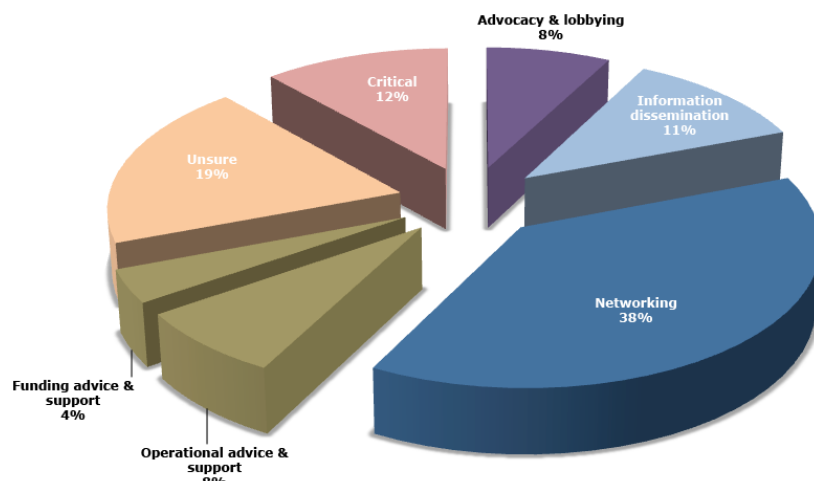


Figure 19: YANQ support for regional groups

Maintaining currency

43 respondents (55%) answered the question "Are there other ways for YANQ to keep up to date with issues impacting on young people and the youth sector throughout Queensland?"

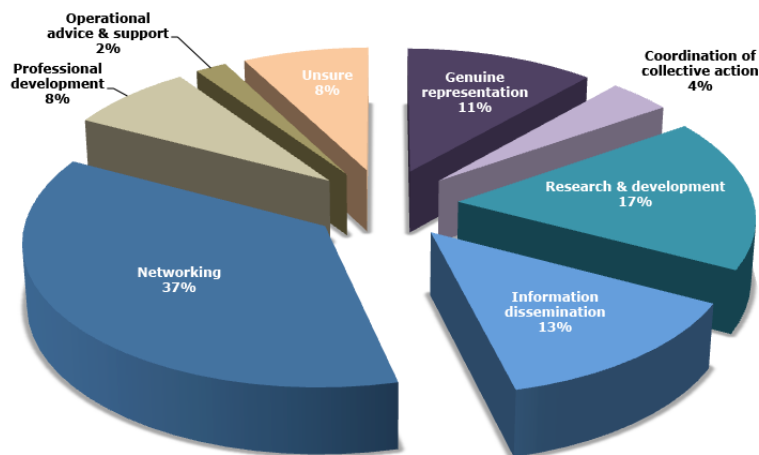


Figure 20: Strategies for maintaining currency

Involving members

49 respondents (63%) offered comments in answer to the question "How could YANQ better involve its members in its activities (e.g. conducting research, developing policy positions and undertaking lobbying and advocacy)?"

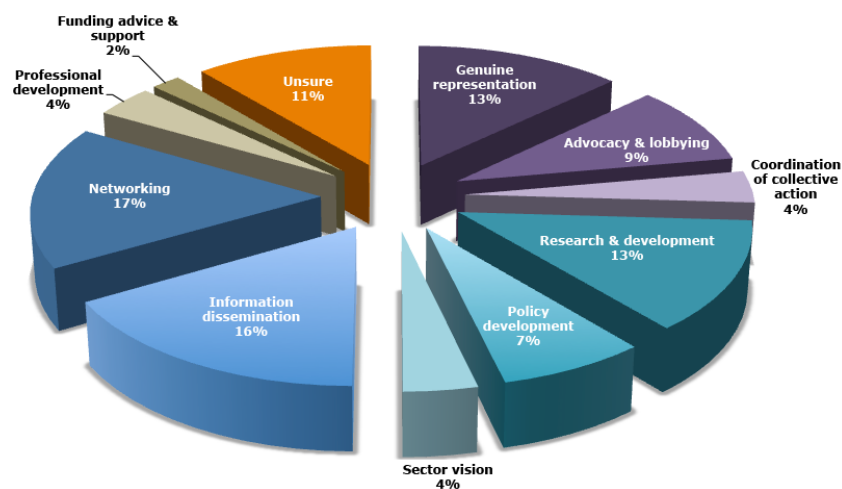


Figure 21: Strategies for involving members

Advocacy and lobbying

Advocacy and lobbying was identified as a key activity for YANQ to involve members, engage regional workers and support inter-agencies.

