

Are We There Yet?

Findings from consultations around developing a working definition of youth work in Queensland

August 2012



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August 2012

Report on a research project conducted for the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland.

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1 Introduction

YANQs *Youth Sector in Queensland Report* (Feb 2010) identified that youth program contracts are increasingly going to large, nationally or externally based organisations with insufficient understanding of and commitment to local or “youth centred” service and community contexts. Youth Workers are increasingly expected to take on roles or responsibilities that were previously undertaken by government or statutory bodies (e.g. Child Protection, Juvenile Justice, etc). Increasingly workers in the broader Youth or Community Services Sectors either do not identify as being Youth Workers but as Case Workers, Child Protection Officers, Education Consultants, Community Development Officers, and so on. Where workers do identify as being “a Youth Worker”, they are being given insufficient recognition or being treated as “junior workers”¹.

The lack of a commonly held definition of Youth Work was identified as a major obstacle to ensuring that Youth Work remains a clearly identified and valued occupation within the broader sector and YANQ released two discussion papers to assist the sector to develop this. The *What is Youth Work* discussion paper considers the history, different approaches to and current status of Youth Work and proposes a working definition². The *Which Wei? Values in Youth Work: A Murri Perspective* discussion paper looks specifically at Murri Youth Work, including its history and current context and focuses on the values and attitudes required to work well with young Murris³.

The following Report documents and analyses consultations held in March 2012 in four Queensland regions to provide Youth Workers with the opportunity to discuss whether they saw “Youth Work” as being different from “working with young people” and if so, how they would define it. The consultations included gauging support for the working definition outlined in YANQ’s background paper.

The Report brings together the voices of the approximately 80 workers who participated in the eight sessions which included holding separate sessions for Murri Youth Workers. It outlines an alternative definition, compares this with the original and proposes a process to establish which aspects of each have the clearest support from Qld Youth Workers. It proposes the final definition be accepted on the basis of this further level of consultation but also ensuring the views already expressed are given due weight.

What’s in the Report

The analysis

Section Two contains an Executive Summary and recommendations for further gauging responses to the *What is Youth Work? Discussion Paper*, testing the results from these consultations more widely, and adopting a commonly held definition of Youth Work across Queensland.

Section Three outlines the project background and methodology in more detail, including describing how the consultation workshops were facilitated.

Section Four contains the two definitions referred to throughout this report as well as outlining how the proposed working definition was developed – i.e. how all the ideas and statements generated through the workshops were compiled together to form a working definition. The section contains:

- the working definition in the YANQ *What is Youth Work* paper – this definition is called the **CURRENT working definition**⁴
- the working definition developed overall from the consultations – this definition is called the **PROPOSED working definition**⁵
- the working definition the **Brisbane Murri group** developed.⁶ This has been highlighted because it was by far the clearest definition any of the 8 groups consulted with developed and it provided the foundations of an additional section on Murri Youth Work included as part of the **proposed definition**.
- a direct comparison of the **current** and **proposed** working definitions, presented in table format.⁷

Section Five provides an analysis of the key themes, commonalities and differing opinions or approaches expressed by participants during these consultations. It includes a comparison of Murri and mainstream approaches to Youth Work. It also considers the differences between aspects of each definition in more detail.

1 YANQ, (Feb 2010), *The Youth Sector in Queensland* – the report can be downloaded from YANQs website: <http://www.yanq.org.au/workforce>

2 YANQ (Oct 2010), *What is Youth Work? A Discussion Paper*, Suzi Quixley – the paper can be downloaded from YANQs website: <http://www.yanq.org.au/what-is-youth-work>

3 YANQ (May 2010), *Which Wei? Values in Youth Work: A Murri Perspective*. A Discussion Paper, Melissa Lucashenko (Yugambah) – the paper can be downloaded from YANQs website: <http://www.yanq.org.au/our-work/2611-qwhich-wei-values-in-youth-work-a-murri-perspectiveq>

4 See pages 14 - 15

5 See pages 17 - 19

6 See page 16

7 See pages 20-26

Section Six is a brief summary of other comments related to ongoing Youth and Murri Sector development made in all 8 groups. These relate to sectoral capacity to maintain youth centred - if not youth driven – practice within an increasingly narrow definition of “service delivery” held by funders and sometimes by senior management within the overall Youth and Community Services Sector.

The Appendices

The project appendices contain a detailed account - mainly in participants’ own words - of the actual discussions and other data collected during the consultations.

Appendix A contains all the different views on what makes Youth Work different or unique to other occupations or professions within “Community Services” and what ought to be included in the final definition. This has been grouped into common themes, with Murri and mainstream input written separately. Each theme also includes current threats or barriers workers saw to maintaining their approach to working well with young people.

Appendix B outlines all the values and attitudes workers saw as central to Youth Work, including comparing Murri and mainstream understandings and priorities.

Appendix C documents a short activity held during the workshops on how participants viewed young people.

Appendix D contains the survey tool it is recommended YANQ use to further gauge responses from the field and, along with these results, use to develop a commonly held and agreed upon definition of Youth Work within Queensland.

2 Executive Summary and Recommendations

We've had about 8 suicides in the last year. Mostly young people and all have been sudden. One minute they were laughing and the next minute they were gone... It's too common. We've become used to it – there's no more room for grief or we're numb already. It affects EVERYONE [in a small community] and we've needed lots of debriefing and support around it.

Issues like this hurt the entire community. So it's absolutely vital that there are people [Youth Workers] who can sit and be with people, do our best to understand and respect it's hard to know what to say but are still there doing what we can...

Murri Youth Worker

We're not in people's faces which can be another reason why it's difficult to justify what we do. We're the ones in the background simply getting on with it.

Mainstream Youth Worker

There are two types of Youth Workers: those on the ground and those who sit in the office. We need the office sitters to write things up well but they also need to remain true to what's happening on the ground.

Mainstream Youth Worker

Executive summary

This consultation has provided the first opportunity for groups of Queensland Youth Workers to discuss the **current working definition** of Youth Work provided in the YANQ What is Youth Work Discussion Paper, including the degree to which they support formally adopting it across Queensland⁸. Consultations were held in four different regions with approximately half the participants identifying as Murri or other First Nation peoples working with young Murris. The consultations also include a majority of regional and rural perspectives⁹.

Separate sessions were deliberately held for Murri and Mainstream workers. This provided opportunities for Murri Youth Workers to focus solely on working with young Murris and has enabled YANQ to ensure First Nation perspectives and priorities are given due recognition within the overall definition of Youth Work within Queensland.

Discussions held during the workshop demonstrated:

- that participants consider Youth Work to be clearly different to working with young people (i.e. a worker such as a Teacher, Social Worker or Corrections Worker who happens to work with young people) and unique within the broader Youth and Community Services Sector.
- clear support for a “youth centred” approach to Youth Work, with strength based, flexible, holistic, informal & practical approaches with the Youth Worker acting as advocate for the young person clearly being the majority view.
- less clarity about whether Youth Work should not only be “youth centred” but “youth driven”
- that participants consider Youth Work to be values driven, along with a high degree of consistency between the values that individual participants saw as being critical to Youth Work.
- a relatively high degree of overall consistency between the key values advocated by both Murri and mainstream groups including respect, trust, honesty, understanding, and loving or caring.
- Clear and significant differences in the way these values and attitudes were prioritised - and possibly interpreted - within Murri and mainstream groups.
- other key differences between Murri and mainstream values and approaches including
 - a far greater Murri priority on culture, role modelling, and teaching & learning through example, and emphasising more collectively based values.
 - A far greater Mainstream priority on belief in personal change, empowerment, social justice, advocacy and human & youth rights, and reflecting more individualistic values.

There is sufficient commonality between the current and proposed definitions for them to be mapped against one another¹⁰. Doing so highlights the following significant differences.

8 YANQ, What is Youth Work, Discussion paper, p 22

9 Some participants did not register (arrived late) or did not complete the impact evaluation at the conclusion of the workshop (left early). There were an estimated 83 participants overall: 41 at Murri sessions & 42 at other; 34 at metropolitan workshops (including a high proportion of non-Indigenous workers who left the session early) and 49 at the regional gatherings.

10 The table in Section 4 on page 20 maps both the current and the proposed definitions directly against each other.

The **proposed working definition**¹¹:

- includes a separate section focusing on working with young Murris as well as embedding culturally inclusive practice throughout the whole definition
- gives high priority and detail about the role of culture in helping shape identity
- provides a lot of detail about and may therefore give higher priority to practical support and meeting needs than it does addressing rights
- states clearly that Youth Work is driven by values which are consistent with rights based, youth centred, culturally inclusive practice
- is written as far as possible in the language used by participants and has a “warmer” tone reflective of the practical, informal, “no nonsense” approach advocated by many at the consultations.

The **current working definition** contains the following key elements which are not included in the proposed one:

- A clearer focus on youth and human rights, with this positioned as a founding principle, with more detail provided about advocacy and addressing breaches of human rights. Essentially this definition advocates not only a youth centred approach but a youth driven one and promotes young people’s position as agents of change as well as willing and active recipients of – or, more accurately, participants in - services or other support.
- An upfront acknowledgement that Youth Workers work with young people on a voluntary basis – i.e. young people choose to use youth services: they are not mandated or forced to do so, even in subtle ways.
- An upfront acknowledgement that Youth Workers work outside of government or statutory services – i.e. come from the NGO sector
- Not only supporting the development of young people’s identity as an individual and within their families and communities but advocating they take responsibility within society as active citizens, locally and globally.

Neither definition uses aged based criteria to define a young person. For instance, the United Nations defines a young person as anyone aged between 12 – 25. The **current definition** states that they have commenced puberty. This was discussed, often at length, by all groups, with the consensus being that some “young people,” especially within First Nation or specific CALD groups, are clearly pre-pubescent and that there is a trend in mainstream or dominant culture for young people to be doing more “adult” things earlier in life as well as physically developing at an earlier age than previous generations did. The majority view was that it made best sense to define “youth” from young people’s perspective, which is also consistent with adopting either a youth centred or a youth driven approach. There was a smaller but vocal number of individuals in several groups who advocated age based criteria in order to be “taken seriously” by the broader sector including funders and sponsors, and/or to remain consistent with the accepted UN definition of a young person.

Both definitions acknowledge the importance of recognising and seeking to work within CALD perspectives but neither provide the amount of detail about this as the additional section on Murri Youth Work contained in the **proposed definition** does about First Nation groups. This is not surprising given there were relatively few participants at the consultations who worked with CALD young people. The **proposed definition** emphasises and explains the role and significance of culture within Youth Work - in its broadest sense as well as racially based understandings – more than the original.

The differences between both definitions are significant enough to warrant additional consultation with a broader group of Youth Workers than the 80+ participants in the consultations. However, the final analysis of this, including reaching a firm definition, should incorporate – rather than replace – the results of this round of consultations.

Evaluations indicated that most participants were pleased they came along to the workshops, viewing the consultation as highly important for ongoing sector development and valuing the discussions that ensued. A number also said, whether during the sessions or more informal conversations during breaks, that the consultation should be with Youth Workers themselves and the definition decided upon by them and not managers (unless they had prior experience in direct service delivery), workers with young people or funding bodies. Many also said that the consultations should have been longer, which the facilitators both firmly agree with, especially for the Murri sessions.

11 See page 17 for the definition developed from these consultations. This is referred to throughout the report as the proposed working definition.

Recommendations

Reaching a commonly held and understood definition of Youth Work

1. That YANQ use its C-Plan, Murri Reference Group and other networks, and develops an on-line instrument such as Survey Monkey to find out which statements within both the current and proposed working definitions of Youth Work are supported more widely by Youth Workers. Specifically, the survey should canvass the following:
 - support for the current, proposed - or an alternative - definition of a “Youth Worker”
 - support for the current or proposed - or an alternative - definition of a “young person”
 - support for the current, proposed - or an alternative - statement of the purpose of Youth Work
 - support from Murri Youth Workers in adopting the proposed statements defining Murri Youth Work along with in principle support from the remainder of the sector about having an additional section relating to Murri Youth Work
 - Whether to adopt culture – in its broadest sense - as a key principle as outlined in the proposed draft
 - Whether Youth Work is youth centred, youth driven or includes both
 - Whether there is sufficient focus on young CALD people and if not what needs to be added
 - whether to state that Youth Work is values driven and, if so, whether to list the sector’s core values as part of the definition and which to include.
 - Whether to state more strongly that Youth Workers work with young people on a voluntary basis (even though the young people may be in involuntary relationships with other workers – e.g. Child Protection, Juvenile Justice) and outside of government or statutory services as expressed in the current working definition.
 - Whether to include government workers and if so, how to remain consistency with the rest of the definition.
 - Whether the definition should include the higher emphasis on youth and human rights including addressing breaches of these and looking at collective, not just individual, rights and advocacy as expressed in the current working definition
 - Whether to include the greater detail and focus on practical, youth centred support as expressed in the proposed working definition
 - Whether to include the additional statements around fostering young people’s awareness of themselves as responsible members of a broader community and as global citizens, as expressed in the current working definition.
2. That this period of consultation is well promoted within YANQs membership & networks, targets workers with direct Youth Work experience, and is time limited.
3. That upon the conclusion of the above, YANQ analyse the results and arrive at a definition of Youth Work that reflects a consistent set of values or approaches based upon the majority view arising from all stages of the consultation (i.e. these results as well as subsequent ones).
4. That YANQ members agree to adopt the definition developed from the above process and review it on a regular basis.
5. That the final definition is worded in clear English and contains a glossary of all key terms or technical language (jargon) used in it.

3 Project background and methodology

This section of the report outlines the overall background to the YANQ What is Youth Work Project and describes how the consultation sessions were facilitated.

Introduction

Consultations were held in four regions across Queensland – Brisbane metropolitan, Rockhampton, Townsville and Mt Isa. Each session was for half a day, with the morning group for Murri workers and the afternoon for mainstream. Both the sessions were facilitated by

- Liz Archer, a non-Indigenous woman with over 25 years experience in the youth sector including SA, Qld and the NT. She's been based in Alice Springs for the past 12 and has mainly worked with remote Aboriginal communities and their organisations.
- Steve Fisher, a Waka Waka man from Cherbourg and Murri Project Worker with YANQ who has 13 years experience working with young Murris and their families.

All the sessions followed the same broad format although sometimes in slightly different order. All groups were asked the same main questions. The amount of background information provided by the facilitators depended on how familiar people were with the Project background and discussion papers, on the overall experiences and make up of each of the 8 groups and on the amount of detail required to start up discussions.

Liz was contracted to write up the sessions with the ultimate aim of reaching a definition of Youth Work that was supported through the consultation process. Many groups made a point of asking Liz to write up this report and resulting definition in clear English, with a minimum of jargon, staying true to the "spirit" of Youth Work.

Why hold separate Murri and Mainstream sessions?

YANQ is genuinely committed to including Murri Youth Work as a vital part of the overall youth sector in Queensland.

As part of this, Murri Youth Workers are entitled to their own dedicated time and space to be able to focus on what it really means to work with young Murris and to determine a Murri definition of this. There was a richness of discussion that happened during the workshop consultations that would not have occurred in the same way had YANQ combined the sessions. Murri (and Islander and Koori and other First Nation) Workers have provided invaluable insights that can now be shared more widely. Hopefully this will reduce the additional pressures Murris talked about during the consultations, including continually having to explain or justify their approach to working with young Murris and their families to outsiders.

Two non-Indigenous participants who work almost exclusively with young Murris came to two of the Murri workshops. One had to leave early. Several Murri participants chose to come along to the mainstream session but not the Murri one. In three of the four regions, participants from the Murri sessions also came along to the mainstream sessions as well. All mainstream sessions ended up including one or two Murri (or Islander) workers.

The few criticisms or questions about why separate sessions were held came from non-Indigenous participants.

Liz offered to leave the room at any point in the Murri sessions, respecting that people might want some time to discuss internal concerns without outsiders being present (Steve reckoned people shouldn't let Liz off so lightly!).

Consultation process

Welcome, acknowledgements and introductions

Each session started with:

- Acknowledgement of Country, Traditional Owners & Ancestors
- Housekeeping & introductions to Steve and Liz
- PARTICIPANT ROUND – everyone gave
 - Their name,
 - where from,
 - the organisation they worked with,
 - what their job was, and
 - why they'd come along or what they expected from the session

Background and purpose

The facilitators asked who was familiar with the background papers – most people hadn't read them or had only

read parts of them.

Liz spoke briefly about YANQs Youth Sector Development Project and how it had mapped out who the Queensland youth sector is and where it sits, including key impacts on the NGO sector. One of the biggest conclusions was the need to develop and agree upon a state-wide definition of "Youth Work", including work with young Murris, to ensure that jobs, pay levels, recognition and training courses remained reflective of and relevant to Youth Work. YANQ is also keen for Queensland Youth Workers to be well positioned to join in the broader national debates about defining Australian Youth Work and the professionalisation of the sector.

Concepts of "youth" and the history of Youth Work

Liz gave the following information contained in both the What is Youth Work and the Which Wei Discussion Papers in order to provide some background and context to discussions. A few more details have been included in this report than were often given in each group. This is because a number of people had no idea about our sector's history (and were really interested in it) and it's "foundational" knowledge to deciding what to include when defining Youth Work in Queensland, if not nationally. What follows is a very broad summary and it was – and still is - recommended to read both the What is Youth Work and Which Wei discussion papers in their entirety for more complete explanations of the following.

