

About the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is Australia's nongovernment youth affairs peak body, which represents young people aged 12-25 and the sector that supports them.

AYAC represents a growing membership of State and Territory youth peak bodies, national youth organisations, researchers, policy makers and young people themselves, who are all passionate about creating an Australian community that supports and promotes the positive development of young people.

AYAC aims to:

- Provide a body broadly representative of the issues and interests of young people and the youth affairs field in Australia;
- Advocate for a united Australia which respects and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, promotes human rights, and provides justice for all;
- Represent the rights and interests of young people in Australia, at both a national and an international level;
- Promote the elimination of poverty and to promote the wellbeing of young Australians, with a particular focus on those who are disadvantaged;
- Recognise the diversity of Australian society, to promote the cultural, social, economic, political, environmental and spiritual interests and participation of young people in all aspects of society;
- Advocate for, assist with and support the development of policy positions on issues affecting young people and the youth affairs field, and to provide policy advice, perspectives and advocacy to governments and the broader community; and
- Facilitate co-ordination and co-operation within the youth affairs field.

AYAC and its members are committed to working for and with young people and seek to ensure they have access to mechanisms which allow them to make decisions about issues that affect them in the Australian community.

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We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

Introduction

AYAC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to a national discussion on the 'Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements'.

This submission has been prepared in consultation with AYAC's Policy Advisory Council, which comprises all youth State and Territory peak bodies, as well youth and youth-led organisations, and specialist organisations with a youth focus, in areas such as mental health, drug and alcohol, academic bodies, and other relevant organisations (see Appendix for the full list of our Policy Advisory Council organisations). However, due to limitations of the consultation process, AYAC was not able to significantly consult very isolated communities.

Our response is based primarily on AYAC's Guiding Principles, which follow:

- **Human rights and social justice:** Working towards an Australian community that respects and promotes the human rights of young people.
- **Participation:** Promoting the valued inclusion of young people in all aspects of the Australian community and educating the community about effective youth engagement strategies.
- **Collaboration:** Engaging stakeholders in a collaborative manner and establishing a meaningful dialogue with partners to build a coalition around the positive development of Australia's young people.
- **Social inclusion:** Ensuring universal access to all aspects of community life for young people and working to eliminate inequalities faced by Australia's young people.
- **Closing the Gap:** Working to eliminate inequalities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Australians.
- **Young People in Context:** Recognising that young people are influenced by their environment, which may include family, peers, health professionals, youth workers and/or educators.
- **Sustainability:** Promoting the need for sustainable development to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **Evidence base and resources:** Promoting evidence-based practice and providing adequate resources appropriate to the needs of young people.
- **Accessibility:** Ensuring that young people have access to adequate and appropriate programs and services, regardless of their geographic location, race, gender, level of disability and social, religious and economic circumstances.
- **Independence and accountability:** Operating as an independent and vocal advocate and functioning in a transparent and accountable manner.

Based on the above principles, we express our support for the Government's decision to investigate more appropriate and innovative ways to increase employment and participation in remote areas of Australia. We have consulted widely with young people and the youth sector that supports them, by sending youth workers to DEEWR consultations and via an online and paper-based survey. In this response, we submit recommendations based on the feedback we have received, along with the knowledge and expertise of our Policy Advisory Council.

We thank you for taking the time to read through our response and would welcome the chance to meet with you and discuss these issues further. We would also strongly advocate

for young people to be involved in any feedback or consultation process that may be carried out in the future, as these are decisions that directly affect them.

Summary of Recommendations

In response to 'The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements' discussion paper, AYAC believes that this is a unique opportunity for the Australian Government to create an innovative, flexible and thoughtful set of programs that recognises the diverse needs and strengths of young people and youth workers throughout Australia.

We urge the Federal Government to use this discussion as a catalyst for action that enables children and young people to have their rights fully recognised, regardless of their geographic location, race, gender, level of disability and/or social, religious and economic circumstances. We propose the following recommendations to assist in achieving this:

1. That DEEWR look to innovative examples of remote service delivery, particularly within the nongovernment sector. Specifically, DEEWR should investigate the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) program and coordinate with and provide support for similar, innovative NGOs (see case studies throughout this submission).
2. That DEEWR recognise the importance of education and training – particularly in the middle years (8-15) – as an important pathway to employment.
3. That DEEWR address, in collaboration with relevant government agencies and nongovernment organisations, the issues of the provision of housing and health services for young people living in remote communities.
4. That DEEWR use the National Broadband Network as infrastructure to deliver training for school students, TAFE students, apprentices, and university students, as well as for youth workers and other professionals who support them.
5. As poor mental health can contribute to poor education, skills attainment and employment outcomes, it is crucial to have services that support the wellbeing of young people living in remote Australia, both in terms of coping with unemployment and in terms of ensuring they are healthy and well and therefore able to participate in education, training and employment. Additionally, DEEWR should incorporate into its overall strategy access to online clinical organisations (such as Inspire and headspace), which would also help to mitigate some of the mental health issues faced by isolated communities.
6. That DEEWR should ensure that any service provider be either community-based or have significant and meaningful structures for input from the local community.
7. When developing service delivery for programs affecting young people, DEEWR should ensure that young people are meaningfully consulted.
8. That DEEWR should thoroughly investigate how the wide range of organisations are already working to tackle unemployment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote Australia.
9. That DEEWR recognise the positive impact cultural awareness training has on increasing understanding and promoting partnerships within the community and that DEEWR incorporate appropriate training to all staff, especially those within Centrelink and other tendered service providers.
10. That DEEWR investigate the way in which the LLNP is delivered and consider it in a culturally sensitive manner.
11. That DEEWR ensure availability of interpreters for people whose first language is not English.
12. DEEWR should consult with local communities about what they need in order to access education. Consultations should be thorough and conducted in partnership with youth service providers to ensure they are age appropriate, so that young people

have a chance to attend and have direct input in decisions that affect them and their wider community.