Comments reinforced that *YANQ's main role should be lobbying and advocacy on behalf of groups (NGO's) that are already doing ground breaking work in the field of youth work, especially those getting little or no support; and to escalate Action Plans implemented at various networks and Alliances. YANQ can play an important role in speaking on behalf of young people, youth workers and youth agencies which may be made vulnerable if they take a public stand on issues (e.g. risk of loss of benefits/ employment for individuals or funding for organisations); and should enable them to either speak for themselves or have their collective interests represented by YANQ (whichever they prefer). Advocacy and lobbying strategies could include promoting the voices of young people (or workers) through social media, mainstream media, on sector working groups or government advisory bodies. YANQ and CPLAN could support inter-agencies by providing assistance with achieving ... needs through acting as a broader platform to escalate identified issues, advocate and lobby government; in both a consultation role and as a conduit to a state youth focused network and peak.*

It was suggested that advocacy should focus on the *most vulnerable groups of young people i.e. LGBTIQAP+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD, low socio-economic. Specific advocacy issues suggested included gaps in service provision for youth; why levels of government should value inter-agencies; and garnering support for non-mainstream education basing their learning practices on a holistic and mental wellbeing perspective.*

Sector leadership and coordinating collective action

Comments describing strategies for coordinating collective action featured most strongly in response to the question asking how YANQ could support inter-agencies.

Responses suggested strategies for sector leadership and coordinating collective action that included *working towards a shared vision/mission; creating a network for those organisations to connect through and speak as a unified and diverse voice; and hosting networking events as opportunity to identify like-minded individuals / orgs and support further/future action from connections made. YANQ could facilitate a strategic direction for the sector and provide feedback [about] the future plans; and [holding] an action focus ... so that the agenda doesn't keep changing depending on who attends different meetings. Sector leadership also includes developing policy positions in response to needs identified at a local level and the experience of YANQ members. It was suggested that this could be achieved through identifying the focus areas, similar to the four sectors in the Youth Strategy; [creating] draft positions and disseminate for feedback; and ensuring all organisations within the sector are working to the same practice standards and framework.*

One respondent emphasised it's *important to encourage participant-driven approaches (e.g. action research), and provide staff support to manage/support processes on behalf of the group. Comments described facilitating a collective voice to policy makers as a support role that YANQ & CPLAN could offer inter-agencies. Specifically comments described engaging youth inter-agencies in planning, and identifying gaps; bringing common themes from different inter-agencies together; facilitating discussions that don't have people's agenda attached to it; and that gives the youth an actual voice and not what the adults think they want. One respondent suggested specialist groups are key to this - they can undertake a number of roles - gathering*

information and designing and/or contributing to research, policy development, lobbying and/or advocacy.

Respondents described the need for YANQ to develop *true partnerships with services or networks; and continue to build a 'parallel' structure of specialist working groups to address specific issues affecting young people; and establishing Youth Advisory groups that meet regularly.* It was also suggested that inter-agency networks could *contribute to the re-establishment of CPLAN; and/or YANQ could send out invitations to focus groups on specific subjects and people can come and learn or share their experiences.*

Genuine representation and engagement

Strategies for facilitating genuine representation featured strongly in comments describing how inter-agencies could support YANQ and CPLAN and featured as key themes for YANQ to maintain currency and involve members.