- Puberty is a fact but what you make of it is largely opinion, beliefs and values.
- "Youth" is a relatively new concept in Western societies. Until industrialisation, children were viewed as being "little people".
- This was always the case in Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures.
- For Murri and Islander peoples all this was deeply and suddenly fractured through colonisation. Like mainstream culture, there was no notion of "youth" until recently.
- There is still a strong element of children looking after even younger children and of very extended family groups within Murri and First Nation cultures. In "traditional" cultures everyone had – and still have - specific roles and obligations to one another within the overall clan or community as well as within each family group. The first stage of becoming a man or woman was through engaging in specific law and rituals ("Initiation" "Business"). This usually happened around puberty AND was always decided according to the individual's readiness as determined by the relevant senior law holders. Whilst this remains true for some language groups in Qld, much has been lost by far too many across the state overall.
- The first wave of youth and children's work in Australia happened with Industrialisation and from concern about poor kids being exploited or having too much spare time - they were banned from working in paid jobs until they were old enough & their families could not afford to send them to school. Lots of them ended up on the streets.
- The word "youth" did not appear until 1940s. The first community services NGOs were established around then too.
- "Youth culture" emerged within the 40s & 50s upward economy where under twenty year olds got jobs and started to have an independent income. But it was only for the more affluent or well to do, not for poor kids or Murris.
- The first NGO services were established in the 1940s including recreation, welfare, etc, along with uniform groups like Scouts, Church groups, etc.
- Legislation governing what young people could and could not do increased through to the 1960s.
- The "youth movement" of the 1960s had a powerful impact on civil, women's and other rights. Youth services were established & the concept of "youth" was cemented in mainstream culture.
- There was also increased political action about First Nation issues in Australia including basic rights such as citizenship, freedom of cultural expression and Land Rights (remember, as a nation, we didn't accept our First Nation peoples as citizens until the 1967 referendum!)
- Not until the 1970s that the first secular (non government, non religious) youth services started to be funded. This was the start of paid non-government youth sector as we know it.
- For Aboriginal & Islander communities and peoples, from the 1970s through to the mid-90s there was also a very brief shift to "self determination" and the establishment of many of the Aboriginal & Islander community controlled organisations as part of the growing NGO sector.
- The need for Murri Youth Work was a direct result of colonisation and of the government policies that promoted the systematic dismantling of First Nation culture, languages and family & kinship structures.
- The economic downturn of the 80s & 90s meant less chance for young people to be independent and saw a further extension of the idea of "youth" (from 21 to 26 for those on Centrelink benefits). There were also more services and programs established within the youth sector.
- Since this time, young people have become a significantly marginalised social group, with many young Murris being even further marginalised.

The current situation

In the 70s and 80s youth services focussed on youth concerns – rather than on government priorities - and there was a lot more room for negotiation with government or funding bodies about particular programs or services to be funded. There was more scope to fit programs to suit the local contexts and needs and there was more of a focus on youth rights. There were more small, independent organisations, including Murri community controlled ones, than there are today.

As identified in the YANQ Workforce Development Report, over the past 20 years program contracts are increasingly going to larger, often national or church based groups who may or may not have genuine local connections. Youth Workers are increasingly expected to take on roles or responsibilities that were previously undertaken by government or statutory bodies (e.g. Child Protection, Juvenile Justice, etc). Increasingly workers in the sector either do not identify as being Youth Workers (but as Case Workers, Child Protection Officers, Education Consultants, Community Development Officers, etc.). Where workers do identify as Youth Workers they are being afforded insufficient recognition or being treated as “junior workers” within the overall sector.

With all of this in mind, Liz and Steve invited everyone to think about

- What makes Youth Work different to working with young people or unique from other occupational groups, and about
- Developing a clear definition that acknowledges what Youth Workers do and which places the sector in the strongest possible position to determine the training, recognition and other requirements for a robust and revitalised youth sector, and
- To try to think beyond individual jobs or organisations and consider what Youth Work overall should or could look like.

How we view young people

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they thought the role or purpose of a Youth Worker fitted into the following categories:

CITIZENS OF TOMORROW: these people believe that the next generation need to be taught how to be good adults so they can run Australia well in the future. People who see young people this way are likely to focus on encouraging young people to participate in education/training and become involved in responsible youth activities.

SOCIAL PROBLEM: these people are particularly concerned about problem youth and often see groups such as Indigenous young people, street kids or unemployed young people as important to work with. They want to teach these young people to be good adults.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT: these people believe that young people have unique expertise that they can contribute to society and argue that young people can have valuable ideas about how society should be. They think it's a good idea for young people to be outspoken¹²

Each participant was given 6 sticky dots and was able to “spend” these in any way they wanted to. For instance, someone believing the sole purpose of Youth Work was to ensure young people’s voices were heard could put all their dots on “social movement”; someone else who thought the key role was to equip young people as tomorrow’s leaders but also thought they should have some say in this, too might put most on “leaders for tomorrow” but one or two on “social movement” and so on.

This information provided a very broad “snapshot” of where participants thought Youth Work ought to focus and was an engaging training tool for encouraging participants to think about how they saw young people and therefore what the role of a Youth Worker needed to include.

What (if anything) makes Youth Work unique or different

All groups were asked what makes Youth Work unique or different to other occupational groups (e.g. social worker, teacher, coach). The metropolitan sessions worked in smaller groups and fed their ideas back into the whole group. All the regional groups chose to work in one big group, with Liz scribing (writing up) the conversations.

Everything Liz wrote down during each session has been recorded in the transcript (Session notes) for that session. Key themes have been combined and form the bulk of Appendix A.

Values mapping for the sector

Put simply, values are ideas about what is “good” or “bad”, right or wrong, just or unjust that we have consciously thought through.

¹² Sherington & Irving cited in What is Youth Work? YANQ, 2010, p 8

Everyone agreed that one of the things that makes Youth Work unique is that Youth Workers deliberately and intentionally have a values-based approach to working with young people.

Given this, participants were asked to individually identify 3 to 5 key values that they considered essential to shaping Youth Work. The Murri group focused on working with young Murrils. Each value was written on a separate piece of paper and these were then mapped collectively on the floor, grouping the same or similar values together. Liz did a little more grouping when writing up each session. These are recorded in full in Appendix B.

Defining Youth Work

On the basis of the discussions and mapping so far, groups were invited to “have a go” at defining Youth Work. This was achieved by reading and reflecting on the **current definition** provided in the What is Youth Work? discussion paper and / or simply deciding what **MUST** be included and what the definition could look like.

Whilst a lot of participants found the working definition lacked clarity or was “too wordy” they found it a challenge to come up with anything more clear or concrete within the allotted time for the workshop consultation. The Brisbane Murri group developed the most solid definition, with the Mt Isa mainstream group expressing concrete ideas about the role, purpose and “way” of Youth Work. Most groups reflected upon particular aspects of the current definition or re-stated elements of the discussion about what made Youth Work different to working with young people.

A number of participants commented that the session was too short. Whilst extra time would certainly have helped, especially since many participants were not familiar with the background materials, it was a lot of detailed thinking to digest in one day. Ideally consultations like these would be best conducted over several sessions, with participants having time to reflect in between each workshop.

How the proposed definition was developed

Groups preferred to either give their own ideas about what ought to be included in a definition of Youth Work or to refer back to the working draft presented in the YANQ Discussion Paper and discuss concerns they had about it.

Therefore, after completing all the consultation workshops, the Consultant used the following process develop the **proposed working definition of Youth Work**:

- Ideas about what makes Youth Work unique or different and what should be included in the definition were grouped into common themes and analysed. Input from Murri and mainstream groups was recorded separately to ensure that different priorities and perceptions continue to be seen clearly in the overall outcomes from the consultations. These ideas are recorded, in full, in Appendix A.
- Maps of the values both groups (Murri and mainstream) considered critical to Youth Work were compiled and analysed. See Appendix B.
- Overall perceptions of how workers viewed young people were also recorded and considered. See Appendix C.
- The Brisbane Murri group developed a very clear definition of Youth Work that contained most of the ideas promoted by other groups. This was used to create the overall framework for the **proposed definition**. Additional ideas from other groups were added to it.

4 The Draft Definitions

Introduction

This section of the report contains:

- The **Working Definition** outlined in the What is Youth Work paper – i.e. **the current definition** (see page 14).
- the **Working Definition the Brisbane Murri group developed** (see page 16)
- the **Working Definition developed overall from the consultations** - i.e. **the proposed definition** (see page 17)
- a direct comparison of the **proposed working definition** with the **current one** (see the table from page 20)

Current Working Definition

This definition is from YANQ's What is Youth Work Discussion Paper, (2010, p 23).

A Youth Worker = someone working in a non-government organisation whose primary goal is to protect and promote the individual and collective human rights of young people.

A young person = someone who has commenced puberty, but has not yet been accorded the full rights of adulthood.

The primary purpose of Youth Work is to resource and support young people who want help to access, navigate and optimise their life choices. Youth Workers do this through:

- Providing flexible support for young people outside formal, statutory systems.
- Working alongside young people in a friendly, informal manner
- Building young people's belief in the possibility for change and their capacity to contribute to positive social and individual change
- Helping young people to adjust to change and harness opportunities
- Recognising the worth of all young people, and building on their assets and strengths.
- Recognising the diversity amongst young people, and listening to and valuing individual young people's needs, ideas, preferences and choices
- Enabling young people to become more aware of themselves and their places in the wider community
- Recognising the integral relationship between young people and their families, community and society
- Recognising that young people cannot be seen in isolation from their social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts
- Particularly recognising the cultural context of marginalised young people and taking responsibility for learning to work in a culturally appropriate way
- Advocating young people's right to actively participate in community life and access their fair share of community resources

- Being conscious of Youth Workers' structural power, and not taking power over young people.
- Helping young people to understand their rights, and resourcing young people to address breaches of their human rights
- Prioritising empowerment of marginalised groups of young people whose human rights are being breached, and seeking to tip the balance of power in young people's favour
- Actively confronting discrimination against young people and breaches of their human rights
- Encouraging and supporting young people to be agents of change – both individually and collectively; at both a personal and social level
- Promoting the actual and potential contributions of young people to the wider community
- Encouraging and supporting young people to take responsibility as active members of their family, community and society.
- Encouraging and supporting young people to take responsibility as active global, national and local citizens.

Definition developed by the Brisbane metropolitan Murri group

Murri Youth Work:

1. Operates from an overarching cultural framework that acknowledges culture as the foundation of everything, which supports following Murri traditions, laws and protocols and which respects the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia.
2. Supports the development of young people's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of a broader clan or community.
3. Includes government workers
4. Works with younger ones, with pre-pubescent children – from when they start getting treated differently or see themselves differently to children. Respects that this often occurs earlier with Murris than in mainstream Australian culture/s.
5. Is holistic
6. Is family based
7. Youth Workers are the roots for young Murris' trees – our role is to provide solid or true foundations
8. Murri Youth Workers must know where young people come from culturally and socially and operate from this basis
9. Be solid and proud within our own cultural identity, no matter what it is. Challenge assumptions made about Murris and Murri youth.
10. Cultural mentoring is an essential part of Murri Youth Work
11. Murri Youth Work is intentionally and deliberately values driven – (see values map)
12. Murri Youth Work is focused on empowerment of both individual Murri young people and of Murris as a group
13. We must be responsible for what we do.
14. If we are outsiders, we need to do our own learning in new situations, especially if we are not just not from that particular cultural group (i.e. First Nation but not Murri) but outside the whole culture as well (i.e. non-indigenous workers with young Murris)

Proposed working definition

This is the definition compiled as a result of consulting about the current working definition

A Youth Worker is someone who works with young people within the context of their culture, identity and place to ensure their rights are protected and promoted and their needs are genuinely met.

A young person is someone who sees themselves differently to a child but who is not yet an adult or being given their due rights as an adult.

The main purpose of Youth Work is to resource and support young people who want help to access, navigate and make the best of their life choices.

Youth Workers do this by:

Adopting an overall framework which acknowledges and supports the critical role culture plays in shaping young people's personal identity and place within broader family and social groups¹³. This requires:

- Recognising that young people identify with a range of different cultures and supporting them in developing their own cultural identity.
- Working within individual young people's cultural understandings, including supporting the attached definition of Murri Youth Work when working with or on behalf of Murri young people or communities.
- Supporting the development of young people's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of broader communities including.
 - Advocating for young people within their family and community
 - Helping parents, adults and elders to understand young people
 - Supporting positive connections between young people, their families and the broader community

Focusing on empowerment of young people both individually and as a group.

- Ensuring young people's voices are heard within their families and the broader community
- Respecting and promoting young people's rights
- Standing up for and with young people.
- Being solid and proud defenders of "youth culture". Challenging negative assumptions made about young people in our communities.
- Lobbying the government to improve the situation for young people

Providing services that meet young people's real needs in a practical way.

- Recognising that the best services and supports are based on local knowledge and local ownership and by making services and programs as responsive as possible to local contexts and perspectives
- Enabling young people to access all the supports and funding they can and advocating for better guidelines for its distribution
- Providing proactive and holistic support to young people
- Providing young people with linkages to other services and supporting them in accessing these
- Using an integrated and broad range of models, tools and approaches consistent with providing youth centred, culturally appropriate services and supports. This includes community development and peer based projects as well as personal support.
- Being prepared to offer diverse, flexible services and work in a multi-skilled way
- Providing practical, useful support based on young people's real situations including being able to provide consistent, longer term services for young people who may require more intensive support

Helping young people who need it to navigate the best possible pathway in life.

- Being role models ourselves: setting an example in our own community
- Showing young people what is possible and helping them achieve their own goals
- Helping young people make their own choices and learn from their own experiences
- Providing solid or true foundations – being the roots for young people's trees
- Using a strengths based, solution focussed approach to our work with young people

¹³ Within the context of this definition, the term culture is used in its broadest meaning, not just racially based cultures. There are many other "cultural groups" within societies – for instance: youth, Christian Church, LGBT, rural to name a few. Many of these cultures will also have sub-cultures within them, some of which may be significantly different – for instance Pentecostal church culture compared with a Uniting or Anglican church culture; rural farm culture compared with rural town culture compared with remote Aboriginal cultures.

Providing youth centred services and supports in a friendly and informal way

- being there for young people
- working at the young person's pace
- maintaining young people's confidentiality
- remaining open-minded about people's backgrounds and circumstances and treating each situation individually
- being prepared to enter into a more personal relationship with young people whilst still being able to maintain ethical – or "professional" - boundaries
- Genuinely caring about young people

Recognising that Youth Work is intentionally and deliberately values driven.

- Values upheld are those consistent with rights based, young person driven culturally relevant youth work (e.g. respect, trust, honesty, empowerment...)

Taking responsibility for and pride in what we do as Youth Workers.

- Being responsible for what we do, being able to justify it and remaining careful of how we use our power and influence with young people and their families.
- Taking responsibility for our own learning about youth, cultural or community groups if we are "outsiders" (e.g. Australian working with refugees, non-Indigenous person working with young Murris, non drug user working with users).
- Being clear about our ethical responsibilities to ourselves, young people, families, communities, our organisation and within the broader sector.
- Being proud of our identity as a Youth Worker, supporting one another, seeking to ensure new colleagues understand what Youth Work means and educating other workers or services about young people and about our role

Murri Youth Work

Includes and supports the above statements and principles.

Additionally, Murri Youth Work acknowledges Murri cultures as the foundation of everything important for Murri peoples.

This includes:

Following Murri traditions, laws and protocols and respecting the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia

- understanding that whilst there is a lot of diversity between different First Nation groups there are many, many similarities and connections.
- understanding what it is like to be a young Murri in the community - understanding young Murris' lifestyles, goals and problems and all the family and other connections within their lives.

Supporting the development of young Murri's or Islander's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of a broader clan or community.

- always viewing young Murris within their family and community context
- supporting and learning from the aunties and nannas who are growing up lots of family
- seeking to involve elders and extended family where possible and linking young people in with supportive family members
- advocating for young Murris within their families and communities
- Playing a broker or bridging role between young people and their families/communities and encouraging both to understand the other's perspectives
- recognising that Murri Youth Work is often about a search for identity and helping heal transgenerational traumas resulting from parents and grandparents being grown up within white institutions and not being allowed to speak their language or practice their culture: as well as being culturally traumatised these parents have little knowledge of how to grow up their own children. Murri Youth Work therefore includes strengthening and healing family connections where possible. Murri Youth Workers play a critical role in modelling appropriate behaviour within communities and often take on a closer relationship with young Murris, including being seen as "Aunty" or "Uncle." This must be understood and accepted by the broader Youth Sector.

Being solid and proud defenders of “Murri culture”. Challenging assumptions made about Murrís and Murri youth in our communities.

- translating “young people’s rights” into a language that both young Murrís and elders can understand
- persisting in supporting pride in being Murri. Holding out against the constant barrage of “whiteness” at school and in other places and encouraging young Murri pride in their “blackness” and cultural identity.
- Doing what’s right for young Murrís and not just following policies and procedures if they are harmful or wrong.

Recognising that cultural mentoring is an essential part of Murri Youth Work

For Murrís this means:

- supporting one another as Murri Youth Workers no matter where we come from
- finding our own cultural mentors & seeking their guidance
- finding out whatever we can about our family history and cultural backgrounds, especially if these have been taken from us
- being prepared to act as strong role models for young Murrís and within our Murri families and communities.
- doing what we can to educate others about Murrís and working with young Murrís

For others working with young Murrís it means:

- seeking – and accepting - cultural and other guidance from local Murrís
- respecting cultural contexts or protocols without the need to question them
- accepting that we will rarely have the relationship that Murri Youth Workers have with young Murrís, doing whatever we can to acknowledge and support their cultural development as Murrís, and finding the best ways to offer what we can as non-Indigenous workers.

Comparison of current and proposed working definitions

The following table compares the key elements of the working draft developed from this consultation with that proposed in YANQs [What is Youth Work](#) discussion paper.

