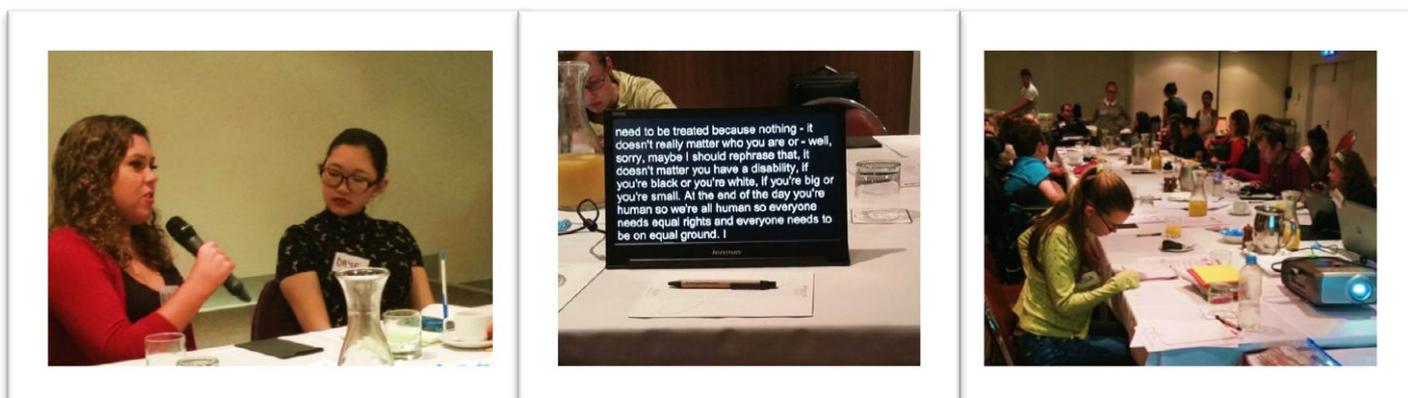


What's Important to YOUTH | 2015

Youth Disability Advocacy Service

“So we don't like 'inspirational' we are just people doing what we are passionate about. That is what we want to be seen as. And we're not suffering but we are struggling because they're not listening.”



Organisation

The Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) is a state-wide service providing systemic and individual advocacy to young people with disabilities aged 12 to 25 years. YDAS is funded by the Office for Disability to employ two part-time staff to work with more than 150 young people with disabilities each year. YDAS receives complaints from young people with disabilities about discrimination in education, employment, housing, abuse and neglect in disability service provision, and much more.

YDAS is a partner agency of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and its work is directed by YDAS Steering Committee members who are young people with disabilities aged 12 to 25.

Recommendations

1. Safeguard against the abuse and neglect of young people with disabilities by:
 - a) Implementing the recommendations of VEOHRC's [Desperate measures: The relinquishment of children with disability into state care in Victoria](#) report to reduce the risk of family break-down and social and economic costs to young people, their families and the Government.

- b) Increasing recurrent advocacy funding to the Youth Disability Advocacy Service to enable advocacy outreach for young people with disabilities who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect.
2. Improve access to education for people with a disability by:
- a) Implementing the Special Needs Plan for Victorian Schools and monitor and reduce the use of seclusion and restraint against students with disabilities. It is essential that the plan promotes evidence-based alternatives within a human rights framework..
 - b) Implementing the recommendations of the VEOHRC's [Held Back](#) report, so that young people with disabilities have equal access to education.
 - c) Reviewing the impacts of 'Ministerial Order No. 625 – Procedures for Suspension and Expulsion'. This review should include any changes to the rate of suspensions and expulsions over time, the outcomes for students after school exclusions, how disciplinary processes are operating in practice, and whether any changes are needed to uphold young people's right to an education.
 - d) Developing and delivering an inclusive education and anti-bullying strategy for Victorian schools in order to eliminate discrimination and bullying of students with disabilities.
3. Support young people with disabilities to access housing in the community with appropriate individualised supports by:
- a) Developing a disability housing strategy that addresses the unmet need for accessible and affordable housing in the community. Tenancy should be separate from service provision, so that young people need not fear losing one service if they complain about the other. They must have full choice and control regarding who they live with, where they live and who provides their support.
 - b) Incorporating the [National Liveable Housing Design Guidelines](#) in all new housing developments and introduce specific incentives to encourage the development of affordable housing that meets these Guidelines.
4. Increase the social inclusion and wellbeing of young people with disabilities by:
- a) Funding projects and programs that are directed towards increasing the social inclusion and social participation of people with disability in education, employment, sports and recreation, cultural activities, and civic roles.
 - b) Deliver on the [Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2013-2017](#) and provide an appropriate increase in resources to meet the milestones for the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
 - c) Develop a disability employment plan that includes strategies to increase employment participation for young people disabilities including targets for the recruitment and retention of young people with disabilities in the Victorian Public Service.
 - d) Provide funding to support young people with disabilities to develop positive self-image, and disability pride through peer mentoring programs.

Methodology

YDAS employed three methods to consult with young people with disabilities:

1. An electronic survey based on the questions provided by the Office for Youth;

2. One-on-one interviews with young people;
3. A forum held in Melbourne on 17 October 2015.

Electronic Survey

YDAS developed an electronic survey using Survey Monkey and distributed the link through YDAS' Facebook page (which has approximately 1800 members), to peak disability organisations across Victoria, and via email to all RuralAccess, MetroAccess and DeafAccess workers across Victoria. The survey received five responses in four weeks; only three individuals answered questions beyond the demographic data. YDAS advertised the Office for Youth's own survey on its Facebook page, which received 1200 views, before the YDAS survey and believes this is one reason for the lack of responses received.

One-on-one interviews

YDAS offered one-on-one interviews as an option for young people with disabilities to provide input into the consultation. One young person expressed an interest in an interview however supports were unable to be arranged in time (i.e. Auslan interpreting) and the survey link was sent to the young person instead.

Forum

YDAS ran a forum on Saturday 17 October at the Quality Hotel Batman's Hill on Collins in Melbourne's CBD. YDAS advertised the event across Victoria through YDAS' website and social media, all Youth Affairs Council of Victoria networks, via RuralAccess, MetroAccess and DeafAccess workers (a phone call was made by a YDAS volunteer to all 68 workers and advertising was also sent out via email), and disability peak organisations including the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit, the Victorian Council of Social Services, the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, National Disability Services, VicDeaf, Women with Disabilities Victoria, and Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities. Advertising has reached more than 2500 youth organisations thousands across Victoria through these networks alone. YDAS has also identified a number of young people who have been directly invited to submit an Expression of Interest application including members of the YDAS Steering Committee, volunteers and past clients.