Respondents emphasised the need to ensure *the voice of peak/YANQ is one of sector; that genuinely [represents] the views of the sector; and is meaningful to all areas of Queensland not just the southeast corner.* It is *important to encourage participant-driven approaches (e.g. action research); that engage the sector in regular dialogue and directly involve the members who work in the relevant fields to understand the needs of each organisation and the communities they work in; working from a local level upwards.* Several comments described *specialist groups as the key as they can undertake a number of roles - gathering information and designing and/or contributing to research, policy development, lobbying and/or advocacy.* For example, *specialist youth housing services can consult directly with clients and share specialised practice wisdom, can highlight common challenges/issues.*

Comments advocated YANQ should ensure *young people and/or youth workers are at the forefront of all activities - either directly or indirectly; identifying it is important to recognise young people's 'lived experiences' and perspectives are needed to inform and shape practice across, not only policy and service delivery, but also planning, development and evaluation.* One respondent suggested *engaging additional younger, disadvantaged youth reps on the YANQ board/management committee.* Another suggested *implementing a youth consultation process – e.g. forum/conference for young people themselves to discuss and voice issues and/or actively supporting existing local youth engagement mechanisms (e.g. the Gold Coast LLA "Travelling Youth Panel" project).*

Responses repeatedly identified a need for *a representative of YANQ at meetings to hear and understand the issues and needs on the ground; and to be aware of rural needs.* Inter-agencies and specialist networks could *share intelligence about issues affecting local young people and the local sector; feeding back to CPLAN and YANQ information relevant to the experience young people they support share, issues in the community, gaps in government supports; reporting to YANQ on emerging issues and challenges; and any local decisions that have affected the organisations ability to delivery front line service; and problems occurring in [the] regions.*

Respondents emphasised the importance of proactively engaging regional workers to ensure YANQ genuinely represents *all areas of Queensland, not just the southeast corner.* Comments suggested this could be achieved through *having a presence in each region, either permanently, or at least initially by holding regular meetings in each region; attend, listen, critique the agendas; discuss issues; engaging providers*

to ask what they are doing; sharing outcomes, highlighting areas of need and success; showcasing and sharing info from regions. This would provide a foundation on which YANQ could build partnerships with regions to create a network for those organisations to connect through and speak as a unified and diverse voice.

Comments also encouraged YANQ to expand its engagement focus *to be more diverse and back in reality through seeking advice outside of the local interagency regular members; look outside ... narrow "pet issues"; and to build connection with the different fields of youth work. Specific examples included a focus on rural and remote communities; youth workers in tertiary health setting; Rotary youth programs; and headspace.*

Research and development

Research and development emerged as a key theme in responses to questions exploring how YANQ could involve members and remain up to date about issues impacting young people and the youth sector.

Comments suggested YANQ proactively canvass information from frontline workers to *understand the needs of each organisation and the communities they work in.* There was a particular emphasis suggesting state-wide surveys were a good strategy, *especially for those unable to attend, or get voice heard in networks; quarterly survey monkeys [could explore] what's coming up in the work.* It was also suggested that surveys should be *short and sent with the purpose why ... so workers understand and don't feel burdened.* Case studies [could also be collected to identify] *examples of practice.*

The information generated from such research could be augmented by systematic engagement including *CPLANs; regular dialogue to understand the issues across the state - either face-to-face or online; think-tank discussions; consults with youth services; asking direct client contact staff; regular engagement directly with young people; public youth forums; and youth advocacy opportunities.*

Networking and self-promotion

YANQ's capacity to genuinely represent the sector is dependent on proactively engaging with the sector and attracting a broad membership. Networking comments dominated suggestions about how YANQ could engage with regional groups and remain up to date about issues impacting young people, youth workers and agencies. Networking also featured as a key strategy for engaging with inter-agencies and involving members.

Awareness raising about YANQ, will bring renewed energy to be involved

A high numbers of respondents identified being previously unaware of YANQ as peak body or unaware that YANQ had remained active since it was defunded. Hence, it's unsurprising respondents expressed a need for YANQ to further build its connection with the sector, to ensure *it has the support of the sector.* Respondents urged YANQ to *start a recruitment drive; call outs to services for interest; recruit a membership that represents all people, regions [and] sectors. More members [means being] better informed.*

Respondents consistently encouraged YANQ to *do road trips; visit the rural areas; agencies; and schools; to have a contact point and presence in each region, either permanently, or at least initially by holding regular meetings in each region; YANQ*

representative attend local youth network meetings; having a physical presence at events; meet with people to discuss issues; connect and actively get involved; be present; attend meetings; go to youth week events across the state; organising speed networking events across QLD; and/or send out invitations to focus groups on specific subjects and people can come and learn or share their experiences on this.