PROPOSED DEFINITION DRAFT FROM THIS CONSULTATION	CURRENT DEFINITION DRAFT FROM YANQ DISCUSSION PAPER
A Youth Worker is...	
...someone who works with young people within the context of their culture, identity and place to ensure their rights are protected and promoted and their needs are genuinely met.	... someone working in a non-government organisation whose primary goal is to protect and promote the individual and collective human rights of young people.
A young person is...	
...someone who sees themselves differently to an older child but who is not yet an adult or being given their due rights as an adult.	... someone who has commenced puberty but has not yet been afforded the full rights of adulthood.
The primary purpose of Youth Work is...	
...to resource and support young people who want help to access, navigate and make the best of their life choices.	... to resource and support young people who want help to access, navigate and optimise their life choices.
Youth Workers do this by...	
Adopting an overall framework which acknowledges and supports the critical role culture plays in shaping young people's personal identity and place within broader family and social groups. This requires	Recognising the integral relationship between young people and their family, community and society
Recognising that young people identify with a range of different cultures and supporting them in developing their own cultural identity	Recognising that young people cannot be seen in isolation from their social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts
Working within individual young people's cultural understandings, including supporting the attached definition of Murri Youth Work.	Recognising the diversity amongst young people, and listening to and valuing individual young people's needs, ideas, preferences and choices

<p>Supporting the development of young people's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of a community, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocating for young people within their family and community • helping parents, adults and elders to understand young people • supporting positive connections between young people, their families and the broader community 	<p>Enabling young people to become more aware of themselves and their places in the wider community</p>
	<p>Encouraging and supporting young people to take responsibility as active global, national and local citizens</p>
<p>Focusing on empowerment of young people both individually and as a group. Including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring young people's voices are heard within their families and the broader community • respecting and promoting young people's rights • standing up for and with young people • being solid and proud defenders of "youth culture". Challenging negative assumptions made about young people in our communities • lobbying the government to improve the situation for young people 	<p>Helping young people to understand their rights, and resourcing young people to address breaches of their human rights</p> <p>Prioritising empowerment of marginalised groups of young people whose human rights are being breached, and seeking to tip the balance of power in young people's favour</p> <p>Actively confronting discrimination against young people and breaches of their human rights</p> <p>Promoting the actual and potential contributions of young people to the wider community</p> <p>Advocating young people's right to actively participate in community life and access their fair share of community resources</p>
	<p>Encouraging and supporting young people to be agents of change – both individually and collectively, at both a personal and social level.</p>

<p>Providing services that meet young people's real needs in a practical way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that the best services and supports are based on local knowledge and local ownership and by making services and programs as responsive as possible to local contexts and perspectives • Enabling young people to access all the supports and funding they can and advocating for better guidelines for its distribution • Providing proactive and holistic support to young people • Providing young people with linkages to other services and supporting them in accessing these • Using an integrated and broad range of models, tools and approaches consistent with providing youth centred, culturally appropriate services and supports. This includes community development and peer based projects as well as personal support. • Being prepared to offer diverse, flexible services and work in a multi-skilled way • Providing practical, useful support based on young people's real situations including being able to provide consistent, longer term services for young people who may require more intensive support 	<p>Providing flexible support for young people outside formal, statutory systems</p>
<p>Helping young people who need it to navigate the best possible pathway in life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being role models ourselves: setting an example in our own community • Showing young people what is possible and helping them achieve their own goals • Helping young people make their own choices and learn from their own experiences • Providing solid or true foundations – being the roots for young people's trees • Using a strengths based, solution focussed approach to our work with young people 	<p>Helping young people adjust to change and harness opportunities</p> <p>Building young people's belief in the possibility for change and their capacity to contribute to positive social and individual change</p> <p>Recognising the worth of all young people and building on their assets and strengths</p>
<p>Providing youth centred services and supports in a friendly and informal way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being there for young people • working at the young person's pace • maintaining young people's confidentiality • remaining open-minded about people's backgrounds and circumstances and treating each situation individually • being prepared to enter into a more personal relationship with young people whilst still being able to maintain ethical – or "professional" - boundaries • Genuinely caring about young people 	<p>Working alongside young people in a friendly, informal manner</p>

<p>Recognising that Youth Work is intentionally and deliberately values driven.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values upheld are those consistent with rights based, young person driven culturally relevant youth work (e.g. respect, trust, honesty, empowerment...) 	
<p>Taking responsibility for and pride in what we do as Youth Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being responsible for what we do, being able to justify it and remaining careful of how we use our power and influence with young people and their families. • Taking responsibility for our own learning about youth, cultural or community groups if we are “outsiders” (e.g. Australian working with refugees, non-Indigenous person working with young Murris, non drug user working with users). • Being clear about our ethical responsibilities to ourselves, young people, families, communities, our organisation and within the broader sector. • Being proud of our identity as a Youth Worker, supporting one another, seeking to ensure new colleagues understand what Youth Work means and educating other workers or services about young people and about our role 	<p>Being conscious of Youth Workers’ structural power, and not taking power over young people</p> <p>Particularly recognising the cultural context of marginalised young people and taking responsibility for learning to work in a culturally appropriate way</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being clear about our ethical responsibilities to ourselves, young people, families, communities, our organisation and within the broader sector. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being proud of our identity as a Youth Worker, supporting one another, seeking to ensure new colleagues understand what Youth Work means and educating other workers or services about young people and about our role 	
	<p>Youth Workers recognise that working to genuinely empower young people will inevitably require a higher than usual level of commitment, self-examination and a willingness to grapple with social issues affecting marginalised young people. It will require clear articulation of the multiple social advantages of enabling active civic participation by young people and undertaking community development – in particular, the social value of contributing toward a vibrant, genuinely inclusive democracy in Queensland</p>
<p>Murri Youth work: Includes and supports the above statements and principles.</p> <p>Additionally, Murri Youth Work acknowledges Murri cultures as the foundation of everything important for Murri peoples. This includes:</p>	

<p>following traditions, laws and protocols and respecting the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding that whilst there is a lot of diversity between different First Nation groups there are many, many similarities and connections. • understanding what it is like to be a young Murri in the community - understanding young Murris' lifestyles, goals and problems and all the family and other connections within their lives. 	<p>Recognising the integral relationship between young people and their family, community and society</p> <p>Recognising that young people cannot be seen in isolation from their social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts</p>
<p>Supporting the development of young Murri's or Islander's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of a broader clan or community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • always viewing young Murris within their family and community context • supporting and learning from the aunties and nannas who are growing up lots of family • seeking to involve elders and extended family where possible and linking young people in with supportive family members • advocating for young Murris within their families and communities including keeping their confidences • Playing a broker or bridging role between young people and their families/communities and encouraging both to understand the other's perspectives • recognising that Murri Youth Work is often about a search for identity and helping heal transgenerational traumas resulting from parents and grandparents being grown up within white institutions and not being allowed to speak their language or practice their culture: as well as being culturally traumatised these parents have little knowledge of how to grow up their own children. Murri Youth Work therefore includes strengthening and healing family connections where possible. Murri Youth Workers play a critical role in modelling appropriate behaviour within communities and often take on a closer relationship with young Murris, including being seen as "Aunty" or "Uncle." This must be understood and accepted by the broader Youth Sector. 	<p>Encouraging and supporting young people to take responsibility as active members of their family, community and society</p> <p>Recognising that young people cannot be seen in isolation from their social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts</p>

<p>Being solid and proud defenders of “Murri culture”. Challenging assumptions made about Murris and Murri youth in our communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • translating “young people’s rights” into a language that both young Murris and elders can understand • persisting in supporting pride in being Murri. Holding out against the constant barrage of “whiteness” at school and in other places and encouraging young Murri pride in their “blackness” and cultural identity. • Doing what’s right for young Murris and not just following policies and procedures if they are harmful or wrong. 	<p>Helping young people to understand their rights, and resourcing young people to address breaches of their human rights</p> <p>Prioritising empowerment of marginalised groups of young people whose human rights are being breached, and seeking to tip the balance of power in young people’s favour</p> <p>Actively confronting discrimination against young people and breaches of their human rights</p> <p>Promoting the actual and potential contributions of young people to the wider community</p> <p>Advocating young people’s right to actively participate in community life and access their fair share of community resources</p>
<p>Recognising that cultural mentoring is an essential part of Murri Youth Work For Murris this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting one another as Murri Youth Workers no matter where we come from • finding our own cultural mentors & seeking their guidance • finding out whatever we can about our family history and cultural backgrounds, especially if these have been taken from us • being prepared to act as strong role models for young Murris and within our Murri families and communities. • doing what we can to educate others about Murris and working with young Murris <p>For others working with young Murris it means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeking – and accepting - cultural and other guidance from local Murris • respecting cultural contexts or protocols without the need to question them • accepting that we will rarely have the relationship that Murri Youth Workers have with young Murris, doing whatever we can to acknowledge and support their cultural development as Murris, and finding the best ways to offer what we can as non-Indigenous workers. 	<p>Particularly recognising the cultural context of marginalised young people and taking responsibility for learning to work in a culturally appropriate way</p>

5 Key themes and areas for wider consultation

Defining what a Youth Worker is

The current definition states that “A Youth Worker = someone working in a non-government organisation whose primary goal is to protect and promote the individual and collective human rights of young people.

There was substantial debate about the above, with a lack of overall consensus in most groups about whether Youth Work should be restricted to the NGO sector. However, it was generally agreed that government employed Youth Workers would need to be able to work within the rest of the definition and that this could be difficult for some.

Similarly there was discussion in most groups about whether Youth Work focussed – or ought to focus - solely on protecting and promoting young people’s rights.

Both of the above debates are discussed in more detail below in the sections addressing voluntarism, rights and whether government employees could be Youth Workers¹⁴.

Additionally, most participants found it difficult to relate to the above as an opening statement within the definition, with many stating that they found the **current definition** “too wordy” in general. There was also plenty of discussion focussed around meeting needs and the way in which Youth Workers relate to – or ought to relate to – young people: a quick scan of the list of tables in Appendix A reveals that most of the focus was on discussing and including individual support and service delivery.

The following has been suggested as an alternative in the proposed definition:

A youth worker is someone who works with young people within the context of their culture, identity and place to ensure their rights are protected and promoted and their needs are genuinely met.

The above includes culture and context right from the start of the definition. It also acknowledges that along with protecting and promoting young people’s rights, meeting young people’s needs is also a key element of what Youth Workers do. It reflects participants’ emphasis on providing “direct” and “real” approaches to young people - including supporting meeting their needs - which was stated consistently throughout the consultations by most groups. Whilst, by definition, young people’s needs are met if their rights are upheld, including a statement about meeting needs is more reflective of the emphasis upon providing useful, practical, timely, holistic support expressed during the consultations.¹⁵ It may, however, still be too “wordy” or not reflect a majority view and therefore requires further consultation.

Defining what a young person is

All groups spent a significant amount of time debating the **current working definition** of a young person, mainly focusing on whether to put age limits to it, as in the United Nations Definition of 12 to 25.

Here is a summary of all the different points made:

- All the Murri groups and several of the mainstream ones noted that there are big cultural differences in how children and young people and young adults are grown up and their position and responsibilities within different cultures & societies. Murrin emphasised
 - Older children (and young people) look after the younger ones – within limits 6 and 7 year olds look out for 3 and 4 year olds. Far from being “neglect”, this is both “normal” and encouraged. **You get more responsibilities when you are older but it’s always there and instilled into children right from the start.** The children people worry for are the ones who aren’t sharing or helping.
 - Never to call young Murrin “teenagers” or “boys”, especially if they are older than about 13 or 14 – they are a young man (or woman) and it is insulting to be treated differently, especially if they are initiated.
 - This older group, especially once initiated, are already adult and therefore no longer young people.
- Currently there are too many restrictions resulting from different ages being imposed on different program areas or service types. This can interfere with holistic service provision and in young people getting a coordinated and timely response.
- The older age of 25 is probably too high. The only programs people could think of that could extend to 25 year olds were possibly parenting programs. The younger groups were seen by some as being more vulnerable or as having higher needs and fewer resources.

14 See Including government workers?, p 32; Voluntary participation – young person’s choice, p 32; Emphasis on rights, p 32

15 See Appendix A, especially Tables: Diverse flexible, adaptive, multi-skilled work, p 53; Practical, useful, up front response, p 53; Holistic; gap-filler; proactive; interactive, p 54

- 18 might be too young a cut off point because some young people also need support transitioning from school/ care through to having a job, etc.
- The younger age range probably needs to be reduced from 12 because
 - Children’s bodies are developing quicker – 11 or 12 now was previously 14 – 15
 - Young people are doing things younger
 - There is a big gap in services for 8 – 12 year olds and this group has clear differences from children’s services
- Some services operate best where you are involving all age groups – e.g. youth activities in remote communities where everyone joins in; community development or family based activities with a “youth” focus.
- One person stated that nominating an age would help the sector to be taken more seriously by government and funders and that given everyone understood the UN definition, why change it. A number of others thought whilst putting in an age might be restrictive, not doing so left too much to interpretation.
- If ages were used, people thought the definition started from either 8 or 10 and finished at 21.
- The definition could be based from when the person themselves started to identify as no longer being a child – this would also fit with youth centred practice. This was agreed to by a number of groups.

Given there was so much concern about the restrictions that resulted from aged based criteria, insufficient agreement about which ages should be included if they were to be defined and a majority view that puberty may be too late a marker for “becoming a young person” especially in some cultures (including Murri and Islander), the **proposed definition** defines “youth” from the young person’s point of view – i.e. from when the person themselves starts identifying with “youth culture/s” or as a “young person.”

Apart from age based criteria, participants generally said that youth services and supports should be provided to those in most need or those who had missed out on their entitlements.

Primary purpose of Youth Work

Unlike the definition of a Youth Worker and young person, developing an overall purpose statement was not discussed directly in the workshops.

Individuals were, however, asked to participate in a group dot voting activity about how they viewed young people – as a social problem, a social movement or as citizens for tomorrow. Apart from providing a short, interactive way to focus on the workshop overall, it was hoped that this might also shed light on the working definition, including the role of the Youth Worker.¹⁶

About a third of the emphasis was on young people as citizens for tomorrow regardless of whether participants were Murri or mainstream or whether they were from rural or metropolitan regions. However there were significant differences in how votes were allocated across the other two options – viewing young people as a social problem or as a social movement. Generally Murri groups tended to see young people as being more of a social problem than a social movement and usually each group framed the “social problem” category as meaning “young people needing Youth Workers usually have lots of concerns and problems and it is a priority to address these” and not that “young people themselves are a problem.”

Participant views about the purpose of Youth Work that arose as part of other discussions generally support the **current definition**, which emphasises young people’s choice and the Youth Worker’s role as “facilitator” or “guide” and not as “director”. Key roles that emerge when combining all responses from the consultations include providing choices, options and resources, being a role model, guiding young people to a full and rewarding adult life, advocating for young people (and families), and providing support.

Comparing Murri and mainstream Youth Work

Both Murri and mainstream workers want to see young people treated fairly and with respect, are passionate about providing genuine and useful support, especially for the most disadvantaged and in providing this in the best possible way or place. Most participants spoke about the importance of young people having choices and of their role as being to provide information and support but not do things for young people and not take over or further dis-empower young people.

However, additionally Murri Youth Work:

- Views culture as “the foundation of all else.”¹⁷
- Sees family as an essential and inseparable part of culture. Therefore Murri Youth Work includes working **with the** young person within the context of their family. This means knowing who to speak with in family

¹⁶ See Appendix C: Views about young people, p 38 for a more detailed account of this activity.

¹⁷ See Table: Culture – Murri, p 41

groups and how to still remain the young person's advocate within their broader family group.¹⁸

- Defines the relationship between the young Murri and the Youth Worker much more closely than in mainstream Youth Work. Participants from all four Murri groups also included "mother, auntie, parent" when describing the role of the Youth Worker whereas none of the mainstream groups did. To do so is usually considered to be inappropriate within mainstream Youth Work approaches on the basis of blurring personal and professional boundaries.¹⁹
- values and prioritises the role of "mentor" or "role model" more highly than mainstream²⁰.
- Is based on teaching and learning through experience²¹.

Mainstream groups emphasised the importance of understanding about different cultures. In contrast, culture was viewed as being central and fundamental to all Aboriginal and Islander people/s by all the Murri groups. It can be difficult for non-Indigenous Australians to really "get" and appreciate what this means. Melissa Lucashenko's Which Wei? paper provides a solid start, with her opinions and observations being reflected throughout the views expressed by Murri participants. As well as the tables referenced above in Appendix A, the combined values maps and different prioritisation of values outlined in Appendix B help to illustrate how profound this difference in understanding of and prioritisation of "culture" is, in general, between Indigenous and mainstream groups.

For Murris, Culture literally is the foundation of EVERYTHING – identity, place, society, family, values, history, law, spirituality, past present and future, the ancestors and the descendents ... Murris say that everything that is important in life for Murris is shaped by culture.

As Lucashenko notes and reflected in Murri discussions about culture and involving families, the way in which individual Murris may relate to their culture depends greatly on their individual experiences through life, their family's experience of growing up Murri and their internalisation of broader Murri history. Because of dispossession, racism and the damage inflicted by past (and often present) government policies and social perceptions, being a Murri too often brings with it a sense of tremendous pain and dislocation; of things missing, broken or lost. As stated in Which Wei and echoed through these consultations with Murri Youth Workers, without colonisation there would be no need for paid Youth Workers: preparing children for adulthood would have remained a normal and natural part of community and family life. From the conservative role of raising families "proper way" and according to traditional cultural values Murri Youth Work now faces the challenges of how to do so in the colonised Queensland of today²². Passion, commitment, strong identity as a Murri regardless of what had been lost culturally or personally, a genuine care for young Murris and the ability to act as a strong role model within Murri communities was identified by both Lucashenko and participants as essential components of Murri Youth Work²³.