The event was attended by 12 young people with disabilities (RSVPs were received from 16 young people), 2 YDAS' staff members, 2 volunteers and 2 staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (who attended to provide support to two rural young people). YDAS employed 2 paid support workers to provide personal care services and a stenographer to provide live transcription for a Deaf participant. YDAS provided taxi transport for 35% of young people attending, and 65% of young people attending required assistance to participate in some way (e.g. assistance with meals). YDAS spent considerable time planning to ensure the event was fully accessible to young people with disabilities and supports purchased was almost 25% of the total project budget.

The event was facilitated by a 25-year-old YDAS Steering Committee member who designed the session in consultation with YDAS staff. The session focussed only on the consultation questions provided by the Office for Youth and used two simple methods: 1) A worksheet to accurately capture individual answers (e.g. ranking the eight most important issues), 2) A roundtable discussion where participants were encouraged to answer all questions in the larger group. Answers to each question were summarised by the facilitator and recorded on butcher's paper.

Literature Review

As presented in the Interim Report submitted to the Office for Youth on 30 September, YDAS undertook a literature review to identify peer-reviewed and grey literature that directly

cites the views of young people with disabilities on issues most important to them. The literature review, while not a comprehensive or rigorous research project, provides a brief overview of key issues and provides some quantitative background to the qualitative responses received through the consultation process. The literature review is attached with this report.

Demographic Information

	No .	Age	Gender		Background		Location	
Survey	3	21-23	Male	3	Aust. born	13	Metro	2
			Female	8	O/S born	1	Rural/Reg.	1
			Other	0	ATSI	0	Growth	0
Forum	11	15-24	Male	1	Aust. Born	10	Metro	6
			Female	1	O/S born	1	Rural/Reg.	4
			Genderqueer	1	ATSI	0	Growth	1
Total	14	21.5 (average)	Male	4	Aust. Born	13	Metro	8
			Female	9	O/S born	1	Rural/Reg.	5
			Genderqueer	1	ATSI	0	Growth	1

Young people with disabilities YDAS consulted disclosed their primary disabilities which included: physical (5 participants), sensory (3), neurological (3), psychosocial (2) and intellectual (1). Young people attending the forum were asked during registration whether or not they work and/or study: 6 were studying (secondary school = 2, TAFE = 2, University = 2) and 3 were currently employed (55% of those currently unemployed are keen to be working).

Outcomes – Key findings

Summary

Young people with disabilities consulted listed education as the most important issue, followed by employment, training, transport, mental health, discrimination, housing, and alcohol and drugs. Key concerns raised about education included bullying by teachers and students, inadequate resourcing to succeed in education, and poor understanding by educators about how to teach and support students with disabilities.

Young people made many suggestions for actions the Office for Youth can take through its youth policy including strengthening legal and policy protections to prevent and address discrimination; employing people with disabilities to provide disability training for educators, employers, mental health workers and public transport staff; urgently addressing full access to public transport and the built environment; investment in peer-to-peer support structures; and ensuring services across all sectors (e.g. mental health, education, medical) are easy to access and provide respectful support.

Young people broadly agreed with the proposed vision, objectives and framework for co-design, however had a range of suggestions for improvement. All young people consulted said that they would like to be involved in the work of the Office for Youth and recommended supports that should be put in place to facilitate their full participation.

Themes and Trends

The section below provides a summary of the problems and solutions identified by young people during YDAS' consultations:

Education

Problem: Young people reported being bullied by teachers and students, experiencing social isolation at school, not having enough and/or the right support at school to succeed, and inaccessible buildings and spaces.

Young people suggest: Strengthening and enforcing equal opportunity protections; compulsory and comprehensive disability training for educators; increased peer-to-peer support programs for students with and without disabilities.

Employment

Problem: Young people have major barriers to finding employment and current systems are not working.

Young people suggest: Incentives for employers to hire young people with disabilities; introducing quotas to improve employment rates.

Transport

Problem: Public transport remains inaccessible to many young people with disabilities and transport operators are not well-equipped to work with customers with disabilities.

Young people suggest: Fast-track works to improve accessibility on public transport in areas of most need; urgently increase funding to public transport access upgrades; increase availability of wheelchair-accessible taxis; provide disability training for all public transport employees.

Training: no comments made during consultations.

Mental Health

Problem: access to mental health services is compromised by a lack of understanding by practitioners of disability issues as well and overly-complex processes to engage with services.

Young people suggest: fund training for mental health workers in disability issues and dual-diagnosis; remove unnecessary administrative processes required to access services (e.g. two referrals required for 10 counselling sessions); ensure mental health awareness campaigns are co-designed with and respectful of service-users.

Discrimination

Problem: young people with disabilities want lack decision-making power in their own lives and often feel disrespected and misrepresented.

Young people suggest: Fund industry-specific disability awareness training to be provided by people with disabilities for people who work with young people with disabilities; ensure discrimination is met with serious consequences (e.g. financial penalties); increase funding to organisations who assist young people with disabilities to pursue discrimination cases and systemic change.

Housing

Problem: Most housing is inaccessible to people with physical disabilities.

Young people suggest: Government should require developers to build a percentage of fully wheelchair-accessible housing stock and adaptable housing.

Alcohol and Drugs: no comments made during consultations.

Other actions suggested by young people for inclusion in the new youth policy which were not covered under the eight key issues identified by the Office for Youth included:

- Improving the social inclusion of young people with disabilities through peer-to-peer mentoring, inclusive sport and recreation, and more resources for schools so that they can implement Social Inclusion Plans for students.
- Ensuring the built environment, including private businesses, is accessible to all by strengthening the law, using incentives and imposing fines.
- Supporting people with disabilities as parents by implementing evidence-based strategies within a human rights approach.
- Improving disability services so that they are easy to find and provide individualised, responsive and respectful service, by bringing consumers together to share information and by enforcing service standards more rigorously.

Data Collected: Questions 1-11

What's Important: The eight important issues

The section below provides answers to questions 1-6 in the 'Non-Government Consultation Guide Youth People'.

Question 1: *How important are these issues to you (Education, Employment, Training, Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs, Discrimination, Housing, Transport)? (Number these in order of importance from 1= most important, 8 = least important)*

Overall, young people ranked education as the most important issue (90% surveyed ranked it in their top four issues), followed by employment (70%), training (70%), transport (70%), mental health (40%), discrimination (40%), housing (30%). Young people were less concerned with alcohol and drug issues with 80% of young people ranking it at number seven or eight in importance.

Question 2: *Thinking about the issue you selected as the most important issue to you. Why do you think this is the most important issue?*

Education

Education was the most important issue to the majority of those surveyed for a range of reasons including that young people had been bullied in school by teachers and students, believe they received a sub-standard education due to inadequate teacher training and low expectations of their potential, and poor support:

Issues with educators and providers

“...education is an important issue for me because some people just jump to conclusions about my condition and think that my disability actually hinders my mental strength...adults who are so stuck in their ways...don't want to deviate and accept us for who we are.”