Comments advocated YANQ actively engage with the sector through *attending inter-agencies and other networking opportunities to meet and share insights and issues. Inter-agencies could provide a space for YANQ to engage with local services on the ground; encourage active members of all networks across QLD to be part of CPLAN and regular meets with YANQ.* Comments also suggested YANQ pursue *membership on other networks/alliances; with specific mention of the potential for YANQ [to] link with Local Level Alliances (LLA) coordinated by Family and Child Connect throughout Queensland to develop partnerships and support the projects being implemented by LLAs. On the Gold Coast and in Logan particularly, LLAs are targeting issues relating to at-risk youth.* It was also suggested that YANQ develop *close relationships with headspace centres.*

Information dissemination and communication

Responses describing strategies for information dissemination and communication featured strongly as a key theme across all areas relating to peak body roles – but especially in relation to involving members and supporting inter-agencies.

Comments described a need for YANQ to *communicate better and more regularly. Quarterly insights could also help track patterns that happen across a 12-month cycle.* Specific examples of information to share across the sector included *info from regions to membership; outcomes, highlighting areas of need and success; current interstate and overseas trends and best practice; trends.*

Responses suggested a need to use different *communication methods to engage people in different areas and ... platforms to share their voices; including digital technology; emails; e-bulletin; websites; Youtube clips; social media; newsletters; meetings; regional contacts; council community info email lists, paper, advertisements.*

Inter-agencies could contribute to the re-establishment of CPLAN in the regions through being *a local place of dissemination/coordination; partnering with YANQ to promote YANQ and CPLAN at meetings and through and extensive mailing lists; and engaging active members of all networks across QLD to be part of CPLAN.* YANQ could support inter-agencies through providing *information from state and national perspective and to state and national [levels] from local /regional perspective; keeping people updated via coordinated service delivery; sharing information about best practice, knowledge, skills; new agencies and skills; and [acknowledging] work already being done.*

Resourcing sector leadership and engagement

Comments captured under operational advice and support reiterated the need for YANQ to be adequately funded and resourced to undertake these activities. Respondents identified

- That *Working groups looking [at] state-wide issues and needs should be properly resourced and supported to conduct research, develop policy positions, undertake lobbying and advocacy, etc.*

- That CPLAN worked very well in this role but if there was some additional funding for state-wide meetings to bring all groups together that would work really well, as it did in the past.
- That YANQ do an excellent job when given the resources and funding needed to do this work effectively
- Feeling Optimistic that ... additional resources, and awareness raising about YANQ, will bring renewed energy to be involved in all of the above
- Feeling confident that if YANQ were funded as needed they would have no issues delivering such activities
- Believing if YANQ were funded as needed they would have no issues delivering such activities

The need to access funding to appropriately resource the implementation of CPLAN was described considered important. Specifically, comments identified *it's important that local facilitators (2-3 days per month) are employed to coordinate at a local level, and that they are adequately supported at a state level; and hopefully, YANQ will have the capacity (funding) to reinstate payment of local youth workers/managers to take on this role on a part time basis (e.g. 1-2 days per month). Additionally, one or two annual get-togethers would also be important. These could include networking between CPLAN facilitators, identification of shared issues for young people/youth sector, and training/briefing on emerging changes within the sector (so they can pass these on at a local level).* One respondent suggested that *there could be a review of TOR and Agendas for the meetings to assist the meetings to evaluate if they want to incorporate CPLAN or YANQ directives/aims etc.*

Professional development

Comments reinforced professional development as a support YANQ could offer inter-agencies and as a strategy for YANQ to keep up to date, with a strong focus on *regular conferences; with guest speakers from NGO's; regular youth forums; and regular networking and information sharing events.* Specific mention was made that meetings should be *held in the larger population centres with local agencies invited,* highlighting that *it is not always possible to attend meetings in Brisbane!*

Engaging Through Social Media

72 (92%) respondents answered the question "Do you follow YANQ on social media?" More than half of respondents identified they didn't follow YANQ on social media. Of those who did follow YANQ on social media, the vast majority (86%; 36% of all responses) follow through Facebook. One respondent questioned if YANQ has considered *getting on Insta and Snap? A lot less young people are on Facebook these days and I don't think I know any that are on twitter.*