Rather than being part of Youth Work, Culture is central to and embedded throughout Murri Youth Work. It includes operating from Murri cultural values including respect, honesty, compassion, walking your talk, sharing things and thinking collectively, and always viewing the young person within their overall family context whilst still remaining true to the young person and their perspective. Murri Youth Work also involves challenging some of the negative "cultural" values or practices that have emerged in response to racism and dispossession. These include selfishness, and putting people down before they can even get up. As one participant stated, "We share. We don't separate off or out so it can make it hard when someone starts to get ahead a bit & others get jealous." Other participants noted the stigma, name calling and isolation from being marked out as being different or getting above yourself that often occurs if a young person does want to make changes in their life²⁴.

Alongside all the diversity and differences, Aboriginal and Islander (First Nation) people will always feel a greater sense of bonding and togetherness with one another than they do, in general, with non-Indigenous people. They will share many similarities and new relationships will be based on an instant recognition and understanding that is usually absent when meeting "outsiders". In the words of one participant "We understand things like Sorry Business without having to explain them." The same holds true within all cultural groups²⁵.

Whilst there is a lot of common ground between mainstream and Murri Youth Work the sector must also recognise, understand, respect and uphold the differences based on culture, history, and politics that exist between both approaches to Youth Work. Outsiders from any group need to recognise and respect when they are "outsiders" and non-Indigenous Youth Workers must resist challenging cultural norms or values unless they seriously undermine

18 See "Working with young people's families" later in this section for a fuller discussion of this. Also see Table: Culture – Murri, p 38; Culture – Young People's, p 40; Working With Families, p 44

19 Table: Closer relationship with young people, p 42

20 See values maps in Appendix B, pp 62 & 63; also Tables: Culture – Murri, p 38; & Role: As Role Model, p 49.

21 As above

22 Lucashenko, op cit, see especially pp 7 - 8

23 Ibid. The remainder of the discussion paper outlines this in greater detail. If you are non-Indigenous and haven't read the paper yet, why haven't you?

24 See table "Culture – Murri", p 38. Also, scanning through ALL the comments made by Murri participants

25 As above

remaining the young person's advocate or jeopardise their safety.

All the threats to retaining a youth-centred focus (see next section below – Understanding Young People) apply to providing culturally appropriate services. Along with these threats, Murri participants stated that they face the following additional challenges in offering culturally appropriate services:

- continually having to explain or justify things to non-indigenous workers
- current focus on partnerships with non-Indigenous agencies which often fail to take account of cultural differences or which have inappropriate policies or procedures for working with young Murris and their families.
- a culture of distrust or misunderstanding of Murris working in mainstream organisations
- senior workers are usually non-Indigenous, can make decisions about more junior worker's approach and often fail to understand it
- having to cope with additional obligations or pressures from within the worker's own family or community²⁶

Understanding young people

Most workers clearly advocated coming from a youth centred perspective and in adapting their services to suit young people and their circumstances rather than expecting young people to fit in with agency / organisational perspectives or funding requirements.²⁷

In some ways this focus on understanding young people mirrors a Murri understanding of culture – as being central to “everything” and the foundation from which everything comes. In other words, a critical requirement of a Youth Worker is to do their best to understand and respect youth culture/s. The desire to do so was evident throughout the consultations, although there seemed to be less clarity or agreement about what this meant in the Brisbane metropolitan mainstream group than in the regional and Murri workshops.

Many workers also provided concerning evidence that the youth centred focus they believed worked most effectively in assisting young people to meet needs or overcome circumstances is under increasing threat from:

- a siloed approach to service provision where each agency is only funded for one little bit rather than being funded to provide a wider range of supports.
- inflexible, differing and confusing age or other criteria across different program areas that prevent many young people from accessing a full range of services and from receiving an holistic and consistent response to their circumstances for as long as required.
- Competitive tendering arrangements leading to less overall cohesion between agencies and to large, new NGOs tendering for program contracts previously provided by local, independent agencies
- increasingly restricted definitions of what governments and other sponsors will fund within the youth (and Murri) sector
- uniform approaches expected by big generalist agencies that fail to understand and operate within youth and/or Murri cultural norms²⁸.

This final point is of particular concern to regional and Murri services: all 7 groups noted that local knowledge works best, and that new or “outsider” agencies had little investment in building up or working in with the local community and were often failing communities.

It is also of concern that mainstream Youth Workers haven't articulated (talked about) their understanding of “youth cultures” as clearly as Murri's have been able to describe what it means to be Murri or work with young Murris. Whilst many of the comments made by participants illustrate deep commitment to working in a youth centred or youth driven way there is not the level of discussion about what constitutes “youth culture/s” as there is by Murris about young Murri culture/s or Murri culture in general. The understanding is implicit in mainstream workers' explaining the general approach that works best for young people (flexible, holistic, informal, etc) and embedded throughout the discussions. However, given the threats and barriers identified by workers, it seems critical that whatever definition is accepted reflects a strong commitment to youth driven practice²⁹.

26 In particular, see tables: Culture – Murri, p 38; local relationships = strong relationships, p 47; working collaboratively with other services, p 55; Sector image, recognition and development, p 58;

27 In particular see tables: Culture – young people's, p 40; youth centred; putting young people first; working by invitation, p 41; closer relationship with young person, p 42; genuine relationships - maintaining boundaries, p 43; working with families, p 44; access and availability – first port of call, 24/7, going the extra mile, p 46; communication models and tools, p 51; Diverse, flexible, adaptive, multi-skilled work, p 53; practical, useful, upfront response, p 53; Holistic; gap-filler; interactive; proactive, p 54.

28 See in particular tables: Culture – Murri, p 38; local relationship = strong relationships, p 47; working collaboratively with other services, p 55; holistic, gap filler, interactive, proactive, p 54; sector image, recognition and development, p 58.

29 Comparing the following tables Culture- Murri, p 38 with Culture – Young people, p 40, shows how much more Murri Youth Workers specifically discussed “youth culture”, especially as it related to young Murris than occurred in the mainstream groups. Mainstream input increases in later related tables such as “Youth centred, putting young people first, working by invitation” p 41

Two of the mainstream groups discussed whether it was easier for Youth Workers who were young people themselves to develop trusting relationships and to genuinely understand young people better than older Youth Workers. Both groups concluded that the main thing was to “be real” and that young people formed different relationships with workers over time, including having more of a peer relationship with younger workers, “auntie” when older and so on.

Working with young people from CALD backgrounds

Most groups included young people from CALD backgrounds in the discussions that were held about culture and all Murri groups discussed including other First Nation peoples. Whilst adopting culture as a central principle clearly includes all cultural backgrounds, this may be lost in the emphasis on youth and Murri cultures and therefore the inclusion of CALD young people may be clearer in the **current working definition**. Having said this, there is actually more said about the role and place of culture in the **proposed definition** than there is in the current one, albeit expressed differently. The recommendations include consulting more with CALD Youth Workers about what to include in the final definition.

Working with young people’s families

Both Murri and mainstream groups emphasised the importance of working with young people within their family context. Both also acknowledged the difficulties in doing this and that parents were often the biggest problem for young people.

As noted previously, Murri workers also viewed family as integral to and inseparable from culture – and therefore wellbeing. They also accepted that in many cases, because of the level of cultural, social and family breakdown, it was not possible to work with whole family groups. Interestingly Murris were a lot clearer than mainstream contributors about their role remaining as the young person’s advocate within their family. This is consistent with retaining both a youth driven focus and a rights based approach. There was, however, discussion about the realities of working with young Murris and their families and how to balance young people’s right to a voice with their elders’ cultural rights, especially where there was also significant cultural and family breakdown.

Murris also noted the importance of learning from and linking in with **the aunties who are growing up all the kids**. The extended family within Murri culture also provides scope for finding supportive relatives to help look out for one another and challenge destructive behaviours and attitudes from other family members. Murri workers saw knowing who to approach – and who to avoid - within families as being critical to remaining an advocate for young Murris. **“we keep it [confidentiality] with young people and we know who we can and cannot approach in their wider families or support circles to help look out for them”³⁰**

As noted in the previous section on culture, Murri workers from all four groups included familial roles such as “auntie” or “parent” in how they viewed their own roles whereas no non-indigenous workers did. As observed previously, Murri Youth Workers see their occupation as having arisen as a direct result of cultural and hence family breakdown, view having strong family as being central to individual and social wellbeing, value role modelling, and may work with young Murris who literally have no (supportive) family even within very extended networks. Murri participants wanted this intrinsically different relationship to be accepted by the mainstream sector, especially by the managers and workers from non-Indigenous organisations who sought and accepted funding for Murri services. This is reflected in the **proposed definition**.

Maintaining boundaries, especially within smaller or closer-knit communities

Murri workers also identified that they needed certain boundaries and to maintain a clear distinction between their work, family and social roles, especially in small communities. Most considered Murri Youth, Health or Community Workers to be at higher risk of burn out than others in the sector. This was due to

- the 24/7 nature of work and life in Murri communities,
- the constant demand for them to act as a proper role model (or lose respect and support from their own mob),
- additional demands from their own extended families,
- having too few Murri Youth Workers in the community, especially male workers
- the complex issues and situations they were helping many young Murris to address, and

30 See table Working with Families, p 44

- the discrimination and lack of understanding from mainstream colleagues and organisations noted elsewhere in this report.³¹

Similar comments were made in all three of the regional mainstream groups, especially about balancing work, family and social life and maintaining clear ethical or “professional” boundaries when “bumping into” young people when not in a work role (including when their own children brought them home from school as “new friends”), and reflect rural or smaller community culture as well as Murri culture. This closer relationship is reflected in both the **current** and the **proposed** definitions.

Including Government workers?

As noted at the start of this section, the **current definition** states that Youth Workers are non-government workers. However, the majority of participants were reluctant to restrict “Youth Work” to the NGO sector.

The clear majority were emphatic about the way in which services and supports for young people ought to be provided if they were to be effective, have lasting change or benefit for young people (and hence broader communities) and provided in culturally meaningful and respectful ways. This included maintaining confidentiality, working from where the young person was at, having an holistic and flexible approach, being proactive, having a more informal approach and so on.³² It may be impossible to do so in a government role because of the more restrictive and inflexible work policies and guidelines in place within these agencies.

Moreover, a lot of government workers would not include – or see - themselves as being “Youth Workers” but rather as “Social Workers” or “Educators/Teachers” or “Community Development Officers” or “Case Managers”. Restricting actual Youth Work practice to the NGO sector – or to those agencies willing and able to provide their services within the accepted definition of Youth Work – would be a way of strengthening the role of Youth Work and highlighting its overall contribution across a more widely defined Youth Sector which includes all workers with young people.

Voluntary participation - Young person’s choice

Most participants strongly supported the idea of working with young people on a voluntary basis. It would be impossible to work according to their definition of Youth Worker unless the young person decided they wanted to do so – i.e. for Youth Workers to have respectful, mutual, trusting relationships, coming from a youth centred position, and being able to act as useful advocates, young people must remain not only voluntary but active participants.³³ As with government agencies, most workers with statutory roles (e.g. Child Protection, Juvenile Justice) or who work with involuntary young people (e.g. accept Court ordered referrals) don’t call themselves Youth Workers but “Social Workers”, “Youth Diversionary” or “Corrections Workers” and so on.

Having said that, some young people may be in clearly “involuntary” relationships with other workers (e.g. young people in Out of Home Care or in Detention Centres) but might want to have support from a Youth Worker as well: this makes the role of the Youth Worker crucial in helping young people navigate (i.e. understand and find their way through) child protection, juvenile justice and other systems, along with educating workers from these sectors about young people and their circumstances. Once again, strengthening the sector’s position on only working with willing young people also further cements the value and distinct purpose and place of Youth Work within the broader Youth Sector.

The **current definition** clearly places Youth Work outside of formal, statutory systems and relies upon voluntary and active participation from young people. The **proposed definition** does not state this as strongly.

Emphasis on rights

Non indigenous workers were more likely to identify rights and empowerment as being important aspects of Youth Work than were Murri workers³⁴. This was often expressed in terms of individual rather than collective rights. Whilst empowerment and rights based approaches were included in the overall discussions and are implicit in most

31 See especially tables: Working with families, p 44; culture – Murri, p 38; culture – youth, p 40; genuine relationships & maintaining boundaries, p 43; access & availability – first port of call; 24/7, going the extra mile, p 46.

32 See especially tables: Youth centred, putting young person first, working by invitation, p 41; Closer relationship with young people, p 42; genuine relationships & maintaining boundaries, p 43; access & availability – first port of call; 24/7, going the extra mile, p 46; communication models and tools, p 51; diverse flexible work, p 53; holistic proactive response, p 54

33 See especially - Youth centred, putting young people first, working by invitation, p 41; closer relationship with the young person, p 42; Genuine Relationships & maintaining boundaries, p 43; working with families p 44; working collaboratively with other services, p 55

34 See values maps, pp 64 & 65 and especially table – advocacy, empowerment and human rights, p 45

discussions about Youth Work, like “youth culture” there wasn’t a lot of information given about how workers or organisations put this into practice.³⁵

In the Murri sessions, rights featured most strongly in the Brisbane metropolitan group’s definition which helped shape the one now proposed. The reduced overall emphasis on rights by Murri groups may be due to the different history of Murri Youth Work and of the additional trauma and difficulties experienced by young Murris and their families resulting in greater attention being focussed around providing practical support to meet basic needs, cultural and family support, and the need for healing.

It may also be that many Murri Youth Workers and their broader communities simply haven’t had the opportunity to consider what applying a rights based approach to their work might look like given most funding is for individual needs. As one of the regional Murri groups concluded “we need to translate youth rights into a language that both young people and the elders understand.” This may be true for mainstream groups as well and also partly account for the shift in emphasis within the sector from collective to individual advocacy.

A significant number of groups commented on the decreasing focus on young people’s rights and the increasing focus on responding to government or funding imperatives, with increased accountability and reporting requirements attached to them. This may well be another reason why rights has not featured as strongly as other aspects of Youth Work in this consultation: workers are simply too busy and preoccupied in meeting their funding requirements and getting through each work day as best they can.

Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that a standard application of human rights conventions to First Nation or in 3rd and 4th world situations is not relevant, and outlining possible alternatives based on appropriate tools for identifying, measuring and analysing needs³⁶.

One non-Indigenous participant was emphatic that having a rights based approach to Youth Work was insufficient: we need to aim higher than achieving human rights. Rights are a minimum so they are not a good goal for a first world country. Youth Work goes beyond rights and making sure people have their basic rights met – it’s part of it but it’s also about focussing on connections, support and creating pathways. Both definitions clearly meet the above criteria, regardless of whether there is wider support for this view.

The current definition strongly supports the youth sector maintaining a rights based approach. Quixley maintains in the What is Youth Work discussion paper that not only does holding a rights based approach provide a solid, ethical platform from which to deliver services and supports. It also ensures the youth sector’s ongoing relevance and sustainability by highlighting why the role of a Youth Worker is clearly different to the role of a worker with young people and including both within a more broadly defined Youth Sector. Youth Work, within this definition includes structural or collective applications of youth, human and First Nation rights and not just individual advocacy.

The proposed definition lacks the clarity of the current one with regard to rights, advocacy and empowerment. For instance, it is not clear whether services and supports ought to be “youth driven” not just “youth centred” and there is less focus on collectively held human and youth rights and advocacy. The current definition clearly promotes young people as agents of change as well as active and willing participants in services or programs.

Values and Youth Work

Put simply, values are ideas about what is “good” or “bad”, right or wrong, just or unjust that we have consciously thought through.

All participants at the consultations agreed that one of the things that makes Youth Work unique is that it deliberately and intentionally has a values-based approach. Complete listings of values identified during the consultations are given in Appendix B: Values and attitudes³⁷ and a description of the process used to generate the values is given in Section 3: Project Background and Methodology³⁸

There is a high degree of commonality between the core values advocated by mainstream and Murri groups – respect, trust, honesty, understanding, loving or caring are held as shared key values for all Youth Workers.

35 See especially - Advocacy empowerment and human rights, p 48; sector image, recognition & development, p 58; working with families, p 47; and, youth centred, putting young people first, working by invitation, p44

36 Max-Neef, Manfred A (1991) Human Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflection, The Apex Press, NY, cited in Some more about Manfred Max-Neef’s Concepts of Needs, Suzi Quixley, available from http://www.suziqconsulting.com.au/free_articles_files/CD%20-%20Needs%20-%20Max%20Neef%202010.pdf

37 See Appendix B: Values and Attitudes, p 59

38 See Values Mapping for the Sector, p 12.

However, clear differences emerged between how Murri and mainstream groups about the relative priorities of different values or groups of values. The following table shows the top ten, in order of most to least included by participants when asked to identify the 3 to 5 values they thought important for Youth Work.

TOP TEN VALUES

Murri	Mainstream
Culture	respect
Understanding/empathy/compassion/connection/awareness	Human rights/social justice/fairness/equity/non-discriminatory/advocacy/having a voice
respect	Understanding/empathy/compassion/connection/awareness
Honesty/transparency/truth/authenticity	Honesty/transparency/truth/authenticity
Good communicator/listener	Belief in young people/change/inherent goodness/hope
Strength based/positive/encouraging	Trust/trustworthy/integrity/loyalty
Love/care/support/peace	Good communicator/listener
Open minded/non-judgmental/diversity/flexibility/inclusion	Love/care/support/peace
Role model/guide/learning/influence	Empowerment/self determination/freedom
Trust/trustworthy/integrity/loyalty	Culture

The differences in values also confirm and match those identified when discussing other aspects of the working definition – i.e. a far greater Murri priority on culture, role modelling, actively encouraging young people and leading through example. Mainstream values reflect a much higher emphasis on empowerment, belief in individual young people’s capacity for personal change, social justice, empowerment, advocacy and human & youth rights.

There may well be a tension between having an “empowerment” or “rights” based approach to Youth Work supported by mainstream Youth Work and the greater emphasis on culture valued by Murri workers. Similarly there are tensions between strongly valuing the role of leading by example and demonstrating or showing and between simply providing young people with choices and options and being more non-directive. Some values expressed during the consultations strongly support a youth driven approach whereas others are more concerned with guiding or leading young people or with being youth centred.