13. As youth workers and youth programs have a significant impact on engaging young people in education, training and work, Government should look to diverting resources to support and sustain local initiatives with skilled youth workers.
14. If AYAC's National Workforce Development Fund project application is funded, DEEWR should work closely with AYAC to ensure remote communities are adequately resourced with youth workers, particularly with a view to extending the number of youth workers who are appropriately skilled and competent in working in remote communities.
15. DEEWR should consider increasing the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, both in scope and individual payments, as well as reducing the means test so that young people living in remote communities have equal access to education, as is their inherent right.
16. When designing programs to increase employment and participation in remote communities, the role of women must be specifically addressed and catered for, even if the issue is not specific to women.
17. When designing schemes for supporting the roles of women, DEEWR should focus on empowering and training young women and girls.
18. Programs that seek to support the role of women in participation and employment must develop the program in consultation with women in communities so as to maintain cultural sensitivity.
19. In partnership with the community, youth peak bodies and service providers, DEEWR should develop programs to provide skills training to young people so they are able to begin further training or employment.
20. DEEWR should conduct a public education program that highlights the benefits of employing young people.
21. DEEWR should establish community employment brokers who work with the community to drive their vision of employment and participation. These brokers could also be responsible for mentoring young people in the transition from training to employment.

AYAC Survey: Remote Employment & Participation

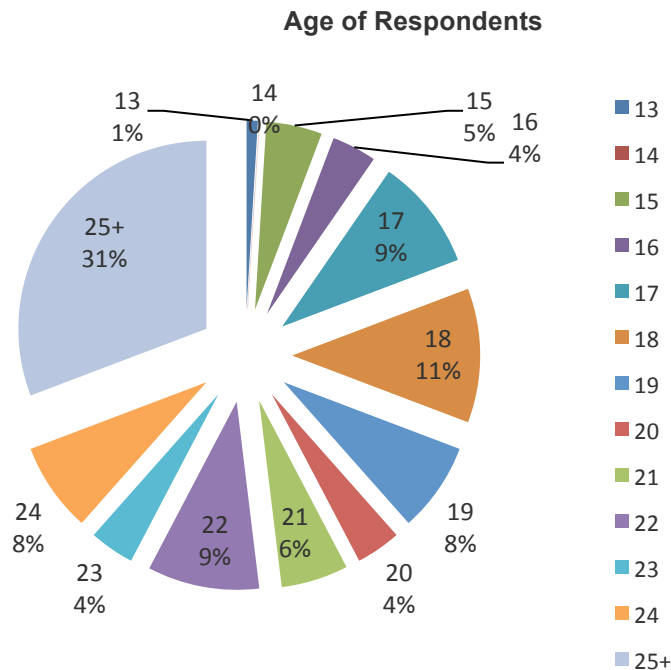
Remote Employment & Participation Survey

About the survey

In August and September 2011, AYAC consulted directly with young people via an online survey entitled *Remote Employment & Participation for Young People*. The survey was also distributed in hard copy format to enable youth workers to gather responses from young people living in very remote areas of Australia, for those with disability and for people whose first language was not English. The poll was aimed at young people in remote areas of Australia, asking them about their perceptions and experiences of the availability of employment and about the changes that could be made to improve access to employment and participation.

Demographics

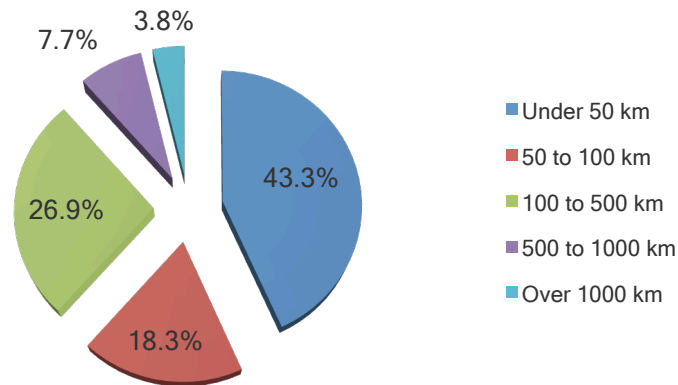
The AYAC survey reflected views of all age groups across Australia with young people aged 12 to 25 years of age among the largest group of respondents. Of these, 28.2% were male and 71.8% were female. Among the respondents, 28.2% were of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, while 7.8% reported having a disability.



