

Media Release

Recovery Youth Support Service Evaluation Report highlights importance of youth-focused disaster recovery

Thursday, 27 March 2025

The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Zoë Robinson, has today released the [Recovery Youth Support Service \(RYSS\) Evaluation Report](#), highlighting the critical need for youth-focused disaster recovery and providing recommendations for future programs.

Following the devastating floods in the Northern Rivers in 2022, the Advocate received funding to build a recovery service dedicated to children and young people. Informed by the needs of children and young people with lived experience of the flooding, the Advocate launched the Recovery Youth Support Service in 2023 for communities that were affected by floods throughout the region. RYSS focused on providing tailored support through advocacy, consultation, capacity building, community engagement, and care pathways, offering one-on-one disaster recovery support tailored to their specific needs.

Insight Consulting prepared the independent *RYSS Evaluation Report*, conducting interviews with children, young people and stakeholders directly involved in the program, along with a review of program documentation.

Ms Robinson said, “RYSS addressed the unique needs of children and young people in the Northern Rivers post the 2022 floods. Working primarily with children and young people in temporary pod accommodation, the team supported improving social connections, confidence, housing access, mental health, and engagement with education and employment.

“This evaluation report found that the presence of ACYP in the Northern Rivers had a positive impact on children and young people on their recovery journey.”

As we saw during ex-Cyclone Alfred, all levels of government are focusing on supports and services for communities, and preparedness for emergencies.

The *RYSS Evaluation Report* highlights that the program's flexible, youth-led model for eligibility and disaster recovery support is key to its high levels of stakeholder satisfaction in this environment.

Additionally, the report found that RYSS was a vehicle to improve the recovery experiences of the youngest community cohorts in future disasters.

The evaluation found that the program's child-focused delivery helped it to:

- Facilitate children's social engagement in pod villages where conflict, isolation and a general sense of disengagement were observed in the program's absence.

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- Re-engage children and young people with critical supports - for example schools and NDIS - while their family networks were unable to advocate on their behalf in these spaces.
- Identify systemic disaster recovery needs such as transport and child-friendly spaces in temporary disaster recovery housing communities.

While it was agreed that future RYSS programs are best delivered by local community-based organisations, most stakeholders asked for pathways to access the expertise of ACYP in disaster recovery and community development and strategic planning more generally.

Ms Robinson concluded, “Locally, children and young people, especially in – but not limited to – pod villages, received one-on-one support and community-based activities that were effective in supporting pathways in mental health, education and community connection.

“This report affirms that programs like RYSS are an effective service model for cohort-specific disaster recovery that may be adapted for other vulnerable groups.”

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For more information or to arrange an interview with the Advocate for Children and Young People please contact: Anwen Ruttle on 0439 346 249