However, the majority of values are very broadly consistent with one another when grouped together. The few clear exceptions were as follows:

Impartiality is not consistent with many other values identified by participants. It is more consistent with conventional social work and case work than it is with values such as empathy, compassion, advocacy and empowerment. This is unless participants actually mean not being discriminatory rather than being impartial. Impartiality is also inconsistent with working with young people’s families but always viewing the young person as central or with the worker’s role as being to advocate for the young person within their family.

The same could be said for “being non-judgemental.” However this was generally explained by participants as “not imposing my values on the young person” and reflective of a more inclusive approach and was grouped accordingly.

Equality and equal opportunity are different to equity, social justice and human rights perspectives. The latter are based on what is fair or just for different groups and seeks to tip the balance in favour of the underdog whereas the former are based on the belief that everyone has – or needs to have – the same opportunities. There was insufficient time to consider this during the consultations.

There were other instances where participants used the same or similar words but might have had different meanings for them – e.g. there were a wide variety of descriptions of “respect” with the majority implying “mutual or shared

respect” but several only implying “respect for others.” It is the consultant’s opinion that Indigenous and mainstream concepts of “culture,” “family,” “community,” “confidentiality” and “rights” may have different meanings for each group and certainly are afforded different priority, in general, by both groups but there was insufficient time to clarify this during sessions.³⁹

The major implication of this is that although workers may be using the same – or similar – words or terms, they may be meaning very different things. A large number of workers said the sector is drowning in jargon and that, as well as expressing things as clearly and simply as possible, it would be useful for Youth Workers to have a glossary or listing of clearly defined technical terms if the broader sector persists in introducing new language.

The majority of participants wanted the values that shape Youth Work to be included in our definition. However, given the number of values and attitudes that were identified in this consultation and clear differences between Murri and mainstream groups it is difficult to know which to include without further consultation.

39 See for example, Schubert (2009, Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation / Mental Health Association of Central Australia Inc) Working Well Guide: reflections on providing suicide prevention projects in remote Aboriginal Communities in Central Australia, p 39. This guide is written for non-Indigenous workers and notes that whilst people might use the same words, vastly different cultural meanings may be attached to them, and the essential requirement for successful services and programs to be firmly rooted in local cultural understandings. <http://www.mhaca.org.au/2010resources/Working%20Well%20Guide.pdf>

6 Concerns for Youth Sector development

We are under increasing pressure to accept the wrong guidelines for working with young people

Mainstream, regional

I feel like we've become our target group and not used to actually thinking about what we as a sector really want or need... we've become too driven over the past decade by imposed methods and funding arrangements... It feels like we've got no voice and even if we did we are no longer used to using it

Mainstream, Metropolitan

Youth Workers remain constant with the young person. Government and funding agendas might change so we adapt too but we're always trying to keep the focus on the young person in a genuine way and not being gammin. This is becoming more difficult. A lot depends on who is employed in positions, who the managers are, what the particular funding bucket is or what other government strategies are impacting on the service or agency at the time

Murri

As well as assisting in the ongoing work to develop a commonly held definition of Youth Work in Queensland this consultation also confirmed significant threats to both the youth and Murri community services sectors identified in other elements of YANQ's Youth Sector Development Project.

Participants saw threats to maintaining a youth centred or driven approach as resulting from:

- narrow funding guidelines and inflexible funding arrangements resulting in young people missing out on entitlements or key supports
- siloed approaches to service delivery leading to gaps, double-ups and increased difficulty for young people to get consistent, coordinated, timely services
- the lack of understanding and valuing of Youth Work from "outsiders" including from more senior staff or managers without experience as a Youth Worker, statutory workers and funding bodies
- the amount of "top down" management
- being bogged down by paperwork, jargon and red tape that was getting in the way of providing the actual services
- an inability to record or document additional "outcomes" or factors contributing to young people's situations within data bases or activity reports developed purely to record the funder's priorities and constructed entirely from within the funder's frame of reference
- the increasing trend in big, new, generic services being awarded contracts previously delivered by small, independent organisations with an understanding of local young people and/or Murri communities developed by being part of the community over time, and
- the failure of many of these larger organisations in actually delivering to young people and their communities⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ See especially Sector image, recognition and development, p 58; Culture – Murri, p 38; Working collaboratively with other services, p 55 along with many of the barriers listed in other tables throughout Appendix A.

Appendix A: What makes Youth Work different?

The overwhelming majority of participants firmly believe that “Youth Work” is different to “working with young people” (e.g. different to a social worker, teacher, police liaison officer, corrections worker, case worker, all of whom could work with young people). The issues might be the same (e.g. homelessness, identity) but the approach and jobs are very different. As was stated in one group:

Youth Work recognises that it's not so much what we do or focus on [e.g. accommodation, alcohol and drug support, help navigating the Juvenile Justice system or getting Income Support] but how we do it that makes the difference.

All Murri and two of the 3 regional groups were emphatic about this. The only two alternative views were:

- Don't know – our [small] group ended up going around in circles.... You could ask 100 people what they thought Youth Work was and get different answers yet we all work together as a diverse and inclusive sector. (metro mainstream)
- A social worker is a Youth Worker if they work with young people. (regional mainstream)

The above two participants/small groups also went on to identify a range of things that did make Youth Work different. Moreover, as demonstrated through this section of the report, the overall answers given by participants share many more commonalities than they do differences, even when taking due account of the overall differences between Murri and mainstream approaches.

Once it was established that participants considered Youth Work to be different or unique, they were asked what made it so and went on to discuss what ought to be included in a definition of Youth Work. Throughout the workshop participants also identified numerous barriers to working well with young people or threats to the youth sector. All this information was used to help shape the working definition.

In this section of the report responses have been put into the following tables. The tables:

- bring together all the different things people thought were unique to Youth Work or different to other occupational groups who might work with young people.
- are written in participants' own words (with minor editing)
- include everything participants specifically wanted in the overall definition of what Youth Work is.
- group common themes together. Each theme is stated at the top of each table.
- Include each statement made in each group once only – there is a lot of overlap between many of the themes. To retain the relative priority of each idea or viewpoint, it has only been included in one place in the tables, not spread across related themes or tables.
- have been divided so that the differences between Murri and mainstream views and priorities can be clearly seen.
- include threats or barriers in working “properly” with young people.
- Include statements people began by saying “We need to...” as threats or barriers. “Needing to” implies that it is necessary or would improve things but is not yet being done ...

CULTURE – Murri	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All things come from culture • Culture – everyone has culture and Youth Work is based on this – racial, young people’s, all the different ones. Need to understand these as part of what we do/how we work • Always viewing young people and families within their cultural context • Understand our own cultural contexts without even questioning them (e.g. “Sorry business”). • Provide better crisis and trauma management because we have a better understanding of our young people • We understand young people’s lifestyles • We also have the links and knowledge within our own communities and families • More likely to make that connection with young people • Murri culture (and therefore Murri Youth Work) is never just about one person. It’s about all of us and that’s what we show. • Sharing culture – if there is no food, we share what we have around and we come together to do this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know about the different cultures we work with
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates from an overarching cultural framework that acknowledges culture as the foundation of everything , which supports following Murri traditions, laws and protocols and which respects the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia. • Collective – in our nature • Family – in our nature • Agencies and workers need to work from respect and from strong cultural values as well. • Cultural mentoring is an essential part of Murri Youth Work • Be solid and proud within our own cultural identity, no matter what it is. Challenge assumptions made about Murriss and Murri youth. • stay true to the people as much as we can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • culturally sensitive
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly teaching non-Indigenous workers about culture – there are too few Murri workers and too few male workers. It can get wearing doing this. • constantly have to deal with new, non-indigenous “professionals” coming in to town for a bit and then going. They don’t know how to work well culturally – e.g. a woman trying to work with a man about male health issues. • General feeling that Murriss in our region are losing respect and the sense of where we come from • Elder discussion in one group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without the young people the elders have no place – elders are custodians of the past and the youth are their future. • A lot of elders aren’t interested in helping young people • We cannot dictate the terms to the elders • Elders role is to pass on wisdom – we need to bring the young people to them 	

- Elders need to be teaching Youth Workers as well as young people so we can pass things on as well
- Young people are finding slightly older people to be their elders in the absence of anything else
- Agencies and workers need to work from respect and from strong cultural values as well. We have had a selfish service shut down & so they should be: they did the wrong thing both our way and government way. The biggest problem now is that they make it even more difficult for the services who are working properly to get things funded again.
- Sharing culture - we don't separate off or out. This can make it hard when someone starts to get ahead a bit & others get jealous
- Danger also of being knocked down before you can even start – can be a further barrier for Murri young people
 - Shame job if you do want to get ahead a bit
 - Name calling – getting above yourself
 - Stigma – marked out as being different
 - Backlash amongst ourselves. Crabs in a bucket – as soon as one tries to get ahead, the others pull them back into the pot.

CULTURE – Young people’s	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth culture – support it as well as Murri. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted the different ways different older Youth Workers relate with young people. Maybe easier for younger Youth Workers to develop immediate rapport? Understand young people better, especially the younger workers
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the development of young people’s identity as an individual, within their family and as part of a broader clan or community. Murri Youth Workers must know where young people come from culturally and socially and operate from this basis Do what’s right for the young person, their family and within their community, not just what’s “culturally appropriate” – recognise each of these is different and treat each situation individually Recognise and support that young people have their own culture/s. It’s really different to our era – language, technology, all sorts and we can’t impose our views on young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include young people and mentor/peer groups
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kids are totally swamped at school by whitefella culture. There is nothing to support Murri culture in the curriculum and “they go to school, all they learn are white ways, they come home and then I have to spend the rest of the evening encouraging their black-ness and pride in their identity all over again.” This brings great pain. Sometimes elders don’t understand youth culture – what happens on the streets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need more awareness building about young people and to encourage collective responsibility for their well being.

Youth centred, putting young people first, working by invitation	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people (and their family) come first • We start from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bottom up • Where the young people are at • What they need and want • Trust and rapport is essential • We are their advocate within the family and the community • Confidentiality – we keep it for young people • Confidentiality – we keep it with young people and we know who we can and cannot approach in their wider families or support circles to help look out for them. • Re: working with other services or getting advice if we're unsure – we can use non-identifying "case scenarios" to discuss the young person's situation with another worker without breaking their confidentiality. • We are respectful – we don't just rock up • Not just assuming you can do what you want just because you are a worker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young person comes first • Young person centred • Young people know we are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actually there for them • respect them • have no ulterior motive • Services are (or ought to be) appealing for young people • Young people come to us – our work is voluntary • We get more from young people than if they are mandated • Two way respect • Putting things into the context of young people and finding out the meaning for them
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be there for young people – no matter what • Young people need to have time to just be young people. Sometimes it's all too rushed and geared to achieving things. We need to have patience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is based upon voluntary participation, commitment and relationships from both. • Youth Work is about finding out the wants and needs of young people and doing our best to provide for these • Youth based or centred practice
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to have boundaries – i.e. young person trusts you so they don't want to speak with anyone else but you might not have specialist information about their particular concern (e.g. health issues where they might need advice from a nurse) • What if the young person doesn't want to speak with anyone else? Who decides what is in their "best interests"? • Youth Workers remain constant with the young people – govt and funding agendas might change so we adapt too but always trying to keep the focus on the young person in a genuine way – not being gammin. This is becoming more difficult – a lot depends on who is employed in positions (managers have a lot of influence), what the particular funding bucket is and what other government strategies are impacting on the service or agency. • Need to work voluntarily with young people as much as you can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding needs to be based on young people's choice rather than being so outcomes driven • We are "Young people centred" but this is getting blurry – often our approaches get shaped by our service or funding – e.g. a Church group, a Detention Centre, etc. • Confidentiality needs to remain with the young person. • Uniform ways of collecting client consent, etc often involve lots of paperwork & can be intrusive. Smaller/independent organisation was able to come up with a form and process where they could get clear about confidentiality early with the young person & without reams of paperwork. Larger organisation workers can be stuck with generic ways of doing things because of the organisations requirement to do things uniformly for the organisation rather than doing them in correct context for their "clients" (or those working directly with the "clients") • Shifting focus from young mums to babies – bigger concern for children, less concern for young people.

Closer relationship with young person	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friend, mother, sister, auntie, counsellor with young people, not just a worker • Parenting – we play an auntie role or we support the aunties who are already growing up LOTS of kids in the absence of anything better for them. Several in the community who are absolutely incredible in what they do for very extended families & their wider Murri community. • Sometimes we play a “parent” role x 2 • Relationships are with whole family, not just the young person • If young people don’t care, it won’t work – we show we care, we get them involved • We spend more time with young people • Deeper, stronger relationships with young people • They open up more with us – greater emotional depth • Working together with the young person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach, teacher, information, referral, confidante, etc. Etc – we play every role • We are involved in more areas in a young person’s life • Focus is on building relationships • Relationships – are most important • RELATIONSHIP is the key – its different • Principles of engaging • young people feel safe and do open up • Trust • Building rapport and connection essential • The way we work – psychologist and social workers tell young people, are expert. The Youth Worker asks “what do you want?” • From a less “expert” position • Work at young people’s level – get them involved. Do with not to • Need to work from young person’s frame of reference as much as possible but also challenge them to extend it (e.g. I am dumb because I don’t have a job; I am a failure because I am homeless, etc.) • Work at the young person’s pace • Check out opportunities – do it together • Avoid “working on” young people or categorising them
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern re: other people’s perceptions – what it might look like, e.g., if you hug kids. We know where we are coming from but it’s against other organisations’ policies or workers’ ways of doing things. • young people need love: often they haven’t been shown it • they need proper attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’re not in people’s faces – can be another reason why it’s difficult to justify what we do – we’re the ones in the background simply getting on with it

Genuine relationships; maintaining boundaries	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have high expectations of us • Young people are watching us constantly • Less distinction between the personal and the professional • Negotiate and are clear with the young person about confidentiality [including during social or family time] • in small communities, everyone knows one another and socialises together • Small communities – everyone knows everyone and everything. So you get over conflict of interest because you have to (one participant had to resuscitate her own father when working with Emergency Services) • you go home to it ... but are as clear as possible about what is work and what isn't • you respect people's confidences • you have kinship obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people see through us and to us. They are good at noticing body language and reading all the cues about what sort of workers or people we are. • Kids respect us being real • Be yourself • You still have to leave work at work – be clear with young people that they're in your home just like anyone else, or when they see you out & about. Unless it's an emergency, you're not on about work stuff: they "get it". They sometimes get as surprised as we do when they see you in your kitchen at home.
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard when you have your own kids and they start socialising with your "clients" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are not young people's friends – this can be difficult in small communities (especially when your own children are bringing home your "clients")

Working with families	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family is central • Community is central • Work with the family as well as the young person. • Murri youthwork actively seeks to involve families wherever possible • We are young people's advocate within the family and the community x 2 • We are still advocating for the young person choosing how/who to tell various things [even though we work within family structures and cultural protocols]. Some other agencies don't see it this way. • We learn from those aunties who are growing up all the kids – their values are really important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide neutral territory therefore we are able to work with families as well as the young person – it's better for all concerned if you can do this well • We involve families as well if possible or appropriate others • Part of our role – help young people to understand parents and adults as well as the other way round – like a broker
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic – looking at wider context of family and community, not just young person

BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if you grow up “in the system” it's hard to recover and grow well. Where is the family? All broken up. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some [parents] only see what they are taught – they have had no opportunity to learn how to care, to parent, to grow up well. • Other parents and families are wanting more for their young people than they had and are helping their kids step up to it • Others are really stuck in the cycle of what their own parents (or carers) did – young mums, low education, etc • White welfare rewards victims. It sets up a culture of “you don't need to deal with it.” We need to break this cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Murris have no parents and no parenting skills • Generic parenting programs can be inappropriate or even insulting. They don't reflect Murri realities & tend to blame or shame the people who have to go along to them. • We need to talk with elders more • Parents are now playing the services off against one another • I just see the same thing each day – hard to keep on going • It can be the hard bit – getting the families on board • I can't – the kids are already in the shelter. Sometimes it's just not possible • It can also be about family identity – there can be real difficulties for us when kids want to find missing relatives – do a family search and the results can mean BIG TROUBLE (e.g. raking up past family issues or jealous fights, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to work more with families • Often the parents are the problem and they can be really set in their ways. • Need more ways of building family support • Need more connectedness back into communities • Our community needs a lot more activities, fun things for young people and older children, festivals and other family based activities that bring people together. There's no real “hang out place” for young people in town (apart from KFC!)

