What's Important to YOUth

Final Report Template

The following is a template to report back on the outcome of your consultations with young people. The report should be structured using the headings indicated on the left of this template. Details for what to include under each heading is outlined with indicative page numbers.

Final Report Template

Organisation Contact details		
Organisation	Reach is a for-purpose organisation for young people, running workshops, camps for young people around Victoria.	Max 1 page
	Each year, 30,000 young people aged 10-18 experience Reach through our workshops that are 100% youth-led – designed and delivered by our young crew. About 50-60 crew members between the ages of 16 and 21 also receive training sessions every fortnight where they participate in similar activities to workshops and learn the ropes of their future roles as facilitators of workshops.	
	Young people say they can relate to the crew because they speak honestly and openly about their own journey and challenges. A motto that reflects this is 'Talk about Real Sh*t', which describes Reach's efforts to get down to the thoughts and issues that young people really experience, and break stereotypes that young people are given in media and society. Reach provides a platform to grow and build self-confidence, identity and communication skills with others in order to tackle life and all its challenges.	
	Our workshops strive to be relevant and meaningful for young people, catered to the issues that are being presented in workshops such as discrimination, low self-esteem, family break-downs or issues, body-image, sexuality, identity, stress, and limiting self beliefs in order to build up our young people to be confident in taking on the challenges that life brings. Reach also provide a great wellbeing network in order to reach out to the young people in workshops who may need more assistance, acting as a bridge to mental health services and support.	
	The only requirement for those attending workshops is that they fit the relevant age-group. No one is excluded from Reach workshops, as we celebrate diversity, multiculturalism, gender and sexuality fluidity and make it possible for those from locations far out from Melbourne to attend.	
Recommendations	List up to 10 key recommendations following your analysis. These may be relevant for government or for other sectors.	Max 1 page
	- More youth-led youth support, for example: each school having a young wellbeing person or mediator who can related to students, ensuring that those who attend wellbeing or school counselling are not seen as 'losers' as quoted by our young participants. Today kids feel shameful or embarrassed going to wellbeing, but if it is made a fun place and cool place to go, with great young teachers who get involved with kids and don't hide out in their office, kids are more likely to use the service. Our school age participants said they simply don't see the older counsellors at school. Where wellbeing is a dual teaching role, it feels like wellbeing is not important. Students are less likely to visit school wellbeing if they are a teacher at	

		the school as they believe it will impact on other aspects of their school life.	
		- Teachers should be encouraged to think broadly and accept multiple points of view so that young people feel accepted. For example it is not appropriate for a teacher to publicly express opinions about gay marriage.	
		- Provide opportunities for young people to gain experience in workplaces in order to get work. Too many young people have difficulty obtaining employment due to their lack of experience, when they feel they have not been given the chance to have any experience.	
		- The government youth reference group should have an official facebook, twitter, Instagram page, run 100% by young people with weekly features, updates and simplified government information as to what is currently happening. The youth central website could also be 'youthified' by young people who study media, web design, and other relevant fields (which could allow young people to gain experience and really reach the young people accessing that site more than adult moderators could)	
		- Increase mental health awareness campaigns in secondary schools. For example: ruok? Day could be used to have workshops on mental health. Celebrating these days will show awareness of mental health issues and encourage young people not to feel stigmatised and to get help when experiencing issues such as, depression or anxiety. This could also include mental health and wellbeing classes in all government secondary schools, recognising the importance of this for the development of young people.	
		- For those in rural locations, a community centre that is youth led and faces the real issues that young people in the community are facing. Something to associate with and be a part of. Possibly a service that includes wellbeing counsellors, youth leaders and workshops. This could also include, youth led drug and alcohol prevention workshops to reduce the numbers of young people using drugs in rural areas	
		- Develop a support system for young people applying for housing (rental properties) and other ways to prove they are responsible. Applications for rental properties are often rejected due to the immediate assumption that a young person is not going to care for the property	
Methodology		The information in this report is based on a youth led process, Caitlin Bleeker developed the plan, gathered the relevant information and compiled this report. **The Focus Group** **How**: Caitlin delivered a brief information session to Reach crew members about the upcoming focus group to invite them to attend, introducing as a youth policy discussion and providing details of the session and what it would involve/cover. The youth policy discussion session was promoted on the Reach facebook page with an official event created inviting all crew members. Several reminders and prompts were organised for the week prior. **When**: Monday 12th of October, 4-5:30 **Who**: Facilitator: Caitlin Bleeker, Reach crew member (age 20, Australian European cultural background) Scribe and Supervisor: Jennifer Brice, General Manager, Services and Learning Participants: 11 participants between the ages of 16-22, with English, European, Kiwi, and Anglo-Indian cultural backgrounds. (22 year old Australian, 18 year old Australian, 21 year old Australian, 16 year old English, 20 year old European, 20 year old Australian Kiwi, 18 year old Australian, 17 year old Anglo-Indian, 16 year old Australian Italian, 17 year old Australian, 19 year old Australian)	Max 2 pages