“...there was another blind student there at my school and I heard that a few of the staff members were not quite sure how to help her. They were kind of guiding her in ways that we consider as being awkward...”

“...there was one teacher that just didn't understand me at all and didn't treat me like everyone else and thought I was crazy in the head.....it is mainly the teachers that are having problems dealing with me”.

“...I have severe depression due to bullying in high school...So I was unable to attend a lot of school towards the end due to bullying [by] other staff members, not with kids...I don't want people to go through the similar things that I went through...I actually got to a point where I was suicidal at one stage...saw things happening to other kids and was told that I couldn't report that because I wasn't the kid that it was happening to even though those kids were non-verbal.”

“My most important issue is education because last year I had a really hard year with my education...which resulted in me moving to another school which is much better...It is a lot more open...everyone has to be included.”

Social inclusion in education

“It pretty much started for me in high school. I had a few friends but I guess I was shy and I felt different so that made it hard to really get a big group of friends. I just used to spend lunch in the integration rooms. For me, that kind of affected my ambitions to further my education and also employment.”

“...I never really had much of a circle of friends. I was always sort of isolated and because I could not see where they were I had to wait for them to come to me. I just felt like schools in general don't have enough awareness of disability...”

“I think at my school the issue was that everyone tip-toed around you. They were too scared to ask, "Why are you in a wheelchair?"...I would prefer someone to be like, "Why are you in the wheelchair?"...get that out of the way and they can get to know you, not the wheelchair.”

“...It was like playing footy, I felt left out because I couldn't actually do what they could do and I think they really put an emphasis on that for some reason...I quickly found that the further I progressed through school the better understanding kids had of me. They became more accepting...”

“...high school was the breakthrough year for me...I didn't know whether I would get abused or whether I would get singled out...it was a real burden to carry around...I'm surprised of how accepting the students were...Yes, they made false assumptions about my condition...I don't blame them for that because they don't know any better themselves but...now I feel really happy with the group of friends I've got...”.

Inaccessible buildings

“...I feel really happy where I am now if only the access was a little bit better around the school.”

Employment

The majority of young people attending the forum reported major challenges finding paid work. One young person listed employment as their number one concern and said that:

Work experience

“I'm putting employment as my number one issue...because growing up I started getting the disability pension at, like, 16...and it was awesome having that support...but now I'm kind of looking for a job and I don't have any work experience”

Training

No comments were offered by young people on training for Question 2, however young people at the forum viewed training as a subset of education.

Transport

A number of young people raised transport as an important issue and discussed the importance of equal access to transport infrastructure, including public transport and taxis. One young person identified transport as the most important issue to them:

Accessibility

“...I'm particularly passionate about public transport being more accessible...especially with independent access to trains... trams and then some V/Line services, particularly those that are local or run by the old trains”

Mental Health

Two forum participants spoke about challenges to accessing mental health services. Those who identified it is very important said that:

Issues with professionals

“...there are difficulties accessing diagnosticians and doctors who can look at you and take you at face value with your condition...holistic mental health care...”

Stigma and acceptance

“...the past four or so years has been a constant process of initial diagnosis, refining, initial diagnosis and more refining. I am right now at a stage where I am comfortable with my 'diagnosis'...but we veer between completely invisible and being fetishised...I have gone through the past few years feeling alone and invisible and now it is just like I am really, really highly visible...anxiety and depression are now a part of this public narrative...but [other diagnoses are] something which really very, very few people know about...I don't know which one I hate more, being invisible or being hyper visible.”

Access to supports

“It is really hard to access mental health care in this state. In order to get 10 Medicare-subsided counselling sessions, I have to go to the GP, get a referral and make sure the person I have been referred to is an appropriate person for me to talk to about really personal stuff. After six sessions I have to go back to GP, get another referral and a letter from the counsellor to the GP to get that referral for four more sessions. Like six hours and I need to get another referral for it, then I'm on my own. If my counsellor didn't offer concession rates I wouldn't have been able to keep on going and I would have been in a lot more trouble than I am currently in.”

Discrimination

The majority of young people consulted were concerned with discrimination, both discriminatory attitudes and inaccessible built environments:

Making your own decisions

“...discrimination is most important to me because I've been treated really badly and people have made choices for me at school and in education so I've never really had a voice...that really needs to change...that we have more of a voice and choices...instead of other people making them for us.”

Incorrect assumptions

“...you've got discrimination as well as people not knowing what's socially right for communicating with people with disabilities. Some of us may have intellectual disabilities, some of us may have physical problems, but...don't treat us like dumb arses.”

“there is discrimination in a lot of pubs when people go out drinking if you've got an Ataxia, which is a form of CP where you wobble a lot, they won't serve you because they think you are drunk and you are not drunk but you can't get your balance right”

Representation

“The media has only two sides and they are both extreme: that this girl suffers from blindness or whatever it is, and...the other side, "She's inspirational, she catches public transport. What a good job she does." Really, that's rubbish. We are neither. We should be seen as equal individuals who just need some guidance and some help.”

“this doesn't just go to the Office for Youth, it should really be a state-wide policy in terms of how we address and portray disability...why, for example, couldn't we get more arts funding in terms of a grant to expand programs like Quippings Disability Unleashed because it was fascinating...an entire hour of satire about the disability sector, bang, right in the face. It would help negate the image that the media has about us.”

Housing

No comments were offered by young people on housing for Question 2.

Alcohol and Drugs

No comments were offered by young people on alcohol and drugs for Question 2.

Question 3: Is there anything else you want to tell us about these issues?

All responses to Question 3 are captured under Question 2 above.

Question 4: Are there other issues that are important to you that are not on the list?

Inclusion and identity

“The most important issue wasn't actually on this list but to me it's social inclusion and sense of belonging and identity...because growing up I kind of felt isolated and different and I guess that's kind of stuck with me until now and I feel like a lot of my friends and other people feel the same as me.”

“When I started playing sports that kind of changed everything for me because I made new friendships and I built confidence and, yeah, that put me on the right path.”

Access to the built environment

“...accessibility to...other public places that may not have disabled access...that is one of the main issues for me...If it wasn't for staircases I may be able to get to more places...it's kind of hard to tell the business owners that you need disabled access because they may say no...even things like pubs or hotels or whatever...It is a problem.”

Parental rights

“...a lot of people with disabilities, being intellectual and physical, are still having their children taken away from them...by the legal system...”