Advocacy, empowerment & human rights	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We advocate for young people – give them a voice • Advocate – be their voice • We are their advocate within the family and the community • Young people have the right to food, clothes, a house. Young people also have the right to respect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment/empowering x 3 • Advocacy x 2 • Heavy advocates for young people • Fight for rights • Social change • Its young people driven • Having a social analysis of young people • Work with the disenfranchised • Young people are particularly disenfranchised (i.e. in certain ways) – we are aware of this and help frame it better for them and to address this • We get young people’s ideas and goals not the other way around • Choice
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murri Youth Work is focused on empowerment of both individual Murri young people and of Murriss as a group • Advocacy • Lobbying government • Standing up for and with young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving people a hand up rather than a hand out. • Walk beside – do with not for. Give a leg up not a piggy back • Be careful not to dis-empower • Youth Workers provide a service driven by the young people themselves according to their own needs • Advocacy including collective action • Rights based • We need to aim higher than achieving human rights. Rights are a minimum so they are not a good goal for a first world country. (same respondent) Youth Work goes beyond rights and making sure people have their basic rights met – its part of it but its also about focussing on connections, support and creating pathways.
BARRIERS OR THREATS (see also sector development table)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting \$\$ to NGOs and building more jails • There is no public transport in our community. Also the Taxis won’t pick up from certain locations or people simply can’t afford them. • Need to translate “young people’s rights” into a language that young people and elders can both understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More government focus on control, less focus on wellbeing • Need to increase our focus on young people’s rights – these have become overshadowed by problems and the focus on funding for particular concerns or strategies rather than rights. • Refugees – we are seeing more of them & also young people from NZ over here studying. They are ineligible for all forms of support because they are not Aust citizens yet totally fit needs we are funded to meet. We ask our funding body but continue to get no answer

Access and availability- first port of call, 24/7 and going the extra mile	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do the right thing, not just follow policies • Available 24/7, especially in small communities • We care – it’s not just a job • Its not just a job. I do it 24/7. Especially in a small community. Even more so in Murri culture. • Our work is 24/7: it doesn’t stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often young people’s first port of call – they’re comfortable coming to us with a problem or whatever • Hands on – e.g. accommodation services see the kids after their days of seeing everyone else • Often it’s not 9 to 5 work – more often 24/7, especially in small or isolated communities • Voluntarism/altruistic/not 9 to 5 • go above and beyond the usual expectations • We do that bit extra. • We have a go even with all the “too hard” in it • Boundaries (or lack thereof, especially in small communities)
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opposite of “not in my Job Description” 	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a high worker turn over and burn out • Wear many hats – high burnout • Need to look after ourselves more - Need to make time for this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s difficult in small communities – can be 24/7 • We do that bit extra. Then there is no place to record it. We have the best, most user friendly data base I’ve ever worked with in terms of entering the data and getting it formatted and sent off for reports and so we have summaries of what we’ve done. BUT... as well as meeting all the Program objectives we do a lot of other things with young people that are necessary to overall success and that are legitimate work to be recorded ... but there is no place to record them. Or extra things that might be a bit outside the norm that we still support. • Data reports are too tick and flick and only reflect what the funder wants to know (x 2) • Difficulty in how we justify it (the extras) – KPIs are too limited and prescriptive which makes it unrecordable sometimes • Our outcomes can be unrecordable in some ways anyway • Still really subjective • Often Youth Work is based on things that are really hard to quantify – most of the emphasis on funding reports is on numbers and tick-a-boxes – our work is often unrecordable or might have been achieved in ways outside the funding requirements or might have unintended or other results... no way of recording this

LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS = STRONG RELATIONSHIPS	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have real knowledge of our local community and of the young people, families, services, barriers, everything, especially if we've grown up here, have family here or have been around for a while. We know what it's like to be young in this place. We know what it's like to be Murri, and to be a local from this place. This local knowledge builds trust. Without it, it's too difficult for the young people to trust us and for us to know what's going to work best. • Need to use local knowledge and skills for best results, especially in small communities or when working with Murri young people and their families. • More culturally appropriate – not just with young people: parents, families and communities trust Murri Youth Workers more than they do government or non-indigenous workers 	
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that metropolitan programs don't work well in isolated areas or remote communities and be able to respond to things from a local perspective • The best services and supports are based on local knowledge and local ownership. This involves love, struggle and sacrifice (burn out). We know what it's like to grow up or be young in our community, outsiders don't. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Work is relational
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many barriers to working well <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws • Rules • Regulations • Top down – govt • 20 years ago in [our town] there were only 3 Youth Workers. We're all still around. We worked collaboratively and well because there were so few services and we all came from common values, attitudes and approaches. Now it's really scattered with a lot of new providers. Some of these providers are using a "tick and flick" approach & have no vested interest in the community and its young people – e.g. service contracts to a particular region with high Murri population – workers drive there, don't develop any linkages, don't provide a real service and then fill out their forms as if they have achieved something. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to have far less services but heaps more support. We shared things. We looked after one another as well as the young people. There was far less burn out and lots more transparency. The grapevine helped keep us honest and on track. Now, with competitive tendering there is less unity and support. • The big NEW services are letting the small communities down. • Big organisations end up with one size fits all approaches. They are generalist services, not youth services and so often don't comprehend clearly enough how and why things need to be run differently to be most effective and useful for young people.

- Seen mainstream mob get Murri \$\$ and then don't actually deliver – put in for it without knowing the community, do tick-a-box stuff. They might come and see us when they first start up but then we don't see them again and we can't see how they benefit our young people & families
- Lots of Fly In Fly Out (FIFO)/high turn over of people in our town – not a lot for young people in the town because most of the big \$\$ goes out with the FIFOs rather than staying in the community. It also means there are lots of new workers & people who don't understand local ways and lifestyles coming in and out the whole time.
- Our region has an influx of young people from remote FNQ communities, especially those in corrections/court systems. They are from really different backgrounds to rural and metropolitan Murris and Islanders including speaking English as a second language & having their own strong cultural protocols. HIGH LEVEL need for staff training.
- Big / govt / mainstream organisations often operate from a culture of mis-trust & their policies reflect this – e.g., always checking up on Murri workers, too many timetables/plans/forms, having to phone in the whole time. It's called or justified as "OH&S" but we know our communities – just what exactly do they think is going to happen on a home visit? We wouldn't be fronting up somewhere if it was the wrong time or doing it wrong way anyway, or if we did we wouldn't be a worker for very long... our way ...The kids are all vying for who is going to ride shotgun with you and you get proper conversations and all that happening. [mainstream agency policy states home visits must be done by 2 workers, clients always sit in back, worker must phone in immediately before and after each visit...]

Accepting; open minded	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are there for everyone in the community and we show this to them. People come to us. • Non-judgemental • There are no bad kids, just bad behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are non-judgemental (as much as possible) and look into people's backgrounds before jumping to conclusions • Open minded to all sorts of backgrounds and circumstances • Accepting • Impartiality • We are young people's confidantes – we show ourselves to be "shock proof" so they can tell us the real stories in their lives
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more trust and less making judgements – e.g. "every child has a laptop..." isn't true. Some kids [e.g. those in "Care"] don't get to have their own laptops because it's feared they'll sell them. And then there's not enough to go around in the places that kids can get to use them.

ROLE - Intentional focus

The following comments were made about the broad role of Youth Work

- We have reasons for what we do, we have certain motivations and we want to motivate young people – Youth Work is deliberate
- Intentional focus of our work

The following tables show what specific roles participants thought Youth Work included. NB there is also information about roles that is included less explicitly in other tables – e.g. advocacy and empowerment, trauma and trouble, etc.

ROLE – as role model	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors • Have no shame – in a good way • We walk the talk in our communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive role models • Youth Workers are role models • Role models • Walk the walk (not talk the walk) • Have "no shame" – in a good way

INCLUDE IN DEFINITION

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a role model – show young people ourselves (especially in small community). Stay strong ourselves as well – show what’s possible. • Mentor • Demonstrate alternatives • Show young people how to respect one another and themselves by offering them our respect • Showing young people that if you don’t stand for something you’ll fall for anything • We set an example in our community • Youth Work is about being passionate and showing young people your passion. Seeing what they can achieve. Figuring out what’s most important to THEM in their lives. Going for it. 	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be role models not just for young people but for the whole community (e.g. no good getting trashed regularly if you are a drug & alcohol worker!) 	

Role – providing choices and options; problem solving, resourcing	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunters and gatherers for young people • Be a point of reference for young people • We vision a different future • Youth Work is about providing activities that have an impact on young people: it’s about facilitating change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall aim – assist young people to live the best possible life that they can • Youth Workers provide young people with choices and options and act to protect their rights. We let young people know what’s there, etc but we don’t do it all for them – we say “it’s up to you to take it on.” • Our role is to enable young people to access all the supports and funding they can and to advocate for better guidelines for its distribution • Give people opportunities • Choices and consequences vs morals – not trying to make young people take on our morals but maybe more giving choices. Even here – young people might have very different morals or see consequences very differently to us (e.g. get status through being in juvenile detention, someone who is happy stealing cars, etc)
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Workers are the roots for young Murris’ trees – our role is to provide solid or true foundations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help young people make choices, not dictate to them
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes young people need to go “walkabout” and find themselves 	

ROLE: Guiding to full adulthood	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We start foundations • Let them make mistakes, fall over and learn how to get up again • We guide • Our job is to plant seeds • Share not teach – pass stuff on - Things we already know inside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We facilitate young people's growth to full adulthood • Our sole concern is what's going on for the young person. We want to better their lives and give them some stability • Provide guidance rather than telling young people what to do • Young people have particular vulnerabilities • Problem solvers especially about accessing appropriate support
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having goals • There is purpose to what we do • Sharing these goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Work encourages young people's personal and social development • Youth Work is guiding young people... to a full and vibrant life • Youth Work is about support – resourcing young people to take on responsibility for their life.
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens for tomorrow – they are here today! Puts pressure on us to guide and also to help them feel they already have a place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we lost our sense of what is "good" or "bad"? (have we lost our moral way?) • we need to be careful not to be overprotective (x 2)

Communication: models and tools	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication can be non-verbal – drawing, music, playstation, etc • yarn, story tell, take the roundabout way, the long way and you see a lot more through the journey • Use things like music, sports, everyday things in young people's lives • Lots of humour – to build connections not in a putdown way ever & within context. Set people up well (rather than being formal/detached) • Keep it informal and relaxed • Do more outreach and home visits • Subtle, friendly communication, not clinical • Use a variety of techniques and not just one model or way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 'case plan' but young person needs to agree (lots of services working with one young person & Youth Worker "on the street" might not know all) • Reflective • Listen really well • Community development • Occurs in a less formal environment • The value in "having a chat" • Casual and informal settings • Few appointments – drop in, flexible, genuinely accessible • Our engagement skills can be a soft entry point to discussing more complex concerns • Safe environment and support • Put yourself in other people's shoes – "empathy" • Youth Workers are not detached
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated or a variety of different models, tools, not just a single approach (e.g. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy [CBT] and Motivational Interviewing for Youth Workers in the Alcohol & other Drug sector is NOT enough by a long shot – what do you do next after a couple of sessions?? – need a MUCH bigger tool box!) • Includes both Youth Work (direct support work at individual level) and youth development (i.e. community development framework)
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case workers or managers are usually the more senior workers but it is the Youth Workers who are actually doing the direct work with the young person • Case work may not be useful – too driven by protocols, not flexible enough • Need for an holistic approach rather than case work. • Young people are missing healing and spirituality – we need to bring these more into our work 	

Strength based and solution focussed	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show people we are survivors • Strengths based • We're still here and still feeling – let our feelings show • Passing on pride in who they are, just as a human being • If you treat someone 2nd rate they believe they are 2nd rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths based
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength based and solution focussed
BARRIERS OR THREATS	

Trauma and trouble – longer term, follow up & consistency	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work with troubled kids • We work with trauma • Murri Youth Work is often about search for identity – some young people and families have black skin and get picked on by racists and bigots but they have little understanding of own culture because it has been taken from them. • Healing hurts of transgenerational trauma – many grand/parents grew up inside white institutions, were not allowed to speak their language or practice their culture. They were not grown up (parented) by their own families and so as well as being deeply, deeply traumatised culturally, they don't know how to raise their own children. • It takes longer to build trust and engagement with Murrin – due to damage inflicted on them • You cannot have time constraints • Young people often need ongoing support because the barriers they face are so big • We do have wins but we rarely see them • It's from the small interactions that you get the big changes. (x 2) • Viewing young people as a "Social problem" – we work with them as a result of problems, we don't think that they are a social problem. • We always follow up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its more ongoing • Don't often see immediate results • We might not see immediate outcomes • Being able to sit with intangibles • Viewing young people as a "Social problem" – we work with them as a result of problems, we don't think that they are a social problem.
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recognise that young people need consistency and they need trust. They have been let down far too many times by too many people and they need to know we are different. This takes time. We need to be patient. 	

BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to be consistent • Limited by age restrictions • No transition time for young people once they reach 18 or other key cut off point • Funding is too split up (siloes) and also too divisive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids in care get no opportunities until they are 18 and then they get everything – need for more gradual support in how they can take up their responsibilities. • Need for better linkages for young people – e.g. linking them with employment, education and training or other services when in detention and not leaving it all until they are released • We need to focus on longer term change.

Diverse, flexible, adaptive, multi-skilled work	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible according to needs • Diverse work – Murri Youth Workers are multi-skilled • We communicate according to the audience we are with (e.g. young person, family, other workers, funding body, when at home ourselves...) • Flexible – re-interpret job statements and funding contracts – to have genuine outcomes for young person and also meet other requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're prepared to bend things for young people • Common sense has to prevail • Location and context (cf also flexibility) • We are more flexible with what we can do (than govt workers) • Flexibility x 3 • We have to be more creative • Creative • Multi-skills • Diverse situations require diverse skills • Jack of all trades, master of none • Jack of all trades • Be adaptive to individual circumstances
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-skilled – sport, housing, practical, life, one minute filling out a report, the next changing a nappy....have done all sorts in a work day. 	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So much to do – where do we focus our energies? • How can people have more choice about who provides their services? • Funding is way too restricted – not just in what is available but in how we can actually use it • Need diverse skills and to be able to work in diverse settings 	

Practical, useful, up front response	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted for a “NO BULLSHIT” approach. • It's about providing USEFUL support (e.g. Reconnect seeing families who just need need some tucker or basic support rather than longer term support but brokerage can be limited) • PRACTICAL • We live in the real world • First needs come first • We are straight talking and we get straight to the point. • We keep one another “real” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide the practical approach & support • Provide for basic needs • Grass roots • Have a direct, grass roots approach. • Tough love – in that we keep it real for them, we don't muck around but play it straight with them about options, likely consequences, etc • Be honest and straight up about consequences • We keep it real

INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Work is guiding young people in a common sense environment in the practical ways of life
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricted funding leaves big gaps and the gaps are mainly for the practical, everyday things people need like transport, money, food, clothes... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are seeing more need for basic, short term, practical things as issues for people – food, clothes, shelter, short term help. It's more of a financial struggle for young people and their families than it used to be.

Holistic; gap filler; interactive; proactive	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More interactive with young people – the way we talk as well as what we talk about Look at overall social and emotional well being – a lot of other services/workers are only trying to fix the direct problems rather than the underlying concerns that have led to the problems in the first place. We fill the gaps We have had about 8 suicides in the last year. Mostly young people and all have been sudden. One minute they were laughing and the next minute they were gone... It too common. We've become used to it – there's no more room for grief or we're numb already. It affects EVERYONE [in a small community] and we've needed lots of debriefing and support around it. Issues like this hurt the entire community. So it's absolutely vital that there are people (Youth Workers) who sit and be with people, do our best to understand and respect it's hard to know what to say but are still there doing what we can Holistic approach Family Community (broader social, school, etc) All aspects of what's going on for the young person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are the putty filler for the cracks in the system Wrap around services (image of a flower petal with Youth Worker in the centre and other services & supports as petals) Not just the young person but all of their supports Holistic approach x 4 Holistic – health and well being at all levels Funding & strategies are very reactive. Prevention is not currently a focus for government funders. So even if most of the funding is directed towards social problems, we re-frame what we do according to our perceptions. We write our funding submissions in ways that maximise our chances of success and still meet the funder's criteria but so we can still achieve the real outcomes too.
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is holistic Be holistic – look at everything and everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have to already be totally down and out to get any kind of support these days, or to have a particular need or issue met. People are falling through gaps or having to see too many organisations and most of it happens too late. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family services – just act as police or to control rather than supporting young people Now there are far too many silos. Need to have more of a focus on emerging issues for individuals or families – often you can't access proper support until the wheels have really fallen off.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heard of workers “triaging needs” as an “assessment tool”! “Ranking client needs” in order to prioritise who gets whatever little scrap is available. This is the opposite of what we’re talking about with Murri Youth Work. • Guidelines on how to spend brokerage \$\$ need to be a lot more flexible so we can actually respond to young people more holistically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you only get funding for the squeaky wheels – for the problems, Need to focus on prevention programs • Need more of a prevention focus but it just isn’t being funded • Child protection focus instead of holistic approach to what children need overall.
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Working collaboratively with other services	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big part of our role is to educate other workers about young people and about our services • We often provide the linkages to other services – young people will go to them with us if they trust us • We build links through communication – in lots of different ways and with lots of different people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to speak with and be understood by many different people – young people, families, funding bodies, other services • Also putting things into organisational and policy context as well as young person – all linked • We bring community resources and networks together • Collaborators
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in “sharing clients” • We all go for the same funding • Need more “partnerships” but there is no trust. Difficult to form them with mainstream organisations because they often take over, even without intending to • Some other agencies work differently to us and do their own thing anyway – aren’t inclined to listen to anyone else. They get caught up in outcomes and don’t see the value in doing other work with young people. This is particularly the case when you are working with “professionally based” services – they tend to take over and not value local or Murri knowledge. [E.g. where Murri service wanted to collaborate and the mainstream service went in themselves, without Murri support, did the program and ticked all their outcomes boxes but there was no lasting value for the program participants and no opportunity for the local Murri service to do anything further]. If you do the same things, it’s over-servicing so you just have to step back and make sure the young people don’t get caught in the middle of it. • We see Murri health workers and teacher’s aides playing a similar sort of role to Youth Workers and being equally undervalued by their mainstream professionals (e.g. teachers, principals, doctors, nurse educators, etc..) x 2 • Some agencies or workers are rude: there is no place for this in Murri Youth Work. • Need for greater cohesion amongst different services – agreements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Portal coming in – data base – hopefully help see what support is actually there and how to access it for young people. BUT this won’t stop the fact that there are too many criteria and that certain young people miss out – you work for ages to secure a small amount of support, are told young person is eligible, they’re looking forward to having a few basic things (e.g. work clothes) and then someone else looks at the application and rejects it. It’s a real kick in the guts for the young person & for everyone else who’s tried to make it happen. • Kids with complex needs – need to have community support panels directly including the young person, have all workers there and all committed to equal power and using a collaborative approach

