Of ten young people are seen in a negative light rather than acknowledging any of their strengths. This negative way of viewing young people is problematic as it can lead to a stereotypical view of youth, which limits their potential and opportunities. Youth services need to be focused around individual agency and possibilities, allowing young people to decide what they want to do and trust young people to run it by themselves, to build their leadership skills.

To improve the sector we need better communication and networking between service providers that offer services to young people. At times, the competition between agencies is more than cooperation, which is not good for the young people as they miss out on assistance and support. An improvement would be to have a support system in place from the higher ranks in NSW in a way that encourages youth workers to have enough support, but there is not enough knowledge in the youth culture about accessing youth services.

Many youth workers are at risk due to not having access to services, e.g., access till later hours since this is when we have found many young people approach us with serious matters. An improvement to the sector would be providing access and education about services to young people at young ages, e.g., at schools, so young people are aware of services that they can access as opposed to being referred later when problems may already exist.

In my experience and in the region that I work in, senior management (not face to face) and the coal face. Youth workers should have a voice in the delivery of service and be involved in the care of young people. Many services appear to have a top down management style and this clearly doesn’t work.

The government needs to inject a huge amount of resources into the youth sector to improve the wage disparity. The current wage disparity means a high turnover of staff and a low value toward the work of youth workers within the wider community. A stronger and more consistent youth sector would exist, resulting in improved service delivery to young people.

We need more focus on empowering young people and communities to make significant change instead of endless band-aid solutions. The family unit remains a great resource and can play a part in supporting youth through tough times. Young people need to be provided with the necessary support to equip them for personal growth and readiness for adult life.

Youth services provide such a vital role within society; if wages were better for staff and more attractive as a career, we would retain more individuals with the drive to keep the sector on its toes in terms of training and professionalisation. Support for young people in equipping them for personal growth and readiness for adult life is crucial.
The Youth Action and Policy Association NSW (YAPA) acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout New South Wales and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past, present and future.

YAPA celebrates Indigenous cultures and the invaluable contribution they make to our society. We recognise that the successes of all Australians are built upon a land with many thousands of years of history.

Our shared history fills us with both pride in what we have achieved, and sorrow over many fundamental injustices that continue until the present day.

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Centre for Community Welfare Training

HypeDC Shoes
about YAPA

The Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) NSW Inc. 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.

To achieve this, it is the role of YAPA to:

1. respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth services sector.
2. provide proactive leadership and advocacy and shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services.
3. collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers.
4. promote a positive profile in the media and the community of young people and youth services.
5. build capacity for young people to speak out and take action on issues that affect them.
6. enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services.
7. ensure YAPA’s organisational development, efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.
This research formed part of the Keeping It Together (KIT) Youth Sector Support Project undertaken by YAPA, to support the youth sector through a significant period of change brought about by two key reforms.

Firstly, after 21 years of serving NSW young people with locally devised programs, the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) began a reform process that would see services fall under two umbrellas—the Early Intervention and Placement Prevention Program (EIPP) focused on direct services to children, young people and their families, and Community Builders, focused on community strengthening. This change precipitated a 25% increase in funding available across various types of services, including a large proportion of services working with young people.

Secondly, the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW handed down by Justice James Wood in 2008 and the subsequent reforms under the NSW Government’s action plan Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing 2009–2014 resulted in wide-ranging changes to the ways in which youth services and their colleagues across the community services sector were required to deal with their work with children and young people.

In response, YAPA and NSW Family Services Inc., the peak organisation providing support to non-government organisations in NSW that provide services to families experiencing stress, partnered to deliver the Keeping It Together Sector Support Project to youth and family support services across NSW, as funded by the Department of Family and Community Services (formerly Department of Human Services—Community Services).

This research was commissioned under the KIT Youth Sector Support Project for the purposes of gaining up-to-date, detailed and relevant information about youth work and youth services in NSW, that would empower YAPA and its government and non-government partners in their work to:

1. assist services throughout the transition processes required under the reforms,
2. monitor the impact of these transitions and
3. identify priorities for building skills and capacity in the sector.
It has been almost ten years since this level of data has been collected from youth services and workers in NSW, representing a significant gap in knowledge available to government and non-government agencies interested in services provided to NSW young people. In particular, the survey and report has created two important baselines:

1. What activities are being undertaken by services across NSW and where are the gaps; and

2. What are the attributes of the youth sector workforce and how does this impact on their vital work with young people.

With pivotal changes from the two major reforms listed above coming into effect at the time this research is released, as well as a new state government bringing fresh perspective to the youth services sector and its work, these baselines will provide crucial information on which to base our assessment of impact of these reforms and future discussions on ways to build in the strengths of the youth services sector.