	Method	Total number participants	Age range	Gender	Cultural background Description	Location
Focus groups		11	16-22	3 – m 9 – f		All metropolitan
One-to-one interviews		4	18-21	1 – m 3 – f		All metropolitan
Total		15	16-22	65 – F 55 - M	Australian born – 14 English born - 1 English/Indian – 1 Kiwi/European – 1	Metropolitan - 15

Why: Reach is a youth organisation engages with young people and their issues on a daily basis. We acknowledge a youth policy that is constructed by the opinions and real experiences of young people is important. The discussion session was intended to gain insight about young people's experiences through conversations about school, employment, and society as young people. The discussion style for our youth meeting fit our crew member's strengths to use discussion in order to get ideas and thoughts across.

What: A discussion session was hosted on Monday the 12th of October at a time convenient to achieve maximum attendance. The 90 minute session was split into two sections, introduction and discussion. Jennifer and Caitlin explained the purpose of the session, and introduced some key issues that the initiative had already highlighted, such as discrimination, mental health, education, employment, training, housing and public transport, and asked participants if there were any others that were needed to be given some thought during the session. Caitlin facilitated brainstorm discussions, noted the main insights on butchers paper while Jennifer also made notes. The following questions were raised:

1. What can the Victorian Government do to improve young peoples' sense of belonging in the community, no matter what age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, health, religion, mental health status or location?

2. What does the Victorian Government need to do to hear all young people, including those who are disengaged or disadvantaged?

3. How do you think we can better inform young people about current supportsthat are available to them?

4. What is important to young people in 2015? Why?

Each question was discussed for roughly 15-20 minutes each.

Participants were asked which of the several issues raised today was the most important to them. There was agreement amongst most participants that education was of highest importance on the list, as it sets youth up for their future, educates on diversity and mental health, and can reduce discrimination. Education is a preventative for several of the issues that were discussed that create obstacles for youth to feel a sense of belonging and equality in Victoria.

Ages and cultural backgrounds were noted whilst participants spoke about the session and shared some pizza.

	The Butchers paper was left out for additional thoughts and ideas for the next 20 minutes. All participants were encouraged to contact Caitlin in case they wanted to mention anything else after the session had finished in order to have all their issues raised.	
Outcomes – Key findings	The major finding that resulted from our discussion was the importance of education. Addressing some of the issues through the education system is a meaningful way to improve equality, reduce discrimination, improve opportunities for employment/training. Those who still attended secondary school detailed several aspects of their education that were being missed at their school, such as lack of mental health education, sex education, and cultural (and other minority group) awareness.	Max 10 pages

Some other major issues that were addressed were: access to services, unemployment, and lack of youth understanding in current government policies.

I have given subheadings to each area that was discussed, and noted the different opinions and suggestions outlined by participants.

Education

Lack of education is often the thing stopping people from accessing the current services in place to support young people, and leading them to believe that there is nothing helpful out there. Schools could help young people gain access to these opportunities for help by constantly advertising and reminding students of what is out there.

Also, by telling young people about the services available, they can be used as preventatives rather than only being discovered and relevant once a young person is having difficulty or crisis.