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we don't take it on it gets taken over • "Partnerships" – we don't get anything unless we form them & then it takes a lot more effort 	
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NOT EVERYONE CAN BE A YOUTH WORKER...	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone can be a Youth Worker and Youth Work is different to working with young people • Need patience and tolerance • Have input into what we do – make our own decisions • Do training • Have more understanding • because occupations are skills based... you can learn to be a Youth Worker but depending on your values and attitudes you might not want to be one • Youth Work isn't about money ... it's about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a difference • Giving opportunities • Showing options • Having proper things in place • Being encouraging • Providing practical, useful support • Showing young people we believe in them • Showing and giving them self worth • Showing we care • Teaching them how to be adults • We are always learning • It's possible to pick up learning later but it's hard. We need to be showing them ourselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different values system • Youth Work is passion driven. It's not about the money. If Youth Work is just a job then it's not the right place for you. • We are a breed of our own • It's all about the qualities and attitudes • "You can have four Degrees and still not have the knack of working well with young people" • Need to be young at heart ... sometimes [like young people] we are seen as being immature • Be a "people person" • Sense of humour • Not take things personally • Have a thick skin • No requirement or set of principles to shape Youth Work • Enjoy working with young people • Passion • Self starters • We have a sense of humour and do actually have fun amidst all the hardships • Optimistic • Not intrusive • The skill set and personal qualities required to do the work • Ability to relate well with young people • Strength based • Youth centred
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of humour is really important 	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	

ETHICAL YOUTH WORK	
Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you say you'll do it, do it!! • Honesty – we keep it real and plant seeds not false hopes • Consistency • Don't make promises you can't keep – you further damage things. It's the biggest trust breaker for those who have already been let down far too often by too many people • You can tell when something has gone off track – people just don't use the service or if they are already there, they leave. • Ethics – can be a really grey area. Need a lot more discussion about Murri ethics. As a start: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obvious one of don't take advantage of young people, whether physically, sexually, economically – in any way at all. • Keep clear records for if anyone questions what you are doing or the way you are working. • figure out what appropriate self-disclosure is – one suggestion always ask yourself WHY you are telling the story: who is it for? If it is for YOU then DON'T! Take responsibility for our relationships and be clear who they are for. • Contact with young people is changing – e.g. access to mobile phone, Facebook – need to have our own boundaries in place for this. Have appropriate filters. • If you have concerns about a young person at risk, don't hold on to it yourself – pass them up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We think about what we do – reflective • We don't make promises we can't keep
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We must be responsible for what we do. • If we are outsiders, we need to do our own learning in new situations, especially if we are not just not from that particular cultural group (i.e. First Nation but not Murri) but outside the whole culture as well (i.e. non-indigenous workers with young Murris) 	
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to be comfortable with young people's assessments of US. It's never just that we assess the young person: they constantly assess us and they make very accurate judgements about which workers or places are likely to be trustworthy or useful • We need some professional boundaries & to "filter out the clowns". We need to protect ourselves as well as young people (SEE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES THIS GROUP GENERATED ABOVE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to be responsible for what we do, be able to justify it, be careful of how we use our power and influence

SECTOR IMAGE, RECOGNITION AND DEVELOPMENT (* n.b. there are many other related comments - see especially the tables for Local knowledge, culture, empowerment, collaborating)

Murri	Mainstream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We get a lot of respect if we do our job well 	
INCLUDE IN DEFINITION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting each other as workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Work is Valued
BARRIERS OR THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have the right to education and training as workers. This needs to be useful. Who is teaching us? We need both the elders and also proper professional development opportunities Limitations to sector development in our region include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff – having the positions, having training, keeping good workers Money Guidelines Funding body requirements Own organisation's lack of understanding of what we do - especially if you are Murri or work with Murris but employed by a mainstream organisation Small community We need to establish own [support] network. Meet regularly. Also go away together from time to time just to sit, talk, listen, relax – this used to happen. Would reduce burn out. We need to take action and go above our managers when and where possible – take things on If you stand up you get defunded is what people have internalised so people are reluctant to take on funding bodies. There is too much change too quickly with too little consultation Policies are often contradictory so you can't follow them anyway Our ideas are often misinterpreted and there is a misuse of power by those at the top 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are a minority group, just like young people I feel like we've become our target group. Not used to actually thinking about what we as a sector really want or need... we've become too driven over the past decade by imposed methods, funding arrangements, etc. Feel like we've got no voice and even if we did we are no longer used to using it. There is less recognition for Youth Work than there is for a lot of other areas that just work with young people (e.g. corrections, social work, psychology, etc) Often looked down upon by other professions or sectors – like teacher's aides and health workers. We can often cop it from other agencies as well and find ourselves continually justifying our jobs We do the hard yards, we often don't have the formal qualifications and yet "the professionals" are the ones who sign off on our work There are not a lot of Youth Work qualifications available (x 2) Sector has a lack of support and recognition & money & it can be all consuming work so people burn out or don't choose to stay There are two types of Youth Workers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those on the ground Those who sit in the office. We need the office sitters to write things up well but they also need to remain true to what's happening on the ground We need to proudly identify ourselves as Youth Workers (e.g. on our FaceBook pages) Need an understanding within our own sector of what our own culture is. Need to skill up new workers in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising the power they have and seeking to use it wisely Having a clear definition of what Youth Work is Actually saying what our values are – being very up front about this Having a clear view about young people that has an holistic analysis We need more support from our peers We need more change from the top <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be blocks with management Too removed Jargon Not seeing things from the ground up We are under increasing pressure to accept the wrong guidelines for working well with young people

Appendix B: Values in Youth Work

Put simply, values are ideas about what is “good” or “bad”, right or wrong, just or unjust that we have consciously thought through.

Everyone agreed that one of the things that makes Youth Work unique is that we deliberately and intentionally have a values-based approach to our work.

Participants were asked to individually identify 3 to 5 key values that they considered essential to shaping Youth Work. Each value was written on a separate piece of paper and these were then mapped collectively on the floor, grouping the same or similar values together. Liz did a little more grouping when writing up each session. The maps give a clear idea of the values prioritised by participants, of the commonality between various groups or regions and once again, of the key differences between the values prioritised by Murri and mainstream Youth Workers.

The combined values maps are on pages 69 and 70. The following tables have been created from them, combining the same or similar ideas. The first table is ordered according to Murri priorities, the second according to Mainstream priorities and the third shows what happens when both sets of values are put together. The numbers indicate how many participants saw each as a key value.

Murri priorities

Value	Murri	Mainstream
Culture	Shapes all	7
Understanding/empathy/compassion/connection/awareness	24	16
Respect	20	21
Honesty/transparency/truth/authenticity	16	14
Good communicator/listener	10	9
Strength based/positive/encouraging	9	6
Love/care/support/peace	8	9
Open minded/non-judgmental/diversity/flexibility/inclusion	8	11
Role model/guide/learning/influence	7	3
Trust/trustworthy/integrity/loyalty	6	10
Fun/humour/celebration/passion	5	5
Belief in young people/change/inherent goodness/hope	4	12
Patience/time/commitment	4	3
Unity/collaboration/sharing/harmony	4	2
Consistency/walk the talk/continuity	3	2
Purposeful/intentional	3	
Reliability/good work ethic	2	
Be yourself/express yourself/ok to feel	2	1
Family/friends/broader social environment/community	2	3
Empowerment/self determination/freedom	1	8
Equality/equal opportunity	1	5
Safety	1	1

Confidentiality	1	2
Worker resilience	1	
Human rights/social justice/fairness/equity/non-discriminatory/advocacy/having a voice		16
holistic		3
Impartiality – is inconsistent		2

Mainstream priorities

Value	Mainstream	Murri
respect	21	20
Human rights/social justice/fairness/equity/non-discriminatory/advocacy/having a voice	16	
Understanding/empathy/compassion/connection/awareness	16	24
Honesty/transparency/truth/authenticity	14	16
Belief in young people/change/inherent goodness/hope	12	4
Trust/trustworthy/integrity/loyalty	10	6
Good communicator/listener	9	10
Love/care/support/peace	9	8
Empowerment/self determination/freedom	8	1
Culture	7	Shapes all
Strength based/positive/encouraging	6	9
Fun/humour/celebration/passion	5	5
Equality/equal opportunity	5	1
Role model/guide/learning/influence	3	7
Patience/time/commitment	3	4
Family/friends/broader social environment/community	3	2
holistic	3	
impartiality	2	
Unity/collaboration/sharing/harmony	2	4
Consistency/walk the talk/continuity	2	3
Confidentiality	2	1
Be yourself/express yourself/ok to feel	1	2
safety	1	1
Purposeful/intentional		3
Reliability/good work ethic		2
Worker resilience		1

Combined priorities

Value	combined
Culture	Shapes all??
respect	41
Understanding/empathy/compassion/connection/awareness	40
Honesty/transparency/truth/authenticity	30
Good communicator/listener	19
Open minded/non-judgmental/diversity/flexibility/inclusion	19
Love/care/support/peace	17
Trust/trustworthy/integrity/loyalty	16
Belief in young people/change/inherent goodness/hope	16
Human rights/social justice/fairness/equity/non-discriminatory/advocacy/having a voice	16
Strength based/positive/encouraging	15
Role model/guide/learning/influence	10
Fun/humour/celebration/passion	10
Empowerment/self determination/freedom	9
Patience/time/commitment	7
Unity/collaboration/sharing/harmony	6
Equality/equal opportunity	6
Family/friends/broader social environment/community	5
Consistency/walk the talk/continuity	5
Purposeful/intentional	3
Be yourself/express yourself/ok to feel	3
Confidentiality	3
holistic	3
safety	2
Reliability/good work ethic	2
impartiality	2
Worker resilience	1

These values and the differing priorities between Murri and mainstream values are discussed in Section Five Values and Youth Work, p 33, and Comparing Murri and mainstream Youth Work, p 28.

MURRI YOUTH WORK VALUES MAP

HONESTY x 15

- Honest communication
- Trust x 6
- Walk the talk
- Consistency
- Reliability
- Good work ethic (not big gammin holes)

NON-JUDGEMENTAL x 3

- No judgement
- Open mindedness
- Diversity and acceptance
- Flexibility
- Forgiving

PURPOSE x 2

- Intentional
- Youth workers enhance young people's experiential learning (good, bad, indifferent)
- Youth workers are living role models and examples of choosing another path
- Equip
- Teach or develop
- Youth workers can influence young people's choices, NOT govern, NOT dictate
- Learning
- Positive role model

- Empowerment
- Equality

- Family
- Friends

- Confidentiality

RESPECT x 17

- Respect people, culture, land
- YABABA (respect) for self, others, elders, country, property
- Respect family

COMMUNICATION x 6

- Good listener x 2
- Reflective

- Genuine care and concern for the welfare of the young person
- Commitment
- Safety - all levels - emotional, physical, etc
- Care

PASSION x 2

- Be outgoing
- Enjoyment
- Express yourself
- Be yourself

- Celebration
- Fun and humour - big kids at heart

PATIENCE x 3

- Time
- It takes longer
- Continuity

UNITY x 2

- Collaboration and partnership
- Sharing

UNDERSTANDING x 5

- Understand young people
- Knowledge of young people
- Understanding of culture, religious and ethnic background
- Compassion x 6
- Empathy x 6
- Awareness
- Connection
- Sensitivity

LOVE x 2

- Love (work from a place of passion)
- Love and support
- Support
- To live without violence but PEACE

- Have a strengths based approach
- Build on strengths
- **MANNA - strength x 2**
- SELF ESTEEM x 2
- Positivity
- **BELIEF IN YOUNG PEOPLE x 2**
- Everyone inherently good
- Hope
- No shame (good way - show how to do and don't hold back)

- Resilience in youth workers

MAINSTREAM YOUTH WORK VALUES MAP

- **Hope x 2**
- **Passion x 2**
- **Fun & humour x 2**
- Optimism regarding the - future
- Joy, fun, happiness
- Everyone can achieve
- Make a change
- Potential opportunity
- Young people can change
- Believe in the capacity of - young people
- Strengths
- Strengths – sometimes not always obvious but need to always be looking for what they are
- Resilience
- Encouraging
- Willing
- Guiding

- Young people deserve to be loved
- Peace and love
- Love – treat as you would be treated
- Love
- **Supportive x 2**
- **Care x 3**
- Safety

- **Honesty x 10**
- Honesty and transparency – I am the same everywhere with whoever and I model how I want young people to act
- Transparency
- Truth
- **TRUST x 5**
- Be trustworthy
- **Integrity x 2**
- Integrity – building relationships based on trust and respect
- Authenticity
- Loyalty
- **Commitment x 2**

- Morality – how to develop it, not what to have
- Encourage young people to have opinions

- **Social justice x 2**
- Equity
- Equality and social justice
- Equal opportunity
- **Equality x2**
- **Young people are the experts in their own lives x 2**
- Self determination
- **Young people have a voice x 2**
- Young people can make decisions
- Empower
- Youth empowerment
- Human beings are all equal
- Everyone should have their human rights met
- Each & every person is an individual & has rights
- Young people have the right to participate
- Human rights for young people
- Justice – rights protection
- Fight for those who have had injustices done to them
- Fight for what's right, be an advocate – social justice
- advocate
- Freedom
- Righteous & caring – being just and fair

- **RESPECT x 15**
- Valuing and respecting all things
- Respect for country & culture
- For others
- For self & others
- YABABA - For others, self, country, elders and property
- Mutual respect

- **Empathy x 8**
- **Compassion x 2**
- **Patience x 2**
- Be there WITH young people
- Reflective with young people
- Compassion for being human & how complex this can be – seek to understand
- Human connection
- Respect the story and the journey
- Feelings – its ok or safe to feel

- **Being non-judgemental x 3**
- **Non-discriminatory x 2**
- Non-prejudicial
- Valuing diversity/ Diversity
- Social inclusion
- Inclusion or inclusivity
- Harmony
- Unity
- acceptance
- **Impartiality x 2**
- **Consistency x 2**

- **Culture x 3**
- Cultural values, kinship and community obligations
- **Recognition of social and cultural context x 3**
- Community
- Understanding young people x 3
- **Families x 2**

- Individualisation – each person is unique and of worth
- Each person is invaluable, irrespective of their abilities, history, family, beliefs, behaviours, etc
- Young people are important & valuable
- Individualism – everyone including parents, children and staff have something to offer
- Self worth

- **Listen x 3**
- **Communication – engaging well x 2**
- Relationship
- Relationship based
- Value silences

- Be open and learning
- I learn from young people
- Learning

- Holistic approach
- Overall health and well being
- A person is more than their physical body

- **Confidentiality x 2**

Appendix C: Views about young people

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they thought the role or purpose of a Youth Worker fitted into the following categories:

CITIZENS OF TOMORROW: these people believe that the next generation need to be taught how to be good adults so they can run Australia well in the future. People who see young people this way are likely to focus on encouraging young people to participate in education/training and become involved in responsible youth activities.

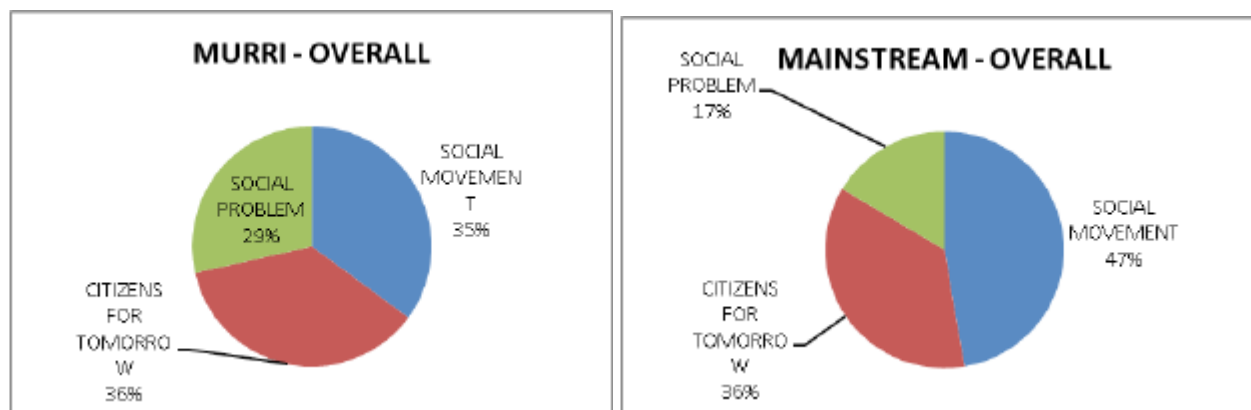
SOCIAL PROBLEM: these people are particularly concerned about problem youth and often see groups such as Indigenous young people, street kids or unemployed young people as important to work with, They want to teach these young people to be good adults.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT: these people believe that young people have unique expertise that they can contribute to society and argue that young people can have valuable ideas about how society should be. They think it's a good idea for young people to be outspoken (Sherington & Irving cited in *What is Youth Work?* YANQ, 2010)

Each person was given 6 sticky dots and was able to "spend" these in any way they wanted to. For instance, someone believing the sole purpose of Youth Work was to ensure young people's voices were heard could put all their dots on "social movement"; someone else who thought the key role was to equip young people as tomorrow's leaders but also thought they should have some say in this, too might put most on "leaders for tomorrow" but one or two on "social movement" and so on.

This information provides a VERY broad "snapshot" of where participants thought Youth Work ought to focus and also illustrates fundamental differences between Murri and mainstream Youth Work.