Location

The survey represented people from all States and Territories across Australia, with the largest representation being New South Wales at 35.6%. Respondents were asked how far they lived from their nearest major centre and were also asked to identify their hometown. Responses varied widely, representing most areas of Australia. Some examples include: Avoca, Dubbo, Nowra, Wauchope (NSW), Broome, Bourke, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Kunanurra, Goondiwindi, and Tennant Creek.

How far young people lived from their nearest major centre



"I like living in a rural area, my family are here and I have a strong connection to my country. It is unfortunate that when I finish school I will have to move away so that I can study further or get a job".

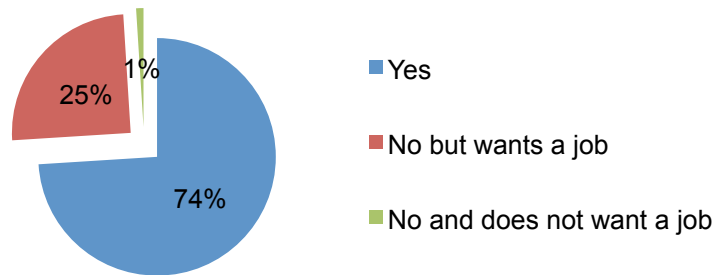
Survey Respondent

Employment status

The current national unemployment rate is steady at 5.1%¹, yet this was not indicative within the results of the survey. Of all the respondents surveyed, 75% held a paid job, while 25% were unemployed but wished to have a job and 1% were unemployed. Of the people that were unemployed and wishing to have a job, varying vocations were listed from childcare to truck driving, reflecting the need for diversity of education and employment opportunities in remote areas.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Labour Force, Australia Aug 2011', key figures, accessed Oct 11, 2011: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0/

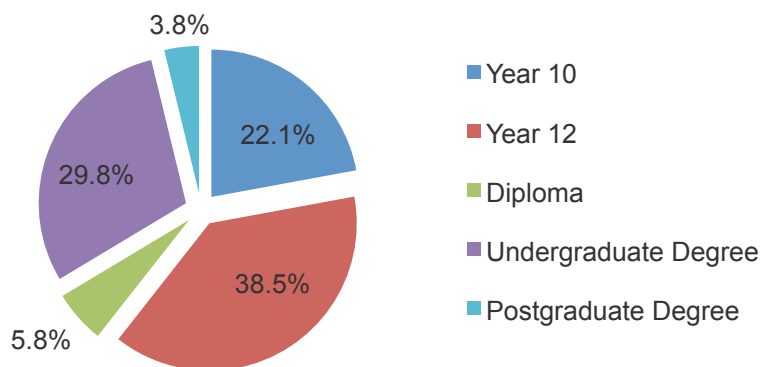
Current employment status



Level of education

Only 3.8% of respondents had a postgraduate degree, with the highest number of respondents (38.5%) having completed Year 12. 22.1% reached Year 10 and only 5.8% had completed a Diploma.

Highest Level of Education Achieved



Barriers to employment and participation

When asked about the opportunities for employment within the respondents' areas, there was an overwhelming response in the negative with 70.2% of respondents stating there were not enough opportunities for employment. Many respondents highlighted an overall lack of jobs in remote areas, especially for young people. Additionally, lack of education, lack of experience or skills, and the lack of mentoring or support services was also mentioned. It was also pointed out that there are only so many jobs available in a small town.

Many respondents also flagged transportation as a major issue. Respondents expressed an inability to get to work or access higher education as getting to major towns and education institutions was very difficult to achieve with limited or no public transport.

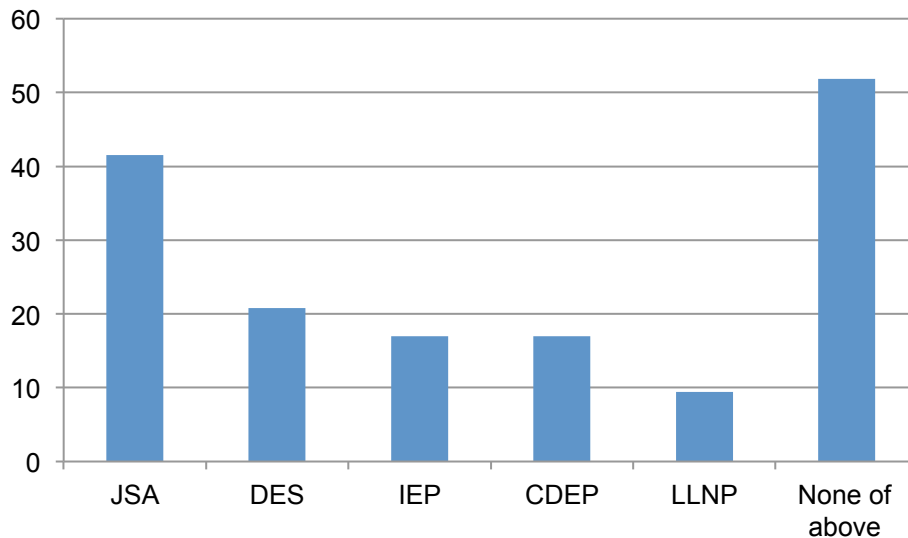
Awareness of government employment services

When respondents were asked if they were aware of employment services in their area, such as Job Services Australia (JSA), Disability Employment Services (DES), the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP), Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), and the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP), 51.9% said that they were not aware of any of the services listed.