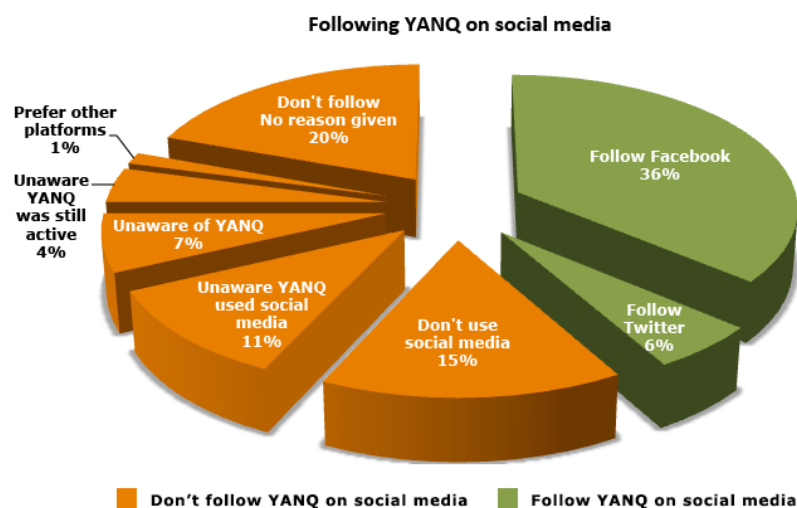


Figure 22: Engaging through social media

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the length of this survey, 40% of respondents added (often detailed) concluding comments. These largely reinforced the key issues raised throughout this report.

Overall, only 2 of the 78 respondents were fundamentally critical of YANQ throughout their survey responses, with one ultimately advising that *YANQ needs a refresh - new people need to be involved with new ideas*. The other critical respondent concluded that *YANQ does deserve not to be re-established*.

By contrast, 10 respondents strongly re-stated the need for a fully functional peak body, with a further 4 advocating for adequate funding to enable this - *YANQ is desperately needed within our youth sector*. Several talked about the adverse impact on the sector of YANQ's defunding, with one saying they

... have noticed the gap without [YANQ's] presence over the last few years. The voice of young people has been lost and the strength of the youth sector weakened. As a non-youth specific service, it has impacted on our services, engagement with and connection with the youth sector.

The overwhelming majority wanted YANQ to re-emerge from de-funding and re-engage with the sector to inform strong collective action – to *bring back YANQ conferences and create bigger and better campaigns*. The following reflects sentiments repeatedly raised by survey respondents

... we need someone who knows what we are going through and what the young people are dealing with; a peak youth sector organisation that advocates the needs of young people and the services supporting them, not a body that primarily supports compliance with funding bodies models of service delivery; a strong voice for young people and the youth sector.

12 respondents commented on the importance of YANQ maintaining a focus on disadvantaged and marginalised young people (particularly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; LGBTIQ young people; young sex workers; young

people engaged in transactional sex; young people with disability; homeless young people; and young people with mental health issues).

[It is] critical that YANQ continues to prioritise addressing the issues and needs of the most disadvantaged and marginalised young people, who have least voice in decisions affecting their lives; and have a clear mandate ... and the resources to be able to do this.

Respondents described *really wanting and needing a peak body that represents the sector well and [provides] something to connect to and feel proud of*. 5 respondents highlighted the importance of YANQ's role in sector development, with a further 3 advocating a strong ongoing regional focus to enable YANQ *to truly become an advocate ... Queensland-wide*.

The youth sector was seen as *broken*, with insufficient youth workers and systemic constraints limiting capacity to genuinely address young people's needs. A lack of focus on prevention and early intervention programs was identified as the underlying cause of many of the current sector problems. Competitive funding arrangements have undermined sector unity, and

... the system needs to change, workers need to be supported properly. Branding, changes etc. has now made this industry NOT about the youth... it's all about the organisation. It's disgraceful.

Overall, survey responses reflected a vote of confidence in YANQ

- *I value the work of YANQ and hope that funding is reinstated.*
- *I acknowledge and thank the incredibly hard work that the YANQ staff have done over the years. I think we may have taken you for granted until you were de-funded and then the times changed.*
- *Keep fighting. Thank you for not letting the knocks stop you completely!!*
- *PS: congratulations on getting some funding back, and having the opportunity to apply for recurrent funding.*