Teachers should be up to date with current youth views. It is also not their job to force opinions onto students – education is a huge influence on young people and the views they carry into adulthood

More relatable, approachable wellbeing staff who are involved in the school curriculum without being a member of the teaching staff can allow kids to get to know wellbeing, feel comfortable with them, and feel that it is not 'weird' or 'lame' to seek help. Encouraging students to stop in for ANYTHING, mental health, stress and study tips, wellbeing advice and even just a chat about how school is going can open up the possibilities for everyone attending school. It is a MUST that wellbeing should be present and active members of the school community!

When wellbeing are teachers at school, or are linked to school staff, they are seen as authority figures rather than role models who are approachable and trustworthy. Wellbeing should be people who can be perceived by students are chilled out, fun, approachable and 'on the student's side' rather than a member of the staff who can punish students for misbehaving. Participants stated that they won't see a wellbeing person, or be honest with one if they feel that they will get in trouble or judged by them.

Reduce stigma by making mental health and wellbeing a spoken about topic rather than taboo! Normalise mental health by discussion more frequently at school.

Participants from Catholic schools reported that their schools do not teach sexual education. There needs to be another way for these young people to learn about it. Possibly, an online video or initiative where young people can learn from young role models leading videos and conversations could be provided on youth central, and advertised heavily to encourage those who want to learn more.

Mental Health and wellbeing strategies and tools, mental illness awareness, and the inclusion of life stressor, anxiety and depression talks in school health classes. The focus on mental health in schools is very small at the moment, and participants suggested that there needs to be more than the occasional posters in the corridor or in the wellbeing office. Celebrating RUOK? DAY, mental health week, having occasional workshops such as mindfulness or healthy habits run by wellbeing coordinators could be helpful.

Cultural awareness and understanding is low in schools, which may be a reason for discrimination in schools. Possibly a cultural appreciation day at school can help this.

Indigenous history is being taught heavily in schools, but resulting in young people getting bored by it, and considering indigenous people as the 'other'. A more wholistic approach, maybe including indigenous people in the education systems can provide more exposure to role models for this group, to bring about more understanding of Indigenous Australians.

Drugs and Alcohol/Addictions

Many people in rural locations turn to drugs and alcohol as a result of nothing else to do, and no positive role models. It was suggested that to prevent this, rural locations need a youth centre, or club that is not just held in the community centre (which may be perceived as uncool to community members) but somewhere where people can gain a sense of belonging and achievement, whilst also learning about drugs and alcohol from role model young people.

Drug and Alcohol use and misuse have not been taught well in schools. There needs to be a realistic approach to educating youth on this issue, and possibly with young role models coming in to schools and discussing drinking and drug use in a relatable way, rather than teachers lecturing students about use.

Alcohol free sports clubs in order to raise a new generation of sport players who don't heavily associate sport with alcohol consumption and intoxication.

Gambling was raised as an issue, with some particiaptnes reporting that it is common amongst their friends. Restricting gambling advertising so that they are less prominent.

Employment

It is a constant circle – you need experience to get the job, and nowhere will hire you until you have that experience. Many participants agreed that this is a major setback for employment. There should be a training that allows young people to gain this experience before they need to get a job.

Discrimination

Disability – awareness is still low for those with disability. Maybe sports or other hobby groups in schools could help bring people together over shared interest rather than ability

Racism – more cultural diversity in advertisements. Language barriers make it hard for kids at school

Ageism – more opportunities for taking up responsibility for young people. Have more roles on Youth Central website for young people. Maybe opportunity for young people to volunteer for experience?

More minority Reps – if more culturally, sexually, gender diverse individuals were in representative positions, wellbeing roles or leadership positions, those who consider themselves a minority or 'black sheep' in their school or group may have someone to look up to.

Cultural celebration days at school and work creating groups in school that can bring together a range of cultures to connect around interests could improve the understanding of different cultural perspectives.

Mental Health

Participants expressed that there were not enough services to meet the needs that exist

The process to receive counselling is too lengthy, expensive and difficult for a young person on their own.

There are also not enough mental health awareness or services in rural or remote locations.

Housing

Homelessness: couch surfing is still a form of homelessness, and countless young people are in situations where they cannot live at home and are forced onto the streets or into the homes of friends

Expenses: two participants spoke about their experiences attempting to move out of home, one with difficult family situations and one who simply wanted to move closer to education.