Low expectations and service delivery

“I was told that [the special school] could only help me find somewhere to go if I wanted to go to a day program and because I didn't want to go to a day program my school wasn't going to help me transition. Then one of my friends didn't want to go to a day program, but because she had an intellectual disability they managed to use that against her to talk her into going to a day program. So when you come to service provision you really need to give people more options about the services they can utilise to find courses or careers that they want to do because there are more services out there...it is about knowing where to find them and a lot of people need help with that.”

Question 5: *Thinking about all of the issues, which would you like to see government taking action on? This could be in the form of changing the law, offering new or better programs or services, or doing things differently.*

Young people consulted identified actions government should take in all areas except for Training and Alcohol and Drugs (see Question 6).

Question 6: *What do you think the government could do to tackle the issues you identified above?*

Young people had a range of suggestions for action government could take in six of eight identified issues including:

Education

Equal opportunity

“...I think it is really important to give us all of the opportunities that other people get...”

“...There should be, like, a policy for people with disabilities and how people react to them and how schools help them and make decisions...we should have equal rights to other people so we are treated the same...”

Educating people with and without disabilities

“If the Government does [disability awareness] education in all schools, it should be from a person who has that disability and knows about others. It should be an ongoing [part of the] curriculum.”

I think it's most important that [education about disability] starts in primary schools because...the biggest question I used to get asked [by children]...is: What's the wheelchair for? Why don't your legs work?...It needs to start in...primary school, like pre-prep sort of stuff.”

“...Not just in disability education, not just in high schools in general but all schools and not just for staff members, also to educate us as students on how we can help others who might not be able to advocate for themselves. I think that is so important.”

“I took part in a buddy program when I was in year 6 and I had a pre-prep and her name was Dylan and she thought I was fantastic...she didn't see my disability as a so-called disadvantage or a problem, she just saw me as me. That's how you are

going to change attitudes by starting it off early and continuing it throughout the person's education.”

“...I was a school captain...and there was another blind student there at my school and I heard that a few of the staff members were not quite sure how to help her...so I figured that as a student I had to do something so I spoke at an assembly just to give them a few tips on how to help her but from a student's perspective. I think it is essential that as students learn how to teach others, especially staff.”

Employment

Quotas

“I think there should be more incentives for employers to employ disabled people. Even quotas maybe that need to be met.”

Training

No comments were offered by young people on training for Question 6, however young people at the forum viewed training as a subset of education.

Transport

Fast track access to public transport

“I would love to see fast tracking the accessibility of the tram network...but also about making the stops accessible and in the immediate term make sure that the low floor trams actually operate on routes with the appropriate stops so using them where they're actually useful. Then similar with V/Line fast tracking or putting money aside in the budget now to replace locomotive rolling stock with access to stops where there's just one step from the footpath to the shop, requiring local councils to raise the footpath so that it is level with the shops...”

“...with the old V/Line trains, having that plan to phase them out as soon as practically possible because most of them offer either no wheelchair access or very limited wheelchair access and it's particularly to places like Shepparton or Swan Hill or Warrnambool that are entirely reliant on old V/Line trains.”

“In Canberra all the buses have both visual screens and announcements telling - announcing every bus stop it went past...the Government should fit passenger information displays and automated announcements beyond the smart bus and new trams and fit them to all, even older trams in the meantime and all bus services...there should be a law.”

Increased funding

“I live in South Melbourne... right near a flat tram stop, flat trams regularly go up and down there a lot and yet I can still sit there and wait 20 minutes for a flat tram. So I think the Government definitely needs to put more funding into public transport.”

Availability of taxis

“Trying to get a wheelchair taxi at peak hour is impossible and trying to get to work in the morning, too bad. They are all out of there. No one will come and get you. We should be put at the top of the list and told - because at the moment taxi drivers are not told to come and pick us up and they should be.”

Educating public transport employees

“There needs to be disability education for public transport [operators]...”

Mental Health

Nuance in awareness campaigns

“In terms of what I think the Government could do... somebody left something on my [Facebook] feed of [a government Minister] wearing odd socks for odd socks day because mental illness is cute and quirky, like forgetting how to put on socks the right way. Can we stop with that, please?”

Discrimination

Education and awareness

“...I think maybe disability awareness at schools or some kind of mentoring program or maybe have improvement to training for teachers and youth workers...”

Punishment for discriminating

“...if someone's doing something that is hurting the other person...they are going to get fined if they do that and break the law if they do that...It just needs to be fixed.”

“I think the most important thing is discrimination...and all types of discrimination should be banned.”

Changes in the law

“...access to legal protection isn't very good for the disabled community. At the moment if you do if you are discriminated against and you make a complaint usually it's settled via a conciliation conference and therefore there is no precedence. Individuals are getting relief but it is not helping to move the law forward in terms of disability.”

Housing

Accessible and adaptable housing stock

“...with housing I'd like to see a policy where all new homes and major modifications so that they're ready to be adapted for disability access”.

Alcohol and Drugs

No comments were offered by young people on alcohol and drugs for Question 6.

Draft Vision

Question 7 – Draft Vision: Report on whether young people agree with this vision or whether they have come up with their own vision.

Overall, young people were very supportive of the draft vision – “I think everybody has that vision” – and they offered suggestions for improvement including that:

“Disadvantaged sounds a lot like an interpersonal problem. It implies you are an agent in your own unhappiness or in your own current social circumstances where a

lot of this stuff isn't created by us. It is created for us and then imposed on us...I prefer the term oppression because it recognises that there is a system that doesn't like us and doesn't include us because we don't fit a common mould, a common shared set of life's circumstances, and I don't accept that we are the agents of our own disadvantage.”

“I don't like the word 'opportunities'. I don't like it because it's broad to the extent that it is almost meaningless. Is it a [genuine] opportunity if you only give somebody the chance to go to a special school? Or is an opportunity when you give them all of their options, give them a bunch of information to look over and help them make their own choice?”

“It suggests that all disadvantaged people are disengaged. That's very much not the case. I think it should be ‘or’.”

“It needs to be even more like 12 to 25 or 26 at the very least. That is basically the youth age.”

“It is very vague as to timelines... are we talking by the time [young people] are 24...we will have maximised all their opportunity for them?”

“I would make the vision: to enable young people to reach their full potential and be included in everyday life”.

“Maximise services and maximise choices – not ‘maximise opportunities’.”

Draft Objectives

Question 8 – Draft Objectives: What do you think is the most important action that the government should take for each of these objectives?

“I totally agree with these statements...they're all true...these objectives are very similar to the thoughts I have about how people should be treated and...how we need to be treated because it doesn't matter you have a disability, if you're black or you're white, if you're big or you're small. At the end of the day you're human...everyone needs equal rights and everyone needs to be on equal ground. I know it sounds clichéd but it is...what I believe - I believe in a fair go.”