Finally, these baselines create a useful snapshot of the state of the youth services sector today. This perspective provides a useful grounding for discussions and lively debates on the future of youth work in NSW and across the country.

YAPA is pleased to offer this research report to help inform and lead these important and exciting discussions.

On behalf of YAPA, I wish to thank the Department of Family and Community Services for funding the KIT Sector Support Project, from which this research report has been generated to help us all understand this complex sector and better ways we can support and build strengths in its work.

To Sue Richards, Mike Sheargold and the team at NSW Family Services, for being such wise, grounded and good-humoured project partners.

Thanks also to Dr Elizabeth Reimer (Elizabeth Reimer Consulting) for providing heavyweight academic rigour to the research work, without losing sight of the practical needs of all involved.

And of course, the KIT ‘guru and sidekick’ Sophie Trower and Dr Ann Deslandes for your tireless efforts, esteemed professionalism and pleasurable work styles.

A massive thank you for all you are and all you do.

Reynato Reodica
YAPA Chief Executive
July 2011
YAPA has developed a list of key objectives that guide all its work towards a society where all young people are supported, engaged and valued. In addition to delivering on the key outcomes within the KIT Sector Support Project, this research contributes to YAPA’s objectives, as follows:

1. **Respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth services sector**
   - The research project was designed to gather up-to-date information as key reform agendas relating to how young people are provided with support services are rolled out, and will inform YAPA’s responses on these issues.

2. **Provide proactive leadership and advocacy and shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services**
   - Baseline data will allow YAPA to lead discussions on the state of youth support in NSW from a more informed position.
   - Youth sector workers identified key issues throughout research that will inform YAPA’s work.
   - Research report will inform thinking by government and non-government agencies about the youth sector.

3. **Collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers**
   - Research provided opportunity for youth sector to have substantial input into the advocacy work conducted by YAPA.
   - Issues identified as important by sector will be progressed by YAPA in a collaborative fashion.

4. **Enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services**
   - Research report will inform the sector on common issues and strengths, providing a sector-wide picture of how services are being delivered and identifying barriers to the sector improving service delivery.
YOUTH WORK SNAPSHOT 2011: YAPA SURVEY OF YOUTH SERVICES & WORKERS IN NSW presents an overview of the results of two surveys recently run by YAPA with the youth sector in NSW—the Youth Services Survey and the Youth Worker Survey.

p12 ‘PROFILE’ provides the basic profile of information gleaned from the Youth Services Survey data. This includes characteristics of the youth services involved in the survey such as region, duration, general types of activities, capacity issues and hours of opening.

p17 ‘RESOURCES’ reports on resources the services responding to the survey bring to the sector. This includes information relating to their staff and funding as well as projects and programs.

p20 ‘CLIENTS’ describes characteristics of the clients using these services. It presents an overview, followed by a specific focus on young men and their families, young women and their families and requests for service from within specific minority groups. This is followed by a more detailed focus on ways in which the services involved in the survey work with clients from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

p32 ‘SERVICE DELIVERY’ provides the findings of the data on service delivery activities of the services surveyed.
The two data sets have not been directly compared in this report. It is anticipated that future work by YAPA will include comparison and correlation of the data, as well as detailed discussion of the findings and their implications for the youth work sector in NSW.

Readers are encouraged to contact YAPA for a copy of the data analysis prepared by Elizabeth Reimer Consulting, or for further detail on specific areas that have been surveyed. YAPA will consider any requests for specific analysis of the data collected in the surveys, such as cross–tabulations that are not available in this document or in the data analysis reports.

All material in this report is taken from the data analysis prepared by Elizabeth Reimer Consulting. It has been re–purposed for publication by YAPA.

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methodology & methods

Quantitative research methods, specifically two questionnaires (Robson, 2004), were utilised to gather descriptive data on youth workers working across the youth services sector as well as the activities of youth services in NSW. This was in order to gain a comprehensive profile of the youth services sector in NSW in 2011. The questionnaires (hereafter referred to as surveys) were prepared by Elizabeth Reimer Consulting in consultation with YAPA staff.

Participants were recruited initially through an email to youth workers across NSW including YAPA members and non–members. The email was sent to 540 agencies, at 801 locations where there were over 1000 projects (the precise number of individual youth workers accessed via this process is unknown). The email explained the rationale for the survey and directed people to the URL for the SurveyMonkey surveys that they were to complete depending on their status as a youth worker or a youth service manager. The email also alerted recipients to the prizes being offered as incentive for people to complete the survey.

Those targeted were encouraged to advertise the surveys throughout their organisation and wider youth work networks. Participants self–selected into the surveys. During the time within which the surveys were publicly available, YAPA staff were accessible to promote, and answer questions regarding, the surveys. During the period from May 18 until May 27, three temporary staff were employed to phone every youth worker and youth service manager in the YAPA database to encourage them to complete the surveys.

After May 27, the data was analysed by Elizabeth Reimer Consulting and prepared in the form of two detailed reports entitled ‘Youth Worker Survey: Methodology and Findings’ and ‘Youth Services Survey: Methodology and Findings’. These are available on request from YAPA. Copies of the survey questions may be found in these reports.

results & limitations

YOUTH WORKER SURVEY

565 of the 633 youth workers commencing the survey completed all of the questions. Approximately half of the responses were from workers based in Sydney (49.0%), while approximately half were from services outside of Sydney (47.0%). This indicates a good account throughout the survey of workers from across NSW.

Sequential sampling methods involved reviewing the survey responses twice before the May 27 closing date. Between May 6 and May 25, the number of respondents submitting the survey had approximately doubled, and by the closing date of May 27, a total of 633 respondents had submitted the survey. Despite the large increase in the number of responses, and the number of completed responses between May 6 and May 27, the percentages in the data in all questions and categories did not vary more than 1.5%. For each new sample, the information received varied little from the information previously given.

While it is not representative of all youth workers in NSW, the data from the large numbers of youth workers who responded provide a powerful description of the youth work sector across NSW.
The youth work sector is a diverse and complex community and there are many different definitions and understandings of types of work completed.
youth services survey

selected findings
profile
Respondents were asked which region of NSW their service operated in (n=138). Findings included:

- 50.3% from services in regional and rural NSW.
- 47.5% from services in Sydney.
- 2.2% from state-wide services.
- Over half the services who responded (54.9%) operated within one Local Government Area (LGA) only.
- 22.6% of services provided services within 2–3 LGAs.
- 12.8% provide services to four or more LGAs.
- Eleven services (8.3%) focused their operations on specific areas within one LGA, rather than covering the LGA in its entirety, and 1.5% had a state-wide focus.

Throughout this report, ‘n’ denotes the number of respondents for the particular question being reported on.
Respondents (n=138) were asked to identify the main activities undertaken by the youth service in which they worked. They did this by choosing multiple answers from a list.

• Over two thirds of services who answered included information referral and living skills as their main activities (79.0% and 67.4% respectively).

• Over half the responding youth services counted individual casework and advocacy, informal counselling and support, structured and unstructured recreational activities and creative arts, music and theatre as main activities of the service.

• Between one third and half the responding services included holiday programs, drop in, school level education and literacy, community and service development, work skills, employment seeking, and training and resourcing services and staff as main activities.

The same list was used to identify the activities which take up the largest proportion of staff time. Respondents were asked to select the largest, second largest and third largest activities in terms of staff time. This information has been ordered according to the activities rated to use the greatest amount of worker time.

In order to make stronger use of this information the number of responses indicating that a particular activity took the greatest, second greatest and third greatest amount of worker time were combined.

• ‘Individual casework and advocacy’ was estimated to take up most service time.
‘Individual casework and advocacy’ was estimated to take up most service time

Figure 4: The proportion of time spent on activities as a combination of the responses indicating the first, second and third most time consuming activities undertaken by youth services in NSW.

**Capacity**

Respondents (n=137) were asked to describe the capacity at which their youth service was working.

- Over one third (36.5%) said that they are working at ‘over 100%—we are run off our feet’.
- One quarter (24.8%) of services indicated they were running at full capacity.
- 32.1% have some spare capacity.
- 6.6% of the services are running under capacity.

Over one third (36.5%) said that they are working at ‘over 100%—we are run off our feet’.

One quarter (24.8%) of services indicated they were running at full capacity.
hours

The respondents (n=135) were asked if clients would be better off if the service was open for (a) 'longer number of hours', or (b) 'at different times than currently', or (c) 'for both longer hours and at different times', or (d) 'that none of these would make a difference'.

- Equal proportions of services (34.8%) replied (c) that it would benefit the clients if the hours were both longer and different hours and (d) that there would be no extra benefit to clients if they were open for more hours or at different times.
- 20.7% of services thought that only (a) longer hours would benefit clients.
- 9.6% thought that only (b) different hours would benefit theirs.

Youth services were asked to choose from a list of suggestions for ways to open the services for longer or different hours or to select 'Other' for a different suggestion.

- The most common responses were 'additional funding' and 'more paid staff' (86.1% and 81.5% respectively; n=108).
- Partnerships with other services was also seen as an option (46.3%).
- 25% saw receiving help from students or volunteers as an option.
- Safety and security (23.1%), higher calculation of worker’s time in lieu (17.6%), and change in worker preferences (12.0%) were also recognised as factors in restricting the changes in service hours.
- Two other services reported they would like to be open longer or different hours, but that current building lease arrangements inhibit this.
Youth services were asked whether they employed Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) staff and whether these staff had a particular role with young people from a similar background.

- Forty-eight services recorded employing staff with an ATSI background (50%, n=96), and twenty-nine services recorded that these staff have a specific role with ATSI children and young people.

- Twenty-four services described how this role is different to workers from non-ATSI backgrounds. In describing the differences, they noted that it includes ATSI work requiring more cultural and local knowledge, culturally specific duties and interventions, working with specific target groups, being better able to work with families, engaging the Aboriginal community and youth and so increasing the number of ATSI clients, and informing non-ATSI staff on cultural awareness.

- Twenty-four services recorded employing staff who can speak languages other than English (42.1%, n=57). From twenty-seven services there were 31 languages listed, with two services listing a few languages and then adding ‘and more’. The most common languages recorded were Spanish, Arabic and French.

The things that ATSI staff bring to work with clients—
“cultural and local knowledge, culturally specific duties and interventions, working with specific target groups, being better able to work with families, engaging the Aboriginal community and youth and so increasing the number of ATSI clients, and informing non-ATSI staff on cultural awareness.”

The main reason given for difficulty in attracting staff was a lack of experience and qualifications amongst applicants. Applicants were also considered to be lacking skills to work with a specific target group, with it being especially hard to find staff with both these skills and qualifications.

The main reason given for difficulty in attracting staff was a lack of experience and qualifications amongst applicants. Applicants were also considered to be lacking skills to work with a specific target group, with it being especially hard to find staff with both these skills and qualifications.
65% of youth services received less than $250,000 of funding in the last financial year

**core funding**

Total core funding in the last financial year for the youth services who responded to this question ranged between $15,000 and $8 million. Twelve of the 123 services who responded to this question (9.8%) received more than $1 million. This was sometimes explained by services as being a combination of many funded programs, or gained through partnerships or consortiums. The three most common funding amounts were $250,000–$500,000 (16.3%), $100–$149,999 (13%), and $40,000–$69,999 (11.4%). Overall, 65% of the youth services received less than $250,000 in the last financial year.

**project funding**

Funding for the youth projects run by the services involved in the survey comes primarily from government sources. The NSW government funds 41.3% of the 557 projects reported, local governments another quarter and, the Federal government funds nearly a fifth of all projects recorded in the survey. The remaining 15.5% of projects are funded through fundraising, sponsorship, donations and, to a lesser extent, by trusts and foundations, client fees and auspicing organisations as shown in Figure 5.

**program funding**

As with youth projects, funding for youth programs in the 89 services who answered comes primarily from government sources, however, slightly more is sourced from state and local governments, and less from the Federal government. The NSW government funds 45.8% of the 284 programs reported, and local governments another 29.2%. The Federal government funds only a tenth of all programs recorded in the survey. The remaining 13.7% of programs are funded through donations, auspicing organisations, fundraising and sponsorship and, to a lesser extent, by client fees, trusts and foundations as shown in Figure 6.
clients
overview

Youth services were asked to describe the clients using the service in a typical month. This was specifically in terms of young people in crisis, young people of different ages and from different minority groups, and parents or carers of young people of different ages and minority groups. The total numbers of young people from different minority groups as arranged in ages that utilise the youth services involved in the survey can be seen in Figure 7.

- The largest age group of young people reported to be using these services is the 15–17 years group (41.6%; or 18,493), followed by the 9–14 years group (26.9%).
- 18–21 year olds comprise 19.6% of young clients.
- 22–25 years olds make up 11.9%.

This general pattern holds true for young men, young women, and young people from ATSI and CALD backgrounds, both first and second generations.

- For young offenders, although the largest group is still the 15–17 year olds, a larger number of 18–21 year olds use the services than those aged 9–14 years.
- There were noticeably fewer requests for a service from youth with a disability, gay, lesbian and bisexual youth and transgender and intersex youth aged 9–14 compared to those in the older age groups.

Requests for assistance from adult parents and carers of young people totalled 3,605 for a typical month.

- These requests were most often regarding 15–17 year olds (42.2%), followed by 26.5% being in regard to 9–14 year olds, 21.2% regarding 18–21 year olds and 9.8% regarding 22–25 year olds. This breakdown is very similar to the proportions of requests from young people themselves given previously.
young men and women and their families

- Within those services who responded, young men attending outnumber young women by 18.5% (5270:4448), although this also equates to 54% young men compared to 46% young women across all age groups.

- 90% of responding services received requests for assistance regarding young women. The number of requests from adults regarding young women across each age group follows the same trend as requests by young people themselves.

young people in crisis

Of the youth services who responded to the question (n=73):

- Services responded to an average of 13.6 occasions where young people were in crisis in a typical month.

- This changed to 8.0 occasions per month when eliminating those services that answered at the extreme high and low ends of the 0–180 occasion range (n=53), with thirty—one of these responding to 1–5 occasions of crisis in a typical month^6^.

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^6^ Of those 20 extreme responses omitted, eight services indicated they never respond to crisis, seven services indicated responding to high numbers of crisis (20—40 occasions), and five services responded to 60, 80, or 180 occasions in a typical month.
The following sub-section relates to young clients and adults from ATSI and CALD backgrounds seeking service delivery, along with young offenders seeking service delivery, and adults seeking service delivery for them. This information relates to Figure 9. This is followed by findings pertaining to young people with a disability, young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning their sexuality, and young people who are transsexual, intersex or questioning their gender. These categories are illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 9: The total number of requests reported to be received by youth services in NSW from young people and adult parents and caregivers connected to young people from the four most common minority groups represented, in order, in a typical month. This includes ATSI young people (n=191) and adults (n=110), young offenders (n=142) and adults (n=92), first generation CALD young people (n=109) and adults (n=53), and second generation CALD young people (n=104) and adults (n=45).

13.6/mth occasions responded to where young people were in crisis (in a typical month)
Young clients from ATSI background made up the largest pool of clients from the minority groups listed by those services responding.

### Young aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their families

- Young clients from ATSI background made up the largest pool of clients from the minority groups listed by those services responding.
- The total number of ATSI clients reported across the services \((n=191)\) for a typical month is \(3293\).
- The pattern across the age ranges is again similar to that described previously, with \(1395\) between 15–17 years \((n=65)\), \(1013\) between 9–14 years \((n=50)\), \(590\) between 18–21 years \((n=46)\) and \(295\) between 22–25 years \((n=30)\).
- Overall, requests from adults connected to ATSI young people was higher than from any other minority category, where 85% of responses indicated adults requesting a service regarding young people.

### Young offenders and their families

- Young offenders were the next largest category, with a total of \(1,765\) clients across the age ranges reported in a typical month \((n=142)\).
- These clients were most typically 15–17 years old \((785; n=53)\), followed by 18–21 years old \((433; n=35)\), with a slight drop in numbers reported for 9–14 year olds \((310; n=30)\), and then 22–25 year olds \((238; n=24)\) the least often reported.
- There were eighteen responses where no young offenders were using the services \((n=160)\).
- Requests for assistance from adults connected to young offenders were also high in number compared to other minority groups, with \(618\) in a typical month \((n=92)\).
- Of the responding services, 84% reported receiving requests for assistance from adults regarding young offenders. Around half of these were regarding young people between 15 to 17 years of age \((303; n=38)\), and another quarter were regarding 8 to 14 year olds \((150; n=22)\). There were eighteen responses where no adults requested assistance regarding young offenders.
young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families

- There were 1,250 first generation young people from CALD backgrounds reported using youth services in a typical month (n=109).
- Of the services involved, first generation CALD clients make up 55% of CALD clients.
- There were twenty-one responses where no first generation CALD clients used the services (n=130) compared to seventeen with no second generation CALD clients (n=121).

Requests for assistance from adults connected to young CALD people in a typical month totalled 310 (n=53), and 258 (n=45), for first and second generation respectively.

- Most requests were regarding 15 to 17 year olds for both first and second generation (148, n=20 and 105, n=16 respectively).
- The second largest proportion of requests was regarding 18 to 21 year olds for first generation CALD young people (70, n=12), rather than the usual trend towards 8 to 14 year olds (58, n=13).
- 66% of services received requests from adults regarding first generation young people (n=80).
- 65% of services received requests regarding second generation CALD young people.

Second
The second largest proportion of requests was regarding 18 to 21 year olds for first generation CALD young people, rather than the usual trend towards 8 to 14 year olds.
Almost three quarters (72%) of youth services responding received requests for assistance in a typical month, making this category the third highest requested of the minority categories, just below ATSI and young offenders.

**Young people with a disability and their families**

- Services provided by the responding services to young people with a disability totalled 725 clients in a typical month across the age ranges (n=119).

- The smallest representation was in the 9–14 years range (125; n=30), with half the number of clients compared to the other three age groups. These age groups included fairly even numbers of clients; with 233 between 15–17 years (n=42), 183 between 18–21 years (n=27), and 185 between 22–25 years (n=20).

- Requests from adults regarding these clients totalled 353 over a typical month (n= 61).

- Although the requests were primarily for 15 to 17 year olds (135, n=22), the trend tended then to the older 18–21 age group (88, n=15) rather than the 8–14 year olds (80, n=18).

- There were only 50 requests regarding 22–25 year olds (n=6). While at younger age groups similar proportions of adults to young people were reported to have requested a service, by the older age groups, these proportions noticeably changed. This indicates that, amongst the services surveyed, as young people with a disability age, they are more likely to request a service themselves than have adults represent them.
young gay, lesbian and bisexual people and their families

- Within the services who answered this question there were 585 clients who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning their sexuality across the age categories in a typical month (n=99).

- These clients were predominantly in the 15–17 years group (195; n=36), closely followed by the 18–21 years (168; n=27) and then the 22–25 years group (148; n=18).

- The 9–14 years group had only one third the number of clients in this category (75; n=18).

- There were seventeen responses of no clients in this category using the services (n=116).

- Of the twenty-three services recording requests for this question, a total of 128 requests from adults regarding young gay, lesbian or bisexual people was recorded for a typical month. This was recorded from 39% of youth services who responded to this question in total (n=59), however it should be noted that the numbers of services responding to this question is low. This was 53 regarding 15 to 17 year olds (n=9), followed by 40 for the 18–21 age group (n=6) and 23 regarding the 8–14 year olds (23, n=5), and only 13 for the 22–25 year olds (13, n=3). There were thirty-six responses recording no requests from adults regarding these clients (n=59).

young transgender and intersex people and their families

- There were a total of 118 clients who are transgender, intersex or questioning their gender reported in a typical month (n=23). Numbers were quite low and evenly distributed across the age ranges.

- There were a total of 118 clients who are transgender, intersex or questioning their gender reported in a typical month (n=23). Numbers were quite low and evenly distributed across the age ranges.

- The highest number of clients in this category were in the 15–17 years group (35, n=8).

- The next largest group was in the 22–25 years (33; n=5) followed by 21–24 years (30; n=6) and least of all in the 9–14 years group (20; n=4).

- There were sixty-one responses of no clients in this category using the services (n=84).

- There was a total of sixty-three requests from adults regarding young transgender or intersex people recorded for a typical month. This represents 16% of youth services who responded to this question receiving requests for assistance in a typical month, however it should be noted that the numbers of services responding to this question is low. There is equal proportions of requests for 15 to 17 year olds and the 18–21 age group (23, n=3 for both groups) but also 15 regarding the 8–14 year olds (n=2), and only 3 regarding 22–25 year olds(n=1). There were forty-six responses recording no requests from adults regarding these clients (n=55).

Figure 10: The total number of requests reported to be received by youth services in NSW from young people and adult parents and caregivers connected to young people from the three least common minority groups represented, in a typical month. This includes young people with a disability (n=119) and adults (n=63), gay, lesbian and bisexual young people (n=99) and adults (n=23), and transgender and intersex young people (n=23) and adults (n=9).
access and equity

Youth services were asked to identify groups for which their service actively implemented access and equity policies in the last year. They did this by indicating as many as were relevant from a list, or by using the ‘other’ option. Of the 105 youth services who responded to this question:

- Over a third (38.1%) noted they already have established access and equity policies and have not implemented anything new in the past twelve months. The other sixty-five services noted they have implemented access and equity policies during this time.

- Access and equity policies implemented (either prior to or during the past twelve months) included policies for people from ATSI backgrounds (55.2%, n=105), young women (44.8%), people from CALD backgrounds (41.9%), people with disabilities (35.2%), gay/lesbian/bisexual people (25.7%), refugees (21.0%), and transgender/intersex people (9.5%).

- Other targeted groups mentioned by respondents included young offenders, those who would not usually access counselling, and those with poor access to transport.

A list of ten implementation strategies was offered for youth services to explain how they were implementing these access and equity policies. The responses of the 109 services who answered this question are shown in Table 1 below.

Following general questions about access and equity, the services were asked to provide additional detail about access and equity factors provided to ATSI and CALD clients in particular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>% OF SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Links with community/cultural leaders</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted information</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific programs just for this group</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to the way existing programs are run</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical outreach from your project to these communities</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation of funding for specific strategies</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not actively implementing access and equity strategies</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to physical appearance of the service</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to physical infrastructure of the service</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translated/multi-lingual resources</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Strategies used to implement Access and Equity policies in youth services in NSW and the proportion of responding youth services who are using them (n=109).
aboriginal and torres strait islander clients

- Over ninety per cent of services responding (91.5%; n=117) reported that young people from ATSI backgrounds utilised their services.

- Up to seventy-five of these services completed additional information about the services provided over the past twelve months.

- This included providing information on the number of occasions they assisted a young person from an ATSI background, or their family members, regarding listed issues, or were asked for assistance but were unable to provide it.

Figure 11 shows the number of occasions of service provided to young ATSI people by seventy–four youth services.

- From 17,849 requests, the five most commonly provided issues of assistance to children and young people related to drugs other than alcohol, education and training, alcohol, criminal justice, and family relationships respectively.

- The 5,015 requests for assistance given to family members of young ATSI people were regarding very different issues; including most commonly, social isolation, education and training, mental health, parenting and safety respectively.

- Requests which these youth services were unable to meet most often concerned homelessness, brokerage and relief funds, criminal justice, alcohol, and mental health respectively, and totalled 3,187 requests for the year.

When asked to identify barriers to working with ATSI young people:

- Thirty services (31.6%, n=95) reported no barriers to working with ATSI clients, and twenty–one (22.1%) reported having limited numbers of ATSI young people in the area as a barrier.

- Of the remaining services answering, the largest identified barrier was having limited staff numbers (72.7%, n=44), followed by transport issues (50.0%)

- Lesser barriers included lack of cultural competency or awareness within the service (22.7%), the presence of an ATSI–specific service in the area (22.7%), and members of the ATSI community not having identified a need for a service (4.5%).

- Other barriers raised by respondents included difficulties sourcing trained ATSI staff members, difficulties engaging the community or ATSI clients 'being unwilling to go outside their local group', some young people becoming socially isolated and refusing service, and ATSI volunteers being very busy and unable to give more time.

- Barriers offered in the question but not chosen included language skills and members of the ATSI community saying that they do not wish to use the service.

Figure 11. The number of occasions in the last twelve months where youth services in NSW assisted ATSI young people and family members regarding a range of issues, and the number of times when requests could not be met (n=75).

YOUTH WORK SNAPSHOT 2011

YOUTH SERVICES SURVEY—CLIENTS
culturally and linguistically diverse clients

• Around two thirds (68.6%) of the youth services responding to the question reported that young people from CALD backgrounds access their service (n=102).

• Further to this, youth services were asked to note the presence of clients from a list of fifteen regions of the world, excluding Australia. The responses of the eighty-eight services who responded are shown in Figure 12 below.

• The youth services in the survey have highest numbers of clients from Australia’s closer neighbours, such as Oceania and New Zealand, then Asia, followed by Europe, Africa and the Americas. The exception to this is the high proportion of services reporting clients from North Africa and the Middle East as the third most common category, and Sub-Saharan Africa as the fifth most common category.

The services were asked to calculate the number of times in the past 12 months when the service provided information or support across certain issues to young people from CALD backgrounds and their family members, and in which areas assistance was requested but unable to be provided. The results from forty nine services responding are shown in Figure 13.

• The top five presenting issues for first generation CALD young people (from 3195 requests) were education and training, mental health, homelessness, domestic and family violence, and criminal justice respectively.

• For second generation CALD young people the top five issues (from 2155 requests) were quite similar. They included education and training, homelessness, family relationships, domestic and family violence, and mental health respectively.

The most common issues for family members of young people (from 913 requests) were neglect, domestic and family violence, family relationships, how to parent children and young people, and mental health respectively.

• The six most common issues for which youth services could not provide assistance (from 51 occasions) were homelessness, brokerage and relief funds, mental health, domestic and family violence, personal relationships, education and training and sexual health respectively.

Respondents were also asked to select relevant barriers to working with young people from CALD backgrounds.

• Nearly one third (31.8%, n=88) of services responding reported there were no barriers to working with young people.
• Of the barriers selected, the most common reason for not working with CALD young people was a limited number of young people in the area in which the service worked (40.9%, n=88).

• The other most commonly reported barriers to working with young people from CALD backgrounds included limited staff numbers (57.8%, n=54), transport issues (31.1%), the presence of a CALD specific service in the area (22.2%), language skills (20.0%), and lack of cultural competency or awareness in the service (15.6%).

• It was reported by 8.9% of the responding services that members of CALD groups may not have identified a need for the service or have said they do not want to use the service (2.2%).
service delivery
young people

Youth services were asked about services provided to young people within the previous month. In doing so, they were asked to consider the presenting issue, the type of assistance given, and the instance when assistance was requested but unable to be given.

When asked which were the three most common issues raised by young people in an average month, youth services reported twenty–seven separate issues (n=78).

• The most common presenting issues were homelessness, employment, education and training, and family relationships or breakdown respectively.

• Other common issues can be seen in Figure 14 along with the number of services not being able to meet specified needs (n=57).

• Other issues raised included thinking about the future, racism, oral health, stereotyping of young people, environmental issues and sexuality as well as lack of available services or knowledge about available services.

• The top issues which the youth services identified they were unable to meet were homelessness, transport, employment, education and training, and emergency or material relief.

From the seventy services who responded to this question, requests for assistance from young people were most often regarding mental health, homelessness, education and training, and alcohol respectively. Figure 15 illustrates this, along with the other issues listed, shown according to the number of services receiving requests regarding each issue. The most common assistance given was information and advice for all issues listed, and this was most commonly regarding, mental health, personal relationships, alcohol, and drugs other than alcohol respectively. Support was most often provided around issues of personal relationships, family relationships, homelessness, and education and training respectively.

Referrals to non–government services were most often made regarding homelessness, mental health, alcohol, and family relationships respectively. Referrals to government services were most commonly made regarding mental health and education and training respectively. Where some respondents talked about having informal referrals processes, others detailed quite specific steps referrals take. Also, many respondents noted that the process depends on the need, and what is available in the area to meet that need. Despite these differences, the key components of referring clients to other services are similar and involve record keeping, utilising relationships and networks with other services, providing contact details and, to a greater or lesser extent, supporting client’s to access additional support.

Where some discussed primarily a ‘self–referral’ process, others were clear that their approach to referral is supported.

Figure 14. The most common issues presented by young people to youth services in NSW and the most common issues for which youth services were unable to meet requests (n=57).
Amongst the respondents, self-referral involves the workers informing the client about the agency who can provide the additional support, providing contact details, and leaving it up to the client to seek further assistance. Assisted/supported referral seems to involve workers talking with the client about the issues (including a variety of phone and/or face to face consultations) and then providing a supportive approach to assist the client to seek additional assistance. This might include phoning the service on the client’s behalf while the client is present and handing the phone to the client to speak with the other worker, attending the other service with the client and introducing the client to other workers, and/or arranging for the other service to meet the client at the youth service.

Many respondents also talked about using referral forms and another important point by a number of respondents was that an important part of the referral process involves networking and building relationships with other services. Finally, some respondents noted that they follow up with the client later to make sure the client is supported.

The services reported that the most common issues raised by young people where requests for assistance were unable to be met related to homelessness and mental health respectively. Two other issues mentioned by respondents were bullying and obtaining and keeping a driver’s licence.

As with young people, the youth services responding to the question primarily used information and advice to assist these adult clients, with the main issues being family relationships, mental health, and alcohol, drugs other than alcohol, and education and employment respectively. Support was most commonly given to adults regarding family relationships, education and employment, homelessness, and domestic and family violence respectively. Referrals to non–government organisations were most often focussed on family relationships, homelessness, domestic and family violence, mental health, alcohol, and drugs