	They shared how expensive it was to move out, and that they were not aware of services that could assist them in saving, budgeting or paying off the expenses of owning a home.	
	Discrimination: one participant spoke about her experiences of ageism when attempting to move out of home into a rental home. She recollects that every place that she applied to rejected her due to her age (20). Other participants agreed that there is a tendency to suspect that any young applicants are going to damage the home or be unreliable.	
	It was suggested that maybe if there was a middle-man service that assessed applicants and then gave them a certificate of approval for rental application processes that this may give real estate agents/owners more confidence that the young people applying for housing are responsible and capable, therefore improve the housing opportunities for young people	
	Transport	
	The fines and punishments for students who don't or are unable to pay their fare is unreasonable. Young people feel targeted and treated poorly compared to adults. It would be good to provide more allowances or subsidies for young people regularly using public transport.	
	Advice directly to the Office for Youth:	
	This consultation initiative is amazing in the opinions of participants. We want this opportunity more! Visiting schools, youth organisations and universities for these sorts of chats would make all youth policy and other legislations more youth friendly and relevant. Who better to ask but the current young people!	
	Often, the high achieving youth who make up youth reference groups or advisory councils are very well aware and educated about services. Not all youth are like this, so asking the everyday people of Victoria for information is a way to gain more representative information regarding the experiences of ALL teens.	
	Youth reference group: get on Facebook, snapchat, twitter, Instagram. Fully lead by young people, moderators for online branding. Weekly information about government issues, current Victorian Government activity, current services in place to help young people. Show young people that there are young people just like them representing them.	
Conclusion	The focus group/ discussion session highlighted the importance of education environments in sharing knowledge and information with young people. These environments need to be non judgemental spaces where young people are able to access the support or information that they need to manage the issues that they may face. The school environment is also valuable for reducing the stigma around mental health and giving young people access to additional supports. The voice of young people is important and in this instance, we have valued the opportunity to share a youth perspective to help shape government policy. There needs to be more initiatives on an ongoing basis to connect young people with the people making decisions about what young people need. Social media, in particular is a way to achieve this, but needs to have a strong and engaging, youth perspective to be effective.	Max 1 page
References		
Attachments	## CASE STUDY 1: 1**. Age: 20** **2. Gender: female** **3. Demographic location: Melbourne** **4. Cultural Background: Born in Australia, half Kiwi, with English and Irish ancestry** One of the things that is important to me is that we foster a positive awareness and understanding of Australian Indigenous culture and history and acknowledge that there is not one single view point or set of cultural beliefs that all Indigenous Australians follow, but hundreds of different language and cultural groups throughout Australia. I think that schools should teach Australian history in a more balanced way by partnering with Indigenous	

Australians to provide another side of Australian history that articulates the resistance against forced settlement and celebrates the rich knowledge and traditions that exist within Indigenous cultures. I think it is important that Indigenous Australians stop being 'othered' through the education system and media outlets and the stereotype of how Aboriginal people should look needs to be left behind. By only portraying an image of Indigenous Australians as being ancient, tribal people with dark skin and covered in body paint, we make it challenging for Indigenous people whom do not fit this stereotype, to feel a sense of belonging. Culturally relevant education in schools will be a positive step towards balancing history and embedding an understanding and respect for differences in the children and youth of this and the next generation.

I feel like I have been provided with some essentials to reach my full potential such as having the opportunity to complete high school and go onto study a Bachelors degree in uni. Having access to a good healthcare system and subsidised medications has also been incredibly instrumental in enabling me to strive to reach my full potential while managing a chronic health condition (Type 1 Diabetes) on a daily basis.

I found adolescence (between age 14-16) an incredibly challenging time full of questions, confusion, hormones, loneliness, misunderstanding, depression and anxiety. I didn't feel understood or supported through my experience of depression and anxiety which lead to a delayed diagnoses and feelings of shame and embarrassment about suffering from mental health issues.

I believe the Victorian government youth policy could improve this situation by making mental health a core component of education in schools. This will help to break down the stigma around mental health and support young people that may be experiencing or know someone experience issues related to mental health.