“I do agree with them - with those statements but I think some other things have to be on there like a sense of, like, having to not have to put up with discrimination...Like actually having some respect and dignity for people with disabilities and...equal rights...have the same things as everybody else...”

“There is lots of words there but it is hard to really understand what it means.”

“Almost none of those objectives currently happen, especially being listened to and having the right to raise issues.”

“The objectives look like they have been drafted by people who go home and have full tummies and they have warm beds to go to and a stable job...it looks like the people who wrote this really don't have very many challenges... whereas we are having trouble just surviving and being respected and being treated as human beings.”

“We talk to the Government about what's going on and that is really hard to do. It should be easy to do but it's hard to do. It's hard to even get them to have a meeting with us let alone listen to us.”

“Complaints-making is really difficult.”

“...ethnicity and race are not the same thing and both of them should be included. Race is a social construct; ethnicity is identity and belonging.”

“...fair go doesn't really mean anything. It should be much more precise language saying discrimination, access to opportunities and choices”

“I was actually expecting representatives of the Office for Youth to be here because I wanted to ask what proportion of your workers, what proportion of your department, what proportion of your advocates and your reference groups are people with disability or are people with disadvantages. It's great having forums specifically for people with disability but where are we in the broader force? I wish someone from [the Office for Youth] was here. Why isn't there anyone here?”

“I just think that people with disabilities are constantly put in a box where they're defined by what they can and can't do and I think there needs to be a statement in there that says that specific to people with disabilities, that we shouldn't be defined by society for what we can and can't do...it is a societal problem.”

“I think these objectives are rights that we have and it's the way it's written. It is very passive and I think it should be more, ‘We have the right to these things,’ rather than just saying that they're trying to ensure that happens...”

Question 9 – Draft Objectives: *List up to three other actions you think the government should take.*

“Compulsory...training for teachers studying teaching...it is not compulsory but it should be not just a minor part of the course. It should be throughout the course. And the same should go for public transport staff, university staff and perhaps even businesses in general.”

“...increased funding to YDAS is one idea.”

“...Mads [Madeleine Sobb, late YDAS project worker] had a vision for a national body called YDAN, youth and disability advocacy national, and the idea was to have a youth disability advocacy service in each state and then they would communicate over the internet and every, say, three months...there would be an interstate meeting where the representatives from each board would go and discuss what was happening at their particular board levels so that people with disabilities in states other than Victoria didn't get left behind...they need to give us the funding back because I think that idea really needs to be put to fruition...”

“There's been several campaigns to make bullying illegal...you wouldn't have so much discrimination, especially in the work environment because bullying leads to discrimination and discrimination leads to bullying. So you knock out one and you don't get the other in most situations.”

Draft Co-Design

Question 10 – Co-design: *Would you be interested in working alongside government to tackle youth issues?*

All young people consulted said they would be interested in working alongside government on youth issues.

Question 11 – Co-design: *In what ways would you be interested in working alongside government?*

Young people with disabilities had a range of suggestions for how they can work with government through co-design including that:

Young people as equals

“...young people should be paid for their time like other people are...”

Proactively seeking out young people with disabilities

“[We’re] not aware of the government’s interest in hearing our opinion. Please contact and visit us...via Centrelink, schools, disability programs, social media, local councils...”

Ensuring access and inclusion in co-design

“One of the ways that young people with disabilities would be involved is to make sure that those methods being used actually work for people. Is the support there when you turn up? Can they help you get there? They are obvious basic things that...[the Office for Youth] could probably use a bit more input about in terms of what does it take to make sure that people can get to the table and be at the table.”

“...they need to recognise the excellent investment that’s needed to involve people with disabilities and obviously, you know, if you can’t get out of bed they can’t get to a meeting...”

“Communication and [ability] to express what we want and need, unable to reach out [to] the Government to give our voices due to limitation of movement/transport, no money...parents need to work and have no time to take me around or to rely on someone else to help.”

“I’m thinking of people particularly in regional areas having sessions not just in Melbourne but around the state and then also offering the opportunity to join in via technology such as Skype or...Face Time”

“...if people choose to travel to Melbourne from country areas to attend these meetings having allowances available to fund travel costs and potentially accommodation costs...say from Mildura...a couple of nights’ accommodation.”

“...[it] might be too emotional for them to be seen by other people and talking...You might want to have...someone come to your home privately and record your session rather than having to be around other people because some people that can be quite confronting for. Especially if you have a mental illness as well as a disability, et

cetera, et cetera...some people might want to take part [but] can't actually access technology or be there on the day or their disability might restrict them.”

“ if people can't attend or can't be there in person...letters about what actually happened, like a meeting timetable thing which noted what actually happened, who said what...what they organised”

“What would be good would be a range of communication options so not just face-to-face consultations and home visits...but things like questionnaires with open questions, leading questions, non-leading questions...”

Accountability in co-design

“...there may be a couple of flaws when it is actually being implemented...maybe not all needs will be catered for...you need a lot of people involved with it...in order to get a clear understanding of what young people want in the policy...It definitely looks promising but I don't know whether there will be discussions behind closed doors saying that...the Government's not going to get this implemented... that they are not actually listening to young people at all...”

“...it's okay to talk about all the issues but to come up with options they're willing to offer and not just doing it to us to kind of ask for the broadest, easiest answer...give us some options of what's feasible.”

Building mutual understanding

“...it's really hard to actually find people to be on the same page...when it's coming to disability. It sucks, yes, I know. You just have to work - if you want to really get it you have to work - we all have to work really, really, really hard to get people on our side to actually do this...I've always had to get people on my side to agree about things and that's what we would have to do as a team if we were going to do this...we will have to get people to really side and agree with us and try to get as many people as we can on the same side to agree with getting this policy up...that's what we need.”

“I think it would be great for us to meet directly with Government ministers to share with them our experiences and get them to hear from the horse's mouth on disability issues.”

Conclusion

The Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) consulted with young people with disabilities through a survey and a forum to find out what's most important to them. Young people identified education as the most important issue – telling YDAS about their experiences of bullying, discrimination, poor educational opportunities and lack of supports to succeed – followed by employment, training, transport, mental health, discrimination, housing, and alcohol and drugs .

YDAS undertook a literature review presenting research that provides further insight into issues that are most important to young people with disabilities which mostly mirrors the views expressed by young people during YDAS' consultations in both problems identified and suggested solutions.

Many of the issues identified for young people and the proposed solutions require government to take a methodical and systemic approach to deal with problems over time.

Young people consulted were very keen to be involved with the Office for Youth in working on solutions.

