

The Hunter Region regional consultation

On 5 November 2015, almost 60 people who work with children and young people in the Hunter region came together to contribute to a new NSW strategic plan. This is what you told us.



what you thought were **priorities** for children and young people in NSW and the Hunter Region

Issues:

Access to mental health supports

Housing for young people in need

Transport

Communication (knowing what's available for young people)

Transition to adulthood, particularly as OOH support stops at 18 years

Disability

Educational pathways that complement academic achievement (eg vocational)

The impact that TAFE reforms have had (increased prices, decreased quality)

Approaches:

Partnerships, particularly partnerships involving youth

Youth leadership

Strengths based planning

Welfare support in schools

Strengthen connections between professionals and CYP

More consistent service supports

Systems:

NDIS funding

Need to address duplication of services and service gaps



what you thought was **working** for children and young people in NSW and in the Hunter Region

Collaboration: Consultation and teamwork across organisations, common goals, **partnerships and alliances** being built between organisations, relationships between NSW Health and high schools (eg Youth Health Teams, Healthy Schools Health Futures Y7-10).

Voice: Youth having a voice such as through youth advisory panels and youth reference groups, giving youth respect and responsibilities, **the emergence of youth leadership** across a range of streams (esp 16-25 year olds). Creating safe environments, **fostering** young people's creativity, volunteer support roles (SES, SLSC, organised sports, scouting/cadets etc).

Vulnerable young people: Child-centred approaches, using Signs of Safety framework; a cultural shift that recognises child protection is everyone's business in many communities; strengths-based planning and ownership of case plans in the Hunter.

Housing and homelessness: Housing support for young people (eg YPPS and Homeless Youth Assistance Program) as well as supported housing, youth Private Rental Subsidy and Youth Accord.

Structures: Child Wellbeing Unit assisting health staff ,PCYC resources and support.

Education efforts: Schools as Community Centres (Windale, Fennell Bay), early literacy programs in the Hunter for disadvantaged young people, ESL courses, homework centres and enrichment programs after school, specialist options like Alesco and Big Picture, Opportunity Hubs (linking from high schools to the future), YAKKA day (try a skill for Aboriginal and disadvantaged young people), Love Bites respectful relationships program (Y9-10), early intervention workers in schools.

Services: Headspace, increasing ease of mental health conversations; NDIS funding for young people on the spectrum (wraparound services and early intervention); pathways to access support services via professional and community organisations.



what you thought was **not working** for children and young people in NSW and the Hunter Region

Education and schools: Gaps in education, need for low cost/free educational tutoring. A drop in the quality of vocational courses alongside price increases impeding progress. A lack of support services (including trauma specific supports) in schools and vocational settings

Employment: Responses to regional adjustments which have seen declining economy, jobs and industry—young people not part of responses, career counselling needs strengthening (for general school and vocational training), alternative non-academic pathways for young people.

Life skills and transitions: Healthy relationship information for years other than Y9-10; discipline in school and home; transitions into adulthood (need full time OOHC support), gaps in ongoing supports at key transition times eg full time OOHC to SIL and aftercare.

Service workforce and systems: Gaps in education, health and other service delivery, referral references, services overlap, varied effectiveness of Family Referral Services. Short funding cycles create uncertainty.

Other: Transport limits the ability of YP to connect safely.

System gaps: Service gaps for 8-12 year olds, insufficient eligibility for the NDIS for young people with mild-moderate needs, significant differences in resourcing between older established communities (well-resourced) and newer, fast-growing communities (less resourced, higher demand).

Mental health support: Across the full spectrum (Headspace, Kaleidoscope child and adolescent mental health support)—long waiting lists, high staff turnover, access is difficult, a “clinical” environment requiring 2 GP appointments.

Vulnerable young people: need for welfare support IN schools, a disconnect between professionals and CYP, drugs (a high number of issues but no support available) and crime. Need consistency in service supports (ie key people in young peoples’ lives).

Empowering young people: Disjointed communication. Need for services for young people with similar challenges to support collaboration and networking. There are high community expectations of young people.

Housing and homelessness: Need for crisis and emergency accommodation; need for sustained accommodation linked to education pathways; rental market is difficult.

*We’ve bolded popular issues

we asked you:

What **three big ideas**, if supported across the state, could improve the lives of children and young people?

and we gave you some prompt questions:

What **state-wide directions** currently support **effective local decision making and service delivery** for children and young people?

What **state-wide directions** currently hinder **effective local decision making and service delivery** for children and young people?

What makes for **good child-centred practice** in this area?

How should **children and young people** be involved

What **local initiatives** could be adapted and scaled up across the state?



you told us your big ideas for the strategic plan*

Jobs, training, innovation, education:

Expand the PDHPE curriculum to include “skills for life effectiveness”, including resilience, civics, communication and collaboration, parenting skills and financial literacy.

Literacy and numeracy preparation before school entry.

Potentially increasing school days for older students to provide a more realistic transition to work.

Mandatory trauma informed practice and mental health first aid training for teachers, both pre- and in-service.



Effective service integration:

Greater use of high schools as service hubs: while some primary schools offer services, in general high schools do not. **Early intervention workers for all schools**, assisting the entire family.

A central location or contact to find assistance for service workers. Could include Patchwork but also databases to promote communication.

Review and amend service specifications to address the service gap for 8-12 year olds.

Expand the partnering of health and education, enabling access to healthcare via school clinics, such as through Kaleidoscope.

Mental health:

The major issues reported are a lack of affordable access to long-term and intensive psychological support; soft entry points eg drop in groups, and waiting times. In response, the ideas are:

Greater use of drop in, group work and outreach services.

Alter the Medicare rebate to allow additional sessions for complex clients.

Improve pay and conditions to attract more psychologists.

*And lots of other ideas about how to make the strategic plan work that we also captured.

here are more big ideas for the strategic plan

Youth leadership:

Build **youth leadership opportunities** into policy across all levels.

Build on successes (eg Girl Guides, Scouts, Lions Youth of the Year, Rotary RYLA and youth leadership courses, Grow a Star, Heywire, Indent funding, youth councils, RYDON)—use these frameworks so we don't reinvent the wheel.

Subsidise funding for fees, memberships.

Networking across local governments so they can deliver combined youth week events (including networked transport and timetabling)

Domestic and family violence:

Youth-led initiatives such as Love Bites program, Drop the Beat using 'map your world' technology to shift the culture around DV and enable YP to find and deliver solutions.

Perpetrator programs, with more funding into early diversion services before there are charges and soft entry points for self-referral. Also early intervention during antenatal contact.

Domestic violence court, like a drug court focusing on diversion from custodial sentence to a community sentence engaged in perpetrator treatment and resolution of whole of life issues (such as housing, employment, mental health).

Housing and homelessness:

Greater use of the **FOYER models** for 16-24 year olds, connecting accommodation with education and vocational training, health, employment and safety

Accommodation hubs where young people can access underutilised accommodation in motels, hotels and vetted households.



thank you for your time and your wisdom.



keep communicating with us via
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