CASE STUDY 2:

1. Age: 21

2. Gender: Male

3. Demographic location: Wonga Park

4. Cultural Background: Born in Australia, 1/4 Scottish

The future is something that seems to be important to young people. In particular throughout schools there's a strong focus on career, and I think as a result YP place a lot of value on that. Strong social networks are also important to YP. Sometimes not even necessarily having the right people around, but people that provide security and protection in a really vulnerable period of your life. Finally, having an outlet. Sport, music, drama, video games.

I was very lucky to grow up in quite an affluent family. I was sent to a private school, allowed to move education systems when I needed to, given all the right tools to help me succeed. I think the only thing that was missing was someone to ask why I was doing the things I was doing. I was blindly acting out and doing the wrong thing, and had no understanding why that was. As a result, I was left thinking I was simply a naughty kid. This probably held me back somewhat, but aside from that I believe I was given every opportunity to succeed, and still am.

I think simpler, cheaper and easier access to face to face assistance for mental health. The toughest period I went through was when I was at around 17-18, and I found the process to get help laborious, expensive and unfulfilling. Further attention and a greater priority needs to be given to mental health care in Victoria and across Australia.

CASE STUDY 3:

Age: 18

Gender: Female

Demographic location: Mount Eliza

Cultural Background: Australian

I think one of the most important things for young people is support, and having the knowledge about it and ready access to it as well. It is a very easy thing for someone in their youth to get stuck in their world and forget that there is someone/some place to help on the outside, which is never a good thing. I think just being reminded that you don't have to do or go through everything on your own is so damn important.

I think that in areas of education and employment there is definitely room for improvement. In the public school education system, it is not uncommon to encounter teachers who couldn't give two shits about how well their students are doing or where they end up, which shows quite obviously is detrimental to a student and their confidence in their abilities. Its also pretty hard to get a job as a young person in a place that isn't fast food, minimum wages or both combined. I've encounter way too many people my age who get ripped off by employers who see them as workers not people

CASE STUDY 4:

Age: 20

Gender: female

Demographic location Parkdale

Culture: European

Mental health and education are the two issues that are most important to me. I think that education is what creates discrimination, so therefore better education can reduce it by increasing awareness and de-buffing a lot of stigma and myths that people have about minority groups. Mental health is important to me as I have suffered from a range of mental illnesses. And whilst they have not really been severe enough to impact my success or ability to reach my potential in high school, uni or various working roles, they sure as hell made the process a lot harder. I think that stigma associated with mental health leads to too many young people going through it alone, and living in a cycle. We say that mental health should be spoken about, however the very symptoms of mental health are still ridiculed, punished or gossiped about. I think that better education to young people about the quite common, shared illnesses such as depression and anxiety can make the young population who suffer from them have better experiences in schools and life in general.

I was given so many opportunities to strive and reach my potential. This includes an incredible family, great and caring teachers, and a great friendship group. However I am very aware that I am not the majority, coming from a middle-class, full family, two parents who attended university, and enough money to support anything I wanted to try or achieve. For the many young people I knew who didn't have this sort of background, it was difficult, and support or resources awareness would have probably helped them a great deal.

A time in my life that was quite difficult, and increased my awareness about how important it is to educate young people on wellbeing and mental health in general, was when I was in grade 6-8, and first started experiencing anxiety and depression. It was not long after I hit puberty that I started also feeling extremely self conscious about my body, reducing what I ate, getting irritable and practically screaming my house down every night without any awareness of what was going on. I played up at school, although never very badly, only answering back and manipulating teachers. I felt like I was against the adults, because I didn't see any who were like me or understood me at school or home. Now I have more respect for

| | those teachers who gave me second and third chances, and most of all my parents, from preventing any further destruction I could have made to myself. It was a very difficult time in my youth solely because I didn't know that what was going on was treatable and manageable, or about the services that I could have used. Now, when I find places like the Reach Foundation, reachout forums and headspace I think to myself how much I would have been saved from myself earlier if I had have been aware of what they offered. Education and awareness is the key in my opinion. | |