Attachment

What's Important to YOUTH Literature Review September 2015 Youth Disability Advocacy Service

Background

The Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) is working with the Office for Youth to consult with young people with disabilities aged 12 to 24 years and find out what is most important to them. The Office for Youth has identified eight key areas of concern to young people including education, employment, training, mental health, alcohol and drugs, discrimination, housing, and transport.

YDAS has reviewed a limited cross-section of statistical data and grey literature to provide an overview of what young people with disabilities have said in the recent past about the issues that they see as most important.

The Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) is a state-wide advocacy service funded by the state government of Victoria to provide individual and systemic advocacy for young people with disabilities between 12 and 25 years of age. YDAS is auspiced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic).

Introduction

It is estimated that approximately 7% of young people in Australia have a physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual and/or psychiatric disability (AIHW, 2011, p.18). Young people with disabilities in Australia today have unprecedented opportunity to be fully engaged citizens, to receive a high quality and inclusive education, and to receive supports that enable them to pursue their personal goals. However young people with disabilities continue to face ongoing and systemic discrimination in many areas of life including in education where they can be refused enrolment and experience regular bullying from school staff and fellow students, in employment where they have very poor prospects, inaccessible public buildings and services and much more.

This report does not attempt to provide a detailed view on the barriers faced by young people with disabilities but presents a summary of their views, as found in available literature, of what government can do to ensure they can lead ordinary lives.

Context

Young people with disabilities face multiple barriers to participation in community life. There is very little research available on what young people with disabilities themselves say about their lives, their concerns and solutions to common issues they face. Research most often focuses on the experiences of their parents, siblings, teachers and other professionals who are providing services (Stokes et al., 2013; ACYS, 2012; Llewellyn & Leonard, 2010).

The Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) has completed a search of statistical data, peer-reviewed published articles and reports by government and community organisations reports and presents key facts about each of the issues identified by the Victorian government's Office for Youth in its 2015 review of youth policy, and the published views expressed by young people with disabilities about these and other issues.

Education

- Students with disability are less likely to complete secondary schooling and lack support. 26% of students with disability do not attend school beyond Year 10, (ABS, 2009) , are only half as likely to complete Year 12 compared with students without disabilities (ABS, 2012) and up to 70% have inadequate support to succeed in education (Children with Disability Australia, 2015).
- Young people with disabilities are “considerably less likely to have completed a higher level qualification” than young people without disabilities (ABS, 2009) and of those that do enrol in tertiary education, 74% report inadequate levels of support and 36% say that they are excluded from learning activities due to disability (AYAC, 2011).
- Both teachers and students say that “the level of resources and funding required to ensure quality education for disabilities/special needs is inadequate, with negative consequences for students, families, teachers, other education workers and schools” (AEU, 2010, pg. 2).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They want to attend mainstream schools and need timely, individualised and flexible supports to succeed there; they do not want to be segregated or singled out in order to receive support (YDAS, 2008).
- There are inadequate resources, and/or the inappropriate use of resources that do not meet individual need which leads to poor academic and social outcomes (e.g. allocating a Teacher's Aide instead of utilising assistive technologies that would provide for greater independence) (YDAS, 2008; AEU, 2010).
- Teachers need training so that they can provide great support and must be willing to work with students to meet their individual needs (e.g. by wearing a microphone in classes), but that often they are unwilling to do so (YDAS, 2008).
- They experience high rates of bullying from other school students, teaching staff and senior administrators, including school principals (YDAS, 2008). Bullying is worse in special schools than in mainstream schools (Yueng, et al., 2008).
- They sometimes struggle to develop social relationships at school (YDAS, 2008).
- When they attend university, they find that many staff do not understand their needs, that lectures and tutorials are not made accessible, and they do not have enough support to either succeed at, or in some cases to stay enrolled in, university courses (AYAC, 2011).

Employment

- In 2009, only 40% of young people aged 15 to 24 years were in full time employment in 2009 compared with almost 60% of young people without disability and 70% of young people with disabilities who are not working full-time are not studying or working at all (ABS, 2009).
- Less than half of people with disabilities who gain work through a Disability Employment Service are still in a job after six months (Commonwealth Government, 2015).
- Government employment policies in Australia effectively encourage young people with a disability to transition to non-vocational pathways; a quarter of all young people with disabilities who have been assessed as having lower support needs transition from school into disability day programs instead of into paid employment (Wakeford & Waugh, 2014).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They want paid employment but find it very difficult to access the high quality job-finding assistance they need and are frustrated by the lack of technical skill and individualised service they receive when they approach job agencies (YDAS, 2008).
- Unlike young people without disabilities, they are forced to continually prove competency before they have paid work (e.g. work capacity testing, work readiness programs, work education courses) and when they are on the job (Stokes et al., 2013).
- They experience discrimination, poor support, harassment and bullying in workplaces due to their disability and those who can avoid disclosing their disability do so (YDAS, 2008).

Training

- Despite considerable evidence that young people with disabilities benefit from and succeed at undertaking accredited vocational training (Ball, 2000), they are underrepresented in these programs as a result of discriminatory attitudes (e.g. refusal of enrolment and reasonable accommodation) and inadequate funding to ensure their full participation (AHRC, 2005).
- Young people with disabilities are frequently channelled into 'enabling courses' (e.g. work education, pre-vocational skills) by training providers with graduates of these types of courses less likely to gain employment after graduation than if they were to complete a typical vocational course (Ball, 2000).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They are prevented from succeeding in training because supports offered are inadequate, for example, personal care (e.g. assistance with eating) is not funded by

training providers: “without personal care assistance, and in particular, toileting; TAFE was out of the question”. (YDAS, 2008)

- If they have invisible disabilities (e.g. diabetes, dyslexia, mental health issues), they are more likely to struggle to receive even basic support in training courses and as a result feel isolated, fall behind in their studies or drop out altogether (YDAS, 2008).

Mental Health

- Young people with disabilities are twice as likely to develop mental health issues compared with young people without disabilities, particularly late in their adolescence, but are much less likely to receive an accurate diagnosis and/or appropriate treatment (CCYC, 2013; VicHealth, 2012; Cooper et al. 2007; Tantam and Prestwood 1999). Around 25% of people with severe or profound disabilities have a high level of psychological distress compared with 5 % of the general population (VicHealth, 2012).
- Young people with disabilities who also have a mental health issue are often excluded from mental health services on the basis that their disability makes diagnosis and treatment too complex (DDDN, 2014, Hearn, 1999). They also face the presumption that their mental health issue is inherent to having a disability rather than as a separate experience of poor mental health (CCYP, 2013).
- Mental health practitioners have very limited training, education and expertise in providing mental health services to people with disabilities and services for people with intellectual disabilities are largely non-existent (DDDN, 2014; CCYP, 2013).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They want consistent support, encouragement, to be treated as an individual, to have greater responsibility and privacy and reliable allies who they can talk things over with and that these factors enhance their mental health (Stokes et al., 2013).
- Despite the best intentions of their families and professionals, they were often denied choice and control in basic decisions that affect their life which has a negative impact on their self-esteem as well as on their ability to make other informed decisions in the future (Pilnick et al., 2010).
- They have fewer close friends than they would like and many feel socially isolated, factors which contribute to an increase in mental health issues (Stokes et al., 2013).