Comparing Murri and Mainstream views

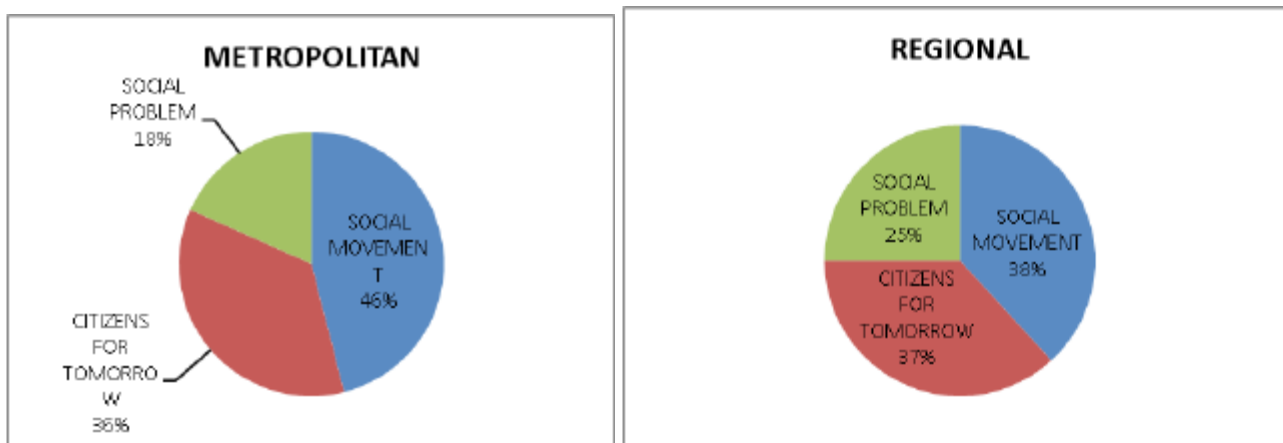


Overall, both Murri and mainstream groups equally viewed young people as citizens for tomorrow (36%). Some groups noted that this was problematic because young people are here today and the role does not give a sense of young people's current value in their community. One Murri group also said this places too much pressure on their role and that there needed to be more involvement from the elders in their community.

The rest of the votes showed differences in degrees to which workers saw young people as "social problems" or as a "social movement." Many groups explained that they did not view young people as BEING PROBLEMS or being "to blame" for their situation but that their vote represented their current preoccupation with all the problems and barriers facing young people and with addressing these as best they could. It is not surprising that Murri groups therefore placed greater emphasis on "social problems."

The mainstream emphasis on young people as a social movement is also reflected in the values maps in Appendix B – the mainstream map has a far greater emphasis on rights, empowerment, advocacy and young people having their own voice than the Murri map does.

Comparing regional and metropolitan views



When comparing regional and metropolitan results “citizens for tomorrow” is the same as in the Murri and mainstream results (36 or 37%). Once again the remaining votes were allocated to either social movement or social problem. Metropolitan workers seem more likely to view young people as a social movement than in the regional centres, although there are clear variations when considering this data at an individual group level.

This activity was primarily concerned with getting a general “feel” of where groups were at and as a discussion starter for the sessions. There was a lot of variation between individual groups from 10% - 40% social problem, 31% - 61% citizens of tomorrow, and 28% - 53% social movement. The overall conclusion was that whilst this sort of analysis was a popular activity with participants and a great discussion starter, it hasn’t made as concrete a contribution to the overall definition as other aspects of the consultation.

APPENDIX D: Proposed Survey tool for wider consultation

YANQ SURVEY: WHAT IS YOUTH WORK

Background and purpose

This survey will contribute to arriving at a definition of Youth Work within Queensland. YANQ is particularly keen to hear from workers with direct experience in working with young people, whether current or in the past, and, who define themselves as “Youth Workers.” Results from the survey will be combined with data from other formal consultation processes YANQ is conducting as part of its Youth Sector Development Project. The end result will be a definition of Youth Work incorporating those statements preferred by a majority of respondents. This definition will be

- accepted by YANQ members,
- promoted for adoption by the broader Youth Sector and
- be up for review by members in 3 years time.

Before completing the Survey, it is highly recommended that you read the background report *Are We There Yet? Findings from What is Youth Work? Consultations, March 2012*, and available on the YANQ website at www.yanq.org.au. This outlines consultations held in four regions across Qld to ascertain support for a working definition of Youth Work proposed by YANQ. All groups consulted with did not want to accept the draft as it was and an alternative definition was developed. The report contains full copies of both the draft definitions that have been used to develop this survey (see pp 14 - 21). It also gives an account of how the alternative definition was developed and compares it with the original draft.

It is also recommended you have read the following two Discussion Papers released by YANQ to support the project:

- *What is Youth Work? A Discussion Paper (2010)*, Suzi Quixley – this provides critical historical & background information about Youth Work, analyses a range of definitions of Youth Work including those accepted in Vic, NSW and Internationally, and, offers a first working definition of Youth Work for adoption across Qld. The working definition was used during the above consultations. http://www.yanq.org.au/images/stories/What_is_Youth_Work_Discussion_Paper.pdf
- *Which Wei? Values in Youth Work. A Murri Perspective. A Discussion Paper (2010)*, Melissa Lucashenko (Yugambah). – this provides critical cultural, historical and contextual information about values in Murri Youth Work and their impact on working well with young Murris. http://www.yanq.org.au/images/stories/Documents/values_in_youth_work-murri_perspective.pdf

The two definitions differ significantly in some key areas and YANQ still needs to determine which concepts are supported by a majority of Youth Workers across Qld. The consultations also included significant input about Murri Youth Work which was then also incorporated into the 2012 draft definition and which is absent from the original definition. Because the consultation group was relatively small (approximately 80 participants) and both definitions contain strong merits, the following survey was developed to decide what Youth Workers want included in the final definition.

Timeframe for completing the survey

You have until 30th September, 2012 to lodge your survey.

- The online Survey Monkey will be closed as of 5pm, 30th September, 2012.
- If you are completing a survey emailed to you from YANQ, you need to have sent it to admin@yanq.org.au by 5pm, 30th September. You will get a reply email acknowledging it has been received.
- If you do not have internet access or prefer not to use on line survey tools, you can get hard copies of the survey and other documents from YANQ.

Instructions for completing this survey

The Survey firstly asks you to provide some information about yourself and your background as a Youth Worker. This will be used to gauge how representative the pool of survey respondents is compared with the Sector overall and to ensure due weight is given to input from direct youth workers and YANQ members.

The Survey then asks you to select the statements from the two draft definitions of Youth Work already developed that you think ought to be included in the final definition. (see pp 14 - 21 of Are We There Yet for complete copies of both definitions). You may also contribute alternative or additional statements. Each statement can be a maximum of 250 characters in the on-line survey.

If you have any technical difficulties with the on-line survey, contact YANQ on 07 3844 7713 or admin@yanq.org.au.

If there is insufficient room for you to include all the changes you wish to make, please send your additional comments to admin@yanq.org.au. If you have any enquiries about the project itself, contact the Project Consultant on lam05@bigpond.com.

SURVEY QUESTIONS: WHAT IS YOUTH WORK?

ABOUT YOU...

Please indicate which best describes you and your employment background in Youth Work. You can only tick one box per question.

- 1 What is your gender identity?
 female male Otrans

- 2 What is your cultural identity?
 Murri or Islander
 other Australian First Nation (e.g. Nunga, Arrernte)
 other Australian
 other First Nation (e.g. Maori, Inuit)
 CALD
 Other _____

- 3 How old are you?
 25 & under
 26 - 35
 36 - 45
 46 - 55
 Over 55

- 4 Do you currently work in the Queensland Youth Sector?
 yes
 no.

If no, have you in the past 5 years?

yes

no

5 How long have you worked as a Youth Worker?

less than 6 months

6 – 12 months

1 – 2 years

2 – 3 years

4 – 5 years

6 - 7 years

8 – 10 years

Over 10 years

6 Where do you work?

Brisbane metropolitan area

other major city or service centre

rural town

remote community

7 Do you currently work with

Mainly ATSI young people

Mainly CALD young people

Young people in general

8 Which best describes your current employing agency?

Indigenous Community Organisation (e.g. Darumbal Community Youth Service Inc)

State based NGO (e.g. Inala Youth Service Inc)

National NGO (e.g. Anglicare)

Local Government

State Government

Federal Government

Private company (e.g. ITEC Health)

9 What role BEST describes your overall employment history in the Youth Sector?

direct service provision

policy

training and education

community development

management

other. Please specify: _____

10 Are you or is the organisation you work with a YANQ member?

yes

no.

QUESTIONS ABOUT DEFINING WHAT YOUTH WORK IS.

Tick the statement you most agree with in each of the following areas. If you don't agree with either statement, add your own alternative.

A Youth Worker is...

someone who works with young people within the context of their culture, identity and place to ensure their rights are protected and promoted and their needs are genuinely met

OR

someone working in a non-government organisation whose primary goal is to protect and promote the individual and collective human rights of young people

OR add yours

A Young Person is...

Someone who sees themselves differently to an older child but who is not yet an adult or being given their due rights as an adult

OR

Someone who has commenced puberty but has not yet been afforded the full rights of adulthood

OR add yours

The primary purpose of Youth Work is to....

resource and support young people who want help to access, navigate and make the best of their life choices

OR

resource and support young people who want help to access, navigate and optimise their life choices

OR add yours

The remainder of the survey asks what you think ought to be included as statements outlining how Youth Workers achieve the above purpose.

The following statements are from both working definitions and have been grouped according to themes. Some of the statements in each group are very similar. Click on ALL the statements you think ought to be included in the accepted definition of Youth Work. There is space at the end of each section

for you to add alternatives or change the wording of those already included. If there is not enough room for you to include all your suggestions, please send additional comments to admin@yanq.org.au.

Culture, place and identity

○ Adopting an overall framework which acknowledges and supports the critical role culture plays in shaping young people's personal identity and place within broader family and social groups. This requires

○ Recognising that young people identify with a range of different cultures and supporting them in developing their own cultural identity

○ Working within individual young people's cultural understandings, including supporting the attached definition of Murri Youth Work

○ Supporting the development of young people's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of broader communities including

- Advocating for young people within their family and community
- Helping parents, adults and elders to understand young people
- Supporting positive connections between young people, their families and the broader community

○ Recognising the integral relationship between young people and their family, community and society

○ Recognising that young people cannot be seen in isolation from their social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts

○ Recognising the diversity amongst young people, and listening to and valuing individual young people's needs, ideas, preferences and choices

○ Enabling young people to become more aware of themselves and their places in the wider community

○ Encouraging and supporting young people to take responsibility as active global, national and local citizens

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Rights and empowerment

○ Focusing on empowerment of young people both individually and as a group including

○ Ensuring young people's voices are heard within their families and the broader community

○ Respecting and promoting young people's rights

○ Standing up for and with young people.

○ Being solid and proud defenders of "youth culture". Challenging negative assumptions made about young people in our communities.

○ Lobbying the government to improve the situation for young people

○ Encouraging and supporting young people to be agents of change – both individually and collectively at both a personal and social level

○ Helping young people to understand their rights, and resourcing young people to address breaches of their human rights

○ Prioritising empowerment of marginalised groups of young people whose human rights are being breached,

and seeking to tip the balance of power in young people's favour

- Actively confronting discrimination against young people and breaches of their human rights
- Promoting the actual and potential contributions of young people to the wider community
- Advocating young people's right to actively participate in community life and access their fair share of community resources

Promoting strengths and change

- Helping young people who need it to navigate the best possible pathway in life. Including
 - Being role models ourselves: setting an example in our own community
 - Showing young people what is possible and helping them achieve their own goals
 - Helping young people make their own choices and learn from their own experiences
 - Providing solid or true foundations – being the roots for young people's trees
 - Using a strengths based, solution focussed approach to our work with young people
- Helping young people to adjust to change and harness opportunities
- Building young people's belief in the possibility of change and their capacity to contribute to positive social and individual change
- Recognising the worth of all young people and building on their assets and strengths

Meeting needs

- Providing flexible support for young people outside formal, statutory systems
- Providing services that meet young people's real needs in a practical way. Including
 - Recognising that the best services and supports are based on local knowledge and local ownership and by making services and programs as responsive as possible to local contexts and perspectives
 - Enabling young people to access all the supports and funding they can and advocating for better guidelines for its distribution
 - Providing proactive and holistic support to young people
 - Providing young people with linkages to other services and supporting them in accessing these
 - Using an integrated and broad range of models, tools and approaches consistent with providing youth centred, culturally appropriate services and supports. This includes community development and peer based projects as well as personal support.
 - Being prepared to offer diverse, flexible services and work in a multi-skilled way

Providing practical, useful support based on young people's real situations including being able to provide consistent, longer term services for young people who may require more intensive support

Providing friendly, informal support

Working alongside young people in a friendly, informal manner

Providing youth centred services and supports in a friendly and informal way including

being there for young people

working at the young person's pace

maintaining young people's confidentiality

remaining open-minded about people's backgrounds and circumstances and treating each situation individually

being prepared to enter into a more personal relationship with young people whilst still being able to maintain ethical – or "professional" - boundaries

Genuinely caring about young people

Values underpinning Youth Work

Recognising that Youth Work is intentionally and deliberately values driven.

Values upheld are those consistent with rights based, young person driven, culturally relevant youth work (e.g. respect, trust, honesty, empowerment...)

If you would prefer to name the values that drive Youth Work, add up to 6:

1

2

3

4

5

6

Ethics and professional responsibility

being conscious of Youth Workers' structural power, and not taking power over young people

○ Particularly recognising the cultural context of marginalised young people and taking responsibility for learning to work in a culturally appropriate way

○ Taking responsibility for and pride in what we do as Youth Workers. Including

○ Being responsible for what we do, being able to justify it and remaining careful of how we use our power and influence with young people and their families.

○ Taking responsibility for our own learning about youth, cultural or community groups if we are “outsiders” (e.g. Australian working with refugees, non-Indigenous person working with young Murris, non drug user working with users).

○ Being clear about our ethical responsibilities to ourselves, young people, families, communities, our organisation and within the broader sector.

○ Being proud of our identity as a Youth Worker, supporting one another, seeking to ensure new colleagues understand what Youth Work means and educating other workers or services about young people and about our role

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Additional statement about rights based youth work.

The following statement was also included as a closing paragraph in current (2010) working draft definition.

Youth Workers recognise that working to genuinely empower young people will inevitably require a higher than usual level of commitment, self-examination and a willingness to grapple with social issues affecting marginalised young people. It will require clear articulation of the multiple social advantages of enabling active civic participation by young people and undertaking community development – in particular, the social value of contributing toward a vibrant, genuinely inclusive democracy in Queensland.

Should it be included?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Include the following statement as an alternative

Murri Youth Work

Do you support including an additional section about Murri Youth Work, like the one developed from the 2012 consultations and outlined below?

○ Yes

○ No

The following questions are for Murri Youth Workers

Which of the following statements do you think ought to be included in the definition of Murri Youth Work?

○ Murri Youth Work includes and supports the statements and principles made in the overall (or general parts) of the definition. (i.e. the rest of the Survey)

○ Murri Youth Work acknowledges Murri cultures as the foundation of everything important for Murri peoples. This includes:

○ Following Murri traditions, laws and protocols and respecting the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia

○ understanding that whilst there is a lot of diversity between different First Nation groups there are many, many similarities and connections.

○ understanding what it is like to be a young Murri in the community - understanding young Murris' lifestyles, goals and problems and all the family and other connections within their lives.

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○ Supporting the development of young Murri's or Islander's identity as an individual, within their family and as part of a broader clan or community.

○ always viewing young Murris within their family and community context

○ supporting and learning from the aunties and nannas who are growing up lots of family

○ seeking to involve elders and extended family where possible and linking young people in with supportive family members

○ advocating for young Murris within their families and communities

○ Playing a broker or bridging role between young people and their families/communities and encouraging both to understand the other's perspectives

○ recognising that Murri Youth Work is often about a search for identity and helping heal transgenerational traumas resulting from parents and grandparents being grown up within white institutions and not being allowed to speak their language or practice their culture: as well as being culturally traumatised these parents have little knowledge of how to grow up their own children. Murri Youth Work therefore includes strengthening and healing family connections where possible. Murri Youth Workers play a critical role in modelling appropriate behaviour within communities and often take on a closer relationship with young Murris, including being seen as "Aunty" or "Uncle." This must be understood and accepted by the broader Youth Sector.

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○ Being solid and proud defenders of "Murri culture". Challenging assumptions made about Murris and Murri youth in our communities.

○ translating "young people's rights" into a language that both young Murris and elders can understand

○ persisting in supporting pride in being Murri. Holding out against the constant barrage of "whiteness" at school and in other places and encouraging young Murri pride in their "blackness" and cultural identity.

○ Doing what's right for young Murris and not just following policies and procedures if they are harmful or wrong.

○

○

○ Recognising that cultural mentoring is an essential part of Murri Youth Work

For Murris this means:

○ supporting one another as Murri Youth Workers no matter where we come from

○ finding our own cultural mentors & seeking their guidance

○ finding out whatever we can about our family history and cultural backgrounds, especially if these have been taken from us

○ being prepared to act as strong role models for young Murris and within our Murri families and communities.

○ doing what we can to educate others about Murris and working with young Murris

○

For others working with young Murris it means:

- seeking – and accepting - cultural and other guidance from local Murris
- respecting cultural contexts or protocols without the need to question them
- accepting that we will rarely have the relationship that Murri Youth Workers have with young Murris, doing whatever we can to acknowledge and support their cultural development as Murris, and finding the best ways to offer what we can as non-Indigenous workers.

Additional questions for CALD Sector workers

Is there enough attention paid to working with CALD young people within the definition (N.B. this is mainly addressed in the survey section on culture, place and identity)

- yes
- no

If not, please provide the additional statements you think ought to be included in the definition.

Anything else??

Any comments or other statements you would like to add about the definition OVERALL?

THANKYOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS IMPORTANT DISCUSSION.



youth affairs network qld