"I think the main things stopping young people from finding work in my area is that there is little knowledge of the wealth of opportunities out there. There are many students who know what they want to do but do not know how to get there or who they should go to [in order] to help them get there".

Survey Respondent

Awareness of Employment Services



Centrelink, however, was more widely known to the respondents, with 78.8% indicating they lived under 50 kilometres from their nearest Office. Only 2.9% indicated that their closest Centrelink was between 100-500 kilometres away.

Availability of youth services

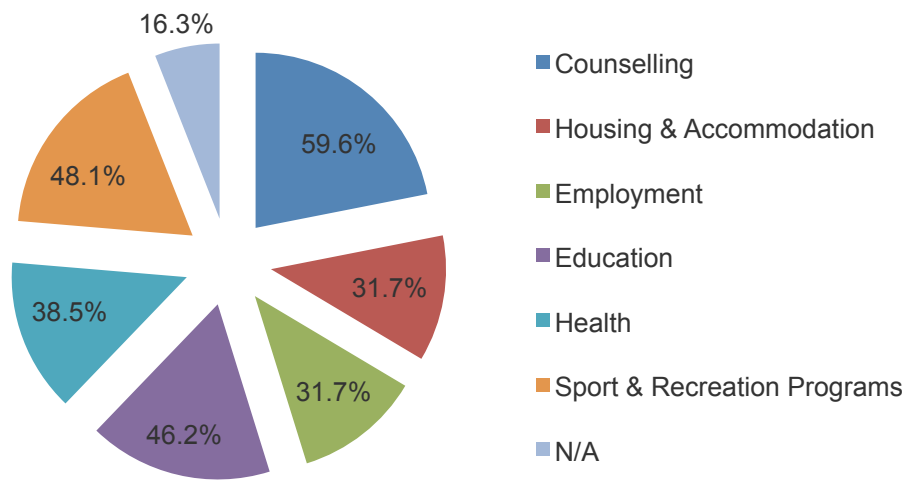
The availability of youth programs was also seen as important for young people living in remote areas. However, while 68.3% of respondents were aware of youth services within their area, 11.5% answered in the negative and 20.2% said they didn't know of any youth workers in their area.

If respondents indicated that they were aware of youth services in their area, they were asked what kind of program/s was available. 31.7% indicated that they knew of accommodation and employment services. Respondents were most aware of counselling, and sport and recreation services, at 59.6% and 48.1% respectively. These are important services, however, when assessing the needs of youth in a holistic manner, accommodation or employment services are fundamentally important in meeting the basic needs and human rights of young people.

"They need purpose. Something outside of themselves that is worth living for."

Survey Respondent

Availability of Youth Services



DEEWR Discussion Paper Response

Discussion Points: How can we provide services in a better way?

How can governments at all levels work better together to ensure that services delivered in remote communities support jobs, participation and economic development?

ISSUE

Governments need to be more cooperative, cohesive and adaptive, especially in recognition of the diversity of the remote clients they serve.

DISCUSSION

Governments should not only work better together (at local, state, and federal levels) but should seek to ensure they leverage the innovative and responsive work of nongovernment organisations already in the field. For example, DEEWR could work in cooperation with – or learn from - the global One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Australia program, which endeavours to ensure all Australians are ‘connected to opportunity’. OLPC recognises that there are more than half a million children aged 4-15 that live in outer-regional, remote and very remote communities across Australia. More importantly, they recognise that young people who live in remote Australia do not lack the capacity to learn; rather, they lack the opportunity. This opportunity to learn is a vital pathway to employment, as noted in the Government’s ‘Stronger Futures’ Report: “Improving education will be an important foundation for getting a job, staying in employment and being able to take advantage of economic opportunities”² (p 13).

Generation One also acknowledges education, as well as other factors that undermine young people’s ability to participate and engage in employment. They state that the ‘critical issues for communities and governments include the provision of quality housing and health services, the vital role of school-based education in “turning off the tap” of jobless young people and the need for young people to transition successfully from school to work’(p7).³ Housing is a fundamental issue in remote communities. Lack of accommodation restricts service providers being able to be placed in communities full time or even overnight, making real community engagement almost impossible in many circumstances.

Given that the National Broadband Network (NBN) initiative prioritises ‘people in homes, small businesses and indigenous communities in some of the most remote areas of Australia’⁴ and will be among the first to access the high-speed network, it makes sense that DEEWR capitalises on this vital infrastructure. This could dramatically enhance the capacity of remote communities to access education and employment by mitigating the issues they face regarding inadequate accommodation and transport. We caution, however, that this is not a panacea to the infrastructure issues that remote communities face. In combination with the One Laptop Per Child program (whose corporate sponsors include the Commonwealth Bank, Telstra and News Limited), DEEWR could leverage the NBN rollout, which prioritises remote communities to ensure all young people have access to high quality education.

² Australian Government 2011 ‘Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory’, discussion paper, accessed Oct 11 2011: www.indigenous.gov.au/strongerfutures

³ Generation One 2011 ‘Skills and Training for A Career’, discussion paper, accessed Oct 11 2011: www.generationone.org.au

⁴ NBNCo 2011 ‘Remote Australians the priority for new NBN Interim Satellite Service’, media release, accessed Oct 11: www.nbnco.com.au

Another serious implication of the low unemployment and education rates in remote Australia is mental illness and the increased rates of suicide, particularly in young men. According to the Australian Department of Health and Ageing, suicide rates in rural and remote regions of Australia 'have risen over the past three decades...unemployment can lead to depression and hopelessness and [is a] known risk factor for suicide'.⁵ Having access to the Internet would also be a significant step towards addressing this tragic by-product of unemployment in remote Australia. Online organisations such as Inspire and headspace could be accessed for increased support.

In the Northern Territory, where youth suicide occurs at a disturbing rate, mental health services for young people are chronically under-resourced. There is a headspace in Alice Springs and one in Palmerston but other regional and remote centres are services that are predominantly 'fly-in fly-out' that are both infrequent and extremely limited in their capacity to provide ongoing support to young people. Place-based youth mental health solutions for regional and remote areas are crucial if we are to better support young people to make strong, proactive and positive decisions about their lives.

In addition to the often overwhelming impact of mental illness on individuals and their families, untreated mental illness continues to have an impact over the course of a person's life, negatively impacting on personal income, productivity in the workplace, and overall contribution to the national economy. In 2009, mental illness cost Australia \$10.6 billion in lost productivity, under-employment, absenteeism, welfare payments, healthcare expenditure and carer costs. Poor mental health compromises Australia's mental and human capital.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That DEEWR look to innovative examples of remote service delivery, particularly within the nongovernment sector. Specifically, DEEWR should investigate the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) program and coordinate with and provide support for similar, innovative NGOs (see case studies throughout this submission).
2. That DEEWR recognise the importance of education and training – particularly in the middle years (8-15) – as an important pathway to employment.
3. That DEEWR address, in collaboration with relevant government agencies and nongovernment organisations, the issues of the provision of housing and health services for young people living in remote communities.
4. That DEEWR use the National Broadband Network as infrastructure to deliver training for school students, TAFE students, apprentices, and university students, as well as for youth workers and other professionals who support them.
5. As poor mental health can contribute to poor education, skills attainment and employment outcomes, it is crucial to have services that support the wellbeing of young people living in remote Australia, both in terms of coping with unemployment and in terms of ensuring they are healthy and well and therefore able to participate in education, training and employment. Additionally, DEEWR should incorporate into its overall strategy access to online clinical organisations (such as Inspire and headspace), which would also help to mitigate some of the mental health issues faced by isolated communities.

⁵ Australian Department of Health and Ageing 2007 'Suicide in rural and remote communities', fact sheet, accessed Oct 11: www.livingisforeveryone.com.au

Should participation and employment services be delivered by a single provider in each location?

ISSUE

The Government recognises that current services 'can be fragmented and their goals are not always aligned [and that] programs can be inflexible and unresponsive to community needs and aspirations' (p7)⁶.

DISCUSSION

Multiple providers who have different specialisations undertake the current provision of government services in remote communities. This is considered both a strength and a weakness of the system as individual providers may have relationships of varying strength with the community and be more or less able to carry out the provision of services and adapt to the needs of the community. However, due to problems with accommodation and transport multiple providers can be an inefficient method of delivering services to communities who cannot reach them.

Some providers have - whether through mistrust or problems between the provider and community - developed bad relationships with communities, which in turn prevents them from carrying out their programs successfully. In consultation with communities and youth sector organisations, there was some concern raised that having a single service provider while potentially streamlining the process holds inherent risk that a single provider's relationship with the community and their competency in the delivery of services is the difference between effective and ineffective services to a remote community.

In remote Indigenous communities, people are accustomed to being subject to a revolving door of services that arrive without their prior knowledge. Furthermore, if young people are not meaningfully consulted about service delivery, it is less likely that they will engage with it. It is crucial that future service delivery seeks to consult beyond standard approaches, through methods such as engaging local community members and workers as facilitators. DEEWR should employ multiple consultation approaches based on local knowledge to capture the views of young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. That DEEWR should ensure that any service provider be either community-based or have significant and meaningful structures for input from the local community.
7. When developing service delivery for programs affecting young people, DEEWR should ensure that young people are meaningfully consulted.

What services could be provided by Centrelink and how can Centrelink work better with other providers to support participation in remote communities?

ISSUE

The Government recognises that 'there may be further opportunities for increased cooperation between Centrelink, other service providers and people in remote Indigenous communities'(p10)⁷.

DISCUSSION

⁶ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2011 'The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements', discussion paper, accessed Oct 11 2011: www.deewr.gov.au

⁷ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2011 'The Future of Remote Participation and Employment Servicing Arrangements', discussion paper, accessed Oct 11 2011: www.deewr.gov.au

Generation One recently released a discussion paper addressing the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly relating to employment and training, entitled 'Skills and Training for a Career'⁸. Their analysis predicts up to 9.3 million job openings in the next 15 years, making this the ideal time to capitalise on Australia's substantial economic growth. While Generation One's discussion paper refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, they offer innovative models that could help to determine training requirements and deliver 'real' jobs. The most important feature of their policy is that 'local industries work in partnership with Indigenous people and their communities and that governments, service providers and education and training providers support and enable that partnership' (p8).

It is also vital that cultural training be mandatory for all service providers, including Centrelink and employers. As one respondent to AYAC's survey said, there is 'a lack of cultural awareness and very covert racism [which] plague the town...and this is just a barrier to some kids that should completely not exist in the first place.'

'All levels of government should set a good example by providing adequate cross cultural training (a short course – not a tick the box scam) to all workers.'

Survey Respondent

Another issue for DEEWR to consider is the way in which the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) is delivered. Experienced youth workers in remote Aboriginal communities have highlighted that shame is a major barrier in the willingness to participate in this program. For example, young men who have been through male initiation rituals, but by Western standards are still thought of as 'youth', often find it shameful and inappropriate to return to school or classroom situations as that is considered to be 'for boys'. This is yet another illustration of why it is so important for all employees of government and business (and NGOs) to undertake cultural training.

'The Government should make small business have an Aboriginal Employment Strategy, endeavouring to employ a percentage of Aboriginal people, and not just 1, as Aboriginal people need to connect and be with other Aboriginal people. All businesses large and small, government and nongovernment should have to complete cultural education programs to acknowledge they understand Aboriginal people and their needs and the understanding of having a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal people to work in.'

Survey Respondent

Lastly, as English is *not* the first language of many people living in remote areas of Australia, the use of interpreters should be more widespread and readily available, with facilitators being trained to use interpreters properly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. That DEEWR should thoroughly investigate how the wide range of organisations are already working to tackle unemployment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote Australia.

⁸ Generation One 2011 'Skills and Training for A Career', discussion paper, www.generationone.org.au, accessed Oct 11 2011

9. That DEEWR recognise the positive impact cultural awareness training has on increasing understanding and promoting partnerships within the community and that DEEWR incorporate appropriate training to all staff, especially those within Centrelink and other tendered service providers.
10. That DEEWR investigate the way in which the LLNP is delivered and consider it in a culturally sensitive manner.
11. That DEEWR ensure availability of interpreters for people whose first language is not English.

Discussion Points: How can we improve results for people?

How can young people be supported to remain engaged with education, training and employment?

ISSUE

Young people living in remote areas of Australia face significant disadvantage compared with urban-dwelling youth, particularly regarding lack of education, training, and access to employment.

DISCUSSION

AYAC considers young people to have inherent strength and resilience. However, as stated by OLPC, young people lack the opportunities, not the capacity, to remain engaged with education, training and employment. For example, there are often no high schools in remote communities, so even if students remain in school until primary classes end, there is a gap between the ages of 12 to 18 where young people are unable to locally access education or training.

Additionally, Western models of education tend to make assumptions that all young people are school-ready, which is often not the case. In the same way that adults often need a great deal of support to become work-ready, so do many young people. Youth work and youth development programs can be highly successful in engaging young people so that they more actively participate in school, training and employment opportunities. Engaging and socialising young people through development programs which complement formal education and training systems are effective in improving overall community functionality, as well as young people's confidence and participation.

Case Study: Mount Theo Program

The Mount Theo program developed by the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) is an outstanding example of remote communities developing innovative solutions to the issues facing their community. Developed according to the needs, interests and values of the community WYDAC has tackled social issues such as substance abuse, communal or domestic violence and other anti social behavior.

By building programs such as the Mt Theo Outstation and the Jaru Pirrjirdi project they have taken at risk youth from the Yuendumu community and created a space for cultural and personal rehabilitation through culturally appropriate measures. From this point the programs then provide mentoring and support for young people to receive training and become empowered as leaders in their community. Programs such as the Jaru Night Club provide education relevant to students and are taught at a time when young people are receptive to learning, rather than maintaining culturally inappropriate Western attitudes to education. Mount Theo is an example of best practice in building sustainable services run by and for the communities they serve to ensure the survival of their culture and their hopes in the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

Youth workers assist young people in all areas of life and act as a conduit between the young person and professionals in their community (for example, if a mental health referral is needed). They also become trusted and valued members of the community in which they work, particularly in rural and remote communities, which include a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. However, while youth workers can add immense value to the lives of rural and remote young people, there are not nearly enough qualified youth workers in these areas. This is attributed to geographic location, inherent difficulties of the work and economies of scale, among other reasons. Furthermore, there is a significant gap in provision of youth programs in remote communities; in many places the capacity for a youth worker (beyond sport and recreation) simply does not exist.

The Minister for School Education's new policy that changes the National School Chaplaincy Program to allow youth workers to be employed by schools, so long as they are qualified, is a good example of this. While it is crucial to have youth workers in schools who are qualified, there is a chronic lack of qualified youth workers in rural and remote areas of Australia. This means that schools in such areas will find it extremely difficult to hire appropriate support staff, for even though many youth workers have extensive experience in their field, they do not have the formal qualifications that are required by DEEWR.

AYAC has considered this and recently applied for funding through DEEWR's Workforce Development Fund to provide training for rural and remote youth workers. Youth workers would gain a Certificate IV in Youth Work and be employed under the aegis of the National School Chaplaincy and Welfare Program.

"Start by preparing young people whilst they're in school for the workforce and perhaps have people dedicated to communicating this information and designing and running programs for any young person interested within the community".

Survey Respondent

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. DEEWR should consult with local communities about what they need in order to access education. Consultations should be thorough and conducted in partnership with youth service providers to ensure they are age appropriate, so that young people have a chance to attend and have direct input in decisions that affect them and their wider community.
13. As youth workers and youth programs have a significant impact on engaging young people in education, training and work, Government should look to diverting resources to support and sustain local initiatives with skilled youth workers.
14. If AYAC's National Workforce Development Fund project application is funded, DEEWR should work closely with AYAC to ensure remote communities are adequately resourced with youth workers, particularly with a view to extending the number of youth workers who are appropriately skilled and competent in working in remote communities.
15. DEEWR should consider increasing the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, both in scope and individual payments, as well as reducing the means test so that young people living in remote communities have equal access to education, as is their inherent right.

How can participation and employment services best support the positive role women play in remote areas?

ISSUE

Women's roles in remote communities are often integral to the effective functioning of the community. Government often finds it difficult to develop programs that support women while remaining culturally appropriate.

DISCUSSION

Historically, governments have overlooked the capacity of existing resources in remote communities, namely the people, opting instead to impose outside structures that are not designed for the culture within which they are being implemented. Of these resources the most overlooked, particularly in Indigenous communities, is women. Indigenous women are the social glue in their community and face the highest levels of disadvantage in the country. When governments and agencies ignore the force that holds together the community, that community loses its cohesion and begins to collapse. Young girls in remote communities often face similar conditions to girls in the developing world. Data shows that if these girls are supported and included in participation and employment they will not only improve their own prospects for the future, they will give back to their community at a disproportionately higher level than men⁹. Early investment by employment and participation services that are designed for young girls in remote communities will mean long term benefits for individuals and entire communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. When designing programs to increase employment and participation in remote communities, the role of women must be specifically addressed and catered for, even if the issue is not specific to women.
17. When designing schemes for supporting the roles of women, DEEWR should focus on empowering and training young women and girls.

⁹ Girl Effect 'The girl effect data: Why should we pay attention to girls?', fact sheet, accessed Oct 11 2011: www.girleffect.org

18. Programs that seek to support the role of women in participation and employment must develop the program in consultation with women in communities so as to maintain cultural sensitivity.

Case Study: Wilurarra Creative

The Wilurarra Creative is a youth arts centre, in Warburton WA, which facilitates a diverse range of creative programs and provides space and support for self-directed learning, for Ngaanyatjarra people aged 17-30. The centre houses a number of facilities from a music studio and library to an internet café which provides the space for people to engage in meaningful projects which provide training and pathways to new opportunities.

Through applying practices that are culturally appropriate to their community the centre has managed to engage demographics, like young Indigenous adults, who in the past have been difficult to engage. By building these relationships, the centre has been able to address issues around mental and sexual health in young adults in culturally appropriate ways. The provision of these services in Warburton, which is one of the poorest towns in Australia (with one of the highest costs of living), is invaluable to building the capacity of the greatest resource of the community: its people.

Discussion Points: How do we get more community ownership and responsibility?

How should communities have a bigger say in the delivery of participation and employment services?

ISSUE

The government believes that individual and community responsibility is vital for participation and employment services to be effective and for local innovation to emerge.

DISCUSSION

Effective service delivery in remote communities relies on a constant adaption of delivery processes appropriate to the context of the community. Government youth services have in the past failed to adapt their delivery systems to be relevant to the community they are serving. Systemic delivery of services in the future should be undertaken through designing programs in consultation with communities and with youth peak bodies who have large networks and more specialised knowledge of the needs of remote communities in their area.

In order to add value to these services and make them relevant to people in remote communities, recruiting and training people from the communities in youth work and youth service delivery would produce a sustainable delivery system culturally attuned to the community it services. Additionally, it is vital to promote the benefits of employing young people to potential employers. This may take the form of a strategic education program that highlights some myths and facts about young people in the workplace and would certainly aim to debunk the stereotype of young people as 'lazy'.

Attempts by service providers to integrate youth into employment and participation often fail when young people are not provided with basic skills to make them ready to begin employment or training. Providing non-accredited training which gives basic skills should be a

platform for greater engagement in employment and further accredited training. Communities should collaborate with youth workers and service providers to develop programs which are culturally appropriate and relevant to the needs of young people.

One innovation that was suggested in consultation with communities is the idea of 'Employment Brokers' who live and work in the community and are employed by DEEWR as an intermediary. Their role would be to help drive what elders and the broader community want to see happen in the community with regards to employment and participation. They could also be involved in a mentoring role to young people and provide assistance as they seek to transition from training to employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. In partnership with the community, youth peak bodies and service providers, DEEWR should develop programs to provide skills training to young people so they are able to begin further training or employment.
20. DEEWR should conduct a public education program that highlights the benefits of employing young people.
21. DEEWR should establish community employment brokers who work with the community to drive their vision of employment and participation. These brokers could also be responsible for mentoring young people in the transition from training to employment.

Appendix: About AYAC's Policy Advisory Council

YAPA

YAPA (Youth Action and Policy Association NSW) is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. YAPA works towards a society where all young people are supported, engaged and valued. The role of YAPA is to: monitor and respond to government policies and proposals affecting young people; promote and advocate on issues affecting young people and youth services; bring young people and youth workers together to act on issues affecting them; work to raise a positive profile of young people in the media and in the community; provide training, forums and conferences to young people and youth workers; provide information and referral; and produce a range of resources, publications and newsletters.

YACVIC

YACVIC (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria) is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria. YACVIC's vision is for a Victorian community that values and provides opportunity, participation, justice and equity for all young people. YACVIC is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Core funding is from the Victorian Office for Youth. YACVIC is governed by a volunteer board and run by a paid secretariat. YACVIC has two main advisory mechanisms, the Policy Advisory Group and the Youth Reference Group.

YACWA

YACWA (Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia) is the peak nongovernment youth organisation in Western Australia. YACWA operates primarily as a human rights organisation that seeks to address the exclusion of young people in a rapidly changing society. YACWA's vision for Western Australia is one that celebrates and engages young people in all aspects of the community. YACWA's role is to strengthen the trust, cooperation, collaboration; professionalisation and voice of the non-government youth service sector to better serve the young people of Western Australia.

YNOT

YNOT (Youth Network of Tasmania) is the peak body for the non-government youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT has input into and responds to policy direction, advocates for the youth sector and lobbies for the needs and initiatives of young people. YNOT is informed and supported by the youth sector organisations through its three regional coordinating groups: YAP, NYCC and NWAY. Integral to the work of YNOT is the peak consultative body, the Tasmanian Youth Forum.

YACSA

YACSA (Youth Affairs Council of South Australia) is the peak body representing young people and the youth sector in South Australia. YACSA's vision is that young people are vital and valued members of their communities. YACSA works towards supporting meaningful improvements in the quality of young people's lives; provides support to the youth sector; advocates to governments and the community on a range of matters which affect young people's lives; and is a source of information and referral on the interests and issues of young people.

YCACT

YCACT (The Youth Coalition of the ACT) is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and is responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years, and those who work with them. YCACT is represented on many ACT government advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on youth issues as well as providing information to youth services about policy and program matters. YCACT

actively promotes the wellbeing and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their social, political, cultural, spiritual, economic and educational development.

YANQ

YANQ (Youth Affairs Network Queensland) is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland, representing individuals and organisations from Queensland's youth sector. YANQ promotes the interests and wellbeing of young people across the state by disseminating information to members, the youth sector and the broader community; undertaking campaigns and lobbying; making representations to government and other influential bodies; resourcing regional and issues-based networks; consulting and liaising with members in the field; linking with key state and national bodies; initiating projects; hosting forums and conferences; providing input into policy development; and enhancing the professional development of the youth sector.

NTCOSS

NTCOSS (Northern Territory Council of Social Service) is the peak body for the Social and Community Sector in the NT and an advocate for social justice on behalf of people and communities in the NT, who may be affected by poverty and disadvantage. NTCOSS plays a coordination, advocacy, policy and sector development, and leadership and information role for the Social and Community Sector in the NT. For a number of years, NTCOSS has been involved in significant advocacy and policy development work related to children, young people and families.

As the Northern Territory does not yet have a youth peak body, the position of Youth Policy Officer, funded by the Department of Children and Families, allows for a more significant response to youth policy issues in the NT and the capacity to meaningfully engage with and consult with remote community organisations.

MYAN (Australia)

MYAN (Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network) is a nationally recognised body that represents migrant and newly arrived young people in order to advance their rights and interests. As a national network, the MYAN is comprised of representatives from each of Australia's states and territories. The MYAN was established in 2005 in response to an identified need for a national advisory and advocacy network for multicultural youth issues. The issues and needs of multicultural young people are often overlooked as they are a sub-group of both the broader youth and multicultural sectors and underrepresented in the policy and advocacy work of both the government and non-government sectors. The MYAN is auspiced by the Centre for Multicultural Youth.

headspace

headspace provides mental health and wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia. Established and funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia in 2006, headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. The people that work at headspace are providing solutions for young people aged 12 to 25 years.

Our primary focus is the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians. We know that getting help early is the key to resolving these problems quickly. headspace is making a difference where it is needed most – our young people.

The Inspire Foundation

The Inspire Foundation is a national non-profit organization with the mission to help young people lead happier lives. Established in 1996 in response to the then escalating rates of youth suicide, Inspire was the first organization in Australia to utilize the internet to deliver a

mental health service. Their flagship program, ReachOut.com is a proven, effective, early intervention service targeting young people aged 14-25. Launched in 1997, ReachOut.com receives over 1.3 million site visits per year – directly supporting over 500 000 young Australians in the last year alone.

Young people are at the centre of all Inspire does — as partners in the development and delivery of all activities. Inspire's programs utilise young people's preferred medium — the Internet and related technologies — to reach young people, build trusted social brands that are part of their landscape, and target the factors that are known to positively impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Inspire's work is evidence based and underpinned by research and evaluation, conducted in partnership with leading academic institutions and research centres.

In addition, Inspire is the leading partner in the Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing ('the CRC'), a collaboration of young people, academics, youth organisations and services, business and government who share the vision for a society that embraces the potential of technology to connect communities and enable all young Australians to grow up safe, happy, healthy and resilient. The research program will explore the potential of technologies, the role it plays in the lives of young people and how its potential can be harnessed to address many of the major social challenges facing young people.