Alcohol and drugs

- There is very little reliable data available on the use of alcohol and drugs by young people with disabilities. However recent research in the United Kingdom suggests young people with disabilities who misuse alcohol and drugs cite reasons including social isolation and exclusion, bullying, self-medicating to deal with communication frustrations, and as a way to fit in with peers (Beddoes et al., 2010).

- Young people with disabilities are more susceptible to alcohol and drug misuse due to intersecting risk factors such as unemployment, poverty and social exclusion (Beddoes et al., 2010).
- Young people with psychiatric disabilities are much more likely to misuse drugs and alcohol than young people without a disability (ABS, 2007) and are less likely to have access to specialist mental health services (DDD, 2014).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They experience regular bullying, abuse and threats to their personal safety and resort to risk-taking behaviour to cope (Stokes et al., 2013).
- They are less likely to have opportunity to take measured risks due to family pressure and lack of opportunity to spend time independently of adults who value safety over dignity of risk (Pilnick et al., 2010).

Discrimination

- Young people with disabilities are 3.5 times more likely to be the subject of abuse and neglect by family members and paid workers (Jones et al., 2012), and are less likely to report abuse because they are often reliant on the abuser for both making a report and to have their basic needs met (Briggs & Hawkins, 2005).
- Young people with disabilities experience widespread violations of their rights due to prejudice and negative perceptions of disability itself, and compounded by inaccessible physical environments, lack of services, social isolation and poverty and are routinely and systematically excluded from education, employment, health services, and public and private spaces (UNICEF, 2013).
- Many young people with disabilities experience multiple disadvantages, particularly young people with disabilities who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, identify as LGBTI, and who are living in institutional settings (e.g. Community Residential Units) (Emerson, et al., 2010).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- Lack of access to public and private spaces (i.e. 'the built environment') impacts on almost every area of their lives. They say that standards are not enforced, that information about access is often unavailable or incorrect, and that there is little done when they make a complaint (YDAS, 2008). Poor access to public spaces, (particularly public transport, restaurants and bars, live music venues) makes it extremely difficult to have a full social life, which causes social isolation (Solish et al., 2010) and for some, makes it almost impossible to find paid work.
- They face persistent, negative community attitudes and feel shut out of society, not listened to, are made to feel as if they are a burden and is the key barrier to participation in activities they enjoy (Morris, 2001).

- They experience multiple disadvantages if they are from a culturally and linguistically diverse community, identify as LGBTI, are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or have multiple disabilities (YDAS, 2008).

Housing

- Young people with disabilities are more likely to be relinquished by their parents into state care than young people without disabilities, costing governments up to seven times as much in providing out-of-home residential care than if individualised support services were put in place in the family home (VEOHRC, 2012).
- Young people with disabilities are more likely to become homeless than people without disabilities, particularly people with psychiatric disabilities and acquired brain injuries, and most often people with multiple disabilities. They are also more likely to miss out on accessing housing because both temporary transitional housing and social housing are typically not wheelchair accessible (Beer, et al., 2011).
- Young people with disabilities are more reliant on government and community organisations for housing, including Residential Aged Care. Private housing is often inaccessible and unaffordable for young people with disabilities, and funding systems rarely offer the level of choice and control necessary to live independently with support (FaHCSIA, 2006; YDAS, 2013).
- Young people with disabilities live with their parents for much longer than young people without disabilities even though they would like the opportunity to move into their own homes with individualised support (YDAS, 2013).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They want the same choices as people without disabilities when choosing where to live but feel that they are powerless because the disability support system offers very limited choices, has very long waiting lists to access assistance, and because parents and professionals often made decisions about housing on their behalf (Stokes et al., 2013; YDAS, 2013).
- They want opportunities to try a variety of housing and support options and be allowed to take risks and make mistakes (Stokes et al., 2013; YDAS, 2013).
- They succeed with living independently when they are well-supported to prepare for life out of home and when they have support services which are flexible and which they can control (Pascall & Hendey, 2004).
- They would like the option to move into a private rental property when they leave home but face a lack of accessible and affordable rental stock, as well as not being permitted to make necessary disability modifications (YDAS, 2008).

Transport

- Public transport across Victoria remains inaccessible to many young people with disabilities due to the slow implementation of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, and the lack of enforcement of the standards (DIRG, 2015). People with the most significant disabilities have extremely limited access to public transport (ABS, 2009).
- Young people with disabilities are more likely to rely on private transport, including taxis and private vehicles compared with young people without disabilities, which incur a greater cost and is prohibitive to developing independence and significantly limits employment opportunities (ABS, 2009; DIRG, 2015).

Young people with disabilities say that:

- Despite improvements to public transport over the past decade, information about accessible services is unreliable (i.e. services are advertised as accessible but are not) and they have very limited access to accessible trams, buses and train platforms (YDAS, 2008).
- Using public transport can be very unsafe as changes to services are made quickly and without both audible and visual announcements, vehicles are not equipped with safe entry or seating areas (e.g. very steep ramp access only) and infrastructure is dangerous (e.g. rail crossings that trap mobility aid wheels).
- Accessible public transport in rural and regional areas is extremely limited causing social isolation and total dependence on family or friends to leave the house (YDAS, 2008).
- While the subsidised taxi scheme made transport more affordable, there are too few accessible taxis, extremely long wait times even in the CBD (i.e. up to two hours), and safety issues with drivers (YDAS, 2008).

Other issues of concern to young people with disabilities

Young people with disabilities say that:

- They highly value their participation in **ordinary community life** (i.e. activities away from school and home that involve other young people) because it provides greater autonomy and self-esteem, improves relationships with peers and family, and helps demystify public misconceptions about the lives of young people with disabilities (Yueng et al., 2008).
- They see a role for themselves as educators in the broader community and feel that they should be **role models** for other young people with disabilities (Stokes et al., 2013).
- They are frequently very socially isolated and opportunities to build and maintain friendships are too often mediated by the involvement of parents or paid support

workers who may interfere and be overly concerned with safety or duty of care: “I am bored out of my brain. I am ready to go out but have no one to go clubbing with. Nobody is there to go out with...I don't want to take my carers. I don't have enough **friends** (Yueng et al., 2008, pg. 71).

- They value their relationships with young people without disabilities but highly value opportunities to network with young people with disabilities where they can create positive shared identities, problem-solve common issues and **support each other** (Stokes et al., 2013; YDAS, 2008).
- They want clear, up-to-date information about the range of **disability supports** and services available to them and feel they are most likely to miss out on receiving information if they are in mainstream education (YDAS, 2008). People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people who need support with communication are the most disadvantaged in being able to access funded services (YDAS, 2008).
- They need timely access to affordable aides and equipment and say that they face long **waiting lists** and only partially-funded options (YDAS, 2008).
- They want individualised services to be available when they need them so that they can have support when they need it by **workers who understand** their needs: “I don't want someone assisting me who looks like my nanna” (YDAS, 2008).
- They are frustrated with **Centrelink** systems which make it difficult to balance part-time work with income support, require regular proof of permanent disability and do not provide accessible information about rules or benefits (YDAS, 2008).

Solutions suggested by young people with disabilities

Education

Young people with disabilities want:

- More support and more funding (CDA, 2015; YDAS, 2008)
- Better communication between families, school staff and students (CDA, 2015)
- Training and professional development across all education settings and for all staff (CDA, 2015; AYAC, 2001; YDAS, 2008).
- Disability awareness programs for students with and without disabilities in schools focussing on the social model of disability and bullying (Stokes et al., 2013; YDAS, 2008).

Employment

Young people with disabilities want:

- Disability awareness education for employers and business groups (YDAS, 2008)
- A minimum quota for the employment for people with disability in large organisations and particularly in the public sector (YDAS, 2008).
- High quality, individualised assistance for finding and keeping work (YDAS, 2008).
- Increased funding for workplace modifications and the work-based personal assistance scheme (YDAS, 2008).

Training

Young people with disabilities want:

- Improved on-campus student support services for young people with disabilities (AYAC, 2011).
- Financial aid for students with disabilities that takes into account the additional costs of disability supports necessary to study (AYAC, 2011).
- Disability awareness training for all staff in training organisations (AYAC, 2011).
- Accessible and inclusive education delivery and materials for all people with disabilities (e.g. assistive technology, personal care services) (AYAC, 2011).

Mental Health

Young people with disabilities want:

- Improved mental health services that are equipped to support young people with disabilities (YDAS, 2008) including improved understanding that it may take more time for young people with disabilities to trust professionals than for young people without disabilities (Stokes et al., 2013).

Discrimination

Young people with disabilities want:

- Legislation that requires all public buildings to be made fully accessible including a timeframe for changes to be made (YDAS, 2008).
- Disability awareness campaigns that challenge stereotypes and educate the public about disability rights (YDAS, 2008).
- Increased positive representation of people with disabilities in the media, particularly on television and in film (YDAS, 2008).

Housing

Young people with disabilities want:

- Legislation that makes universal access mandatory in new housing development (YDAS, 2008).
- More affordable and accessible public and private housing (YDAS, 2008).
- Opportunity to try out a range of support options and take risks while learning how to live independently (Stokes et al., 2013).
- More flexible, individualised and self-directed support that makes independent living possible for all (YDAS, 2008).

Transport

Young people with disabilities want:

- A firm commitment by government to make public transport accessible to all as soon as possible (YDAS, 2008).

Disability Services

Young people with disabilities want:

- A non-means tested disability allowance that provides for the additional cost of having a disability (YDAS, 2008).
- The introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme across Victoria (YDAS, 2008).
- Accountability for how funded disability supports are provided (YDAS, 2008).
- The recruitment of more young people as disability support workers (YDAS, 2008).
- An online one-stop-shop database for all disability services (YDAS, 2008).
- More individualised and client-centred disability service provision (YDAS, 2008).
- The employment of more people with disabilities in leadership roles in disability services (YDAS, 2008).

Recreation

Young people with disabilities want:

- Increased support to access age-appropriate and self-directed recreational pursuits with peers (Stokes et al., 2013: YDAS, 2008).

Health

Young people with disabilities want:

- Clearer pathways to and more appropriate services for young adults with disabilities transitioning from paediatric healthcare to adult services (YDAS, 2008).

- More focus on how young people with disabilities want to report on their health and well-being rather than what parents and professionals perceive as most important (Llewellyn & Leonard, 2010).

Advocacy

Young people with disabilities want:

- A funded national advocacy and social action network for young people the disabilities that will support information sharing, peer support and leadership (YDAS, 2008).
- Opportunity to meet together to provide peer-support, develop leadership skills and problem-solve common issues (Stokes et al., 2013).

Abuse and Neglect

There is little direct discussion by young people with disabilities in the literature reviewed for this report on issues of abuse and neglect however the Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) believes it is a critical issue that must be addressed by government and should be considered as part of the Office for Youth's development of youth policy.

Young people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by abuse and neglect due to a number of factors which include but are not limited to:

- extremely limited access to rights-based education and information about what constitutes abuse and neglect;
- inadequate support to report abuse and neglect;
- substandard responses by police and other agencies who do not believe that young people with disabilities will be credible witnesses during a prosecution;
- the perceived likelihood of retribution by abusive family members and paid workers
- poorly implemented protection mechanisms which allow people who set out to abuse young people with disabilities to enter and stay in the disability workforce.

The absence of literature that focusses on the experiences of young people with disabilities who have been abused and neglected is concerning given statistics show they are much more likely to be abused and neglected than their peers without disabilities. Research into this area should be made a priority for both researchers and government.

Conclusion

It is essential that governments consult with young people with disabilities on youth policy given their views are often absent from discussion about their needs, opinions and ideas. Current literature on young people with disabilities is almost entirely focussed on the negative aspects of their experience and based on the judgements of people without disabilities looking in. It is important to note that this report simply aggregates available information on the views of young people with disabilities across a range of areas, and that

reference to gender issues, sexuality, disability pride, cultural identity, along with many other important issues, is absent from prevailing literature.

If governments are to provide real opportunity to young people with disabilities, systemic issues such as equal access to high quality education, employment, transport and housing, as well as serious measures to prevent abuse and neglect, must be addressed. Further, there must be strong and transparent oversight of public and community services to ensure they are accessible, inclusive and equitable, as well as reliable and comprehensive advocacy services for young people with disabilities who need support to address concerns. All government programs, services, events, consultations and advisory groups should be inclusive of, and proactively seek out, young people with disabilities, and governments must view the issues raised by young people with disabilities as issues for youth rather than disability issues.

Overall, young people with disabilities say that, like their peers without disabilities, they want to live ordinary lives, to access education and training, to have financial security, to participate in sport and recreation, to have long-term relationships and get married, to care for their families, to travel, to be independent and to direct their own lives: “I want to be a normal person in a normal environment...I'd like to have my own home, my own car, a husband and children” (Yueng et al., 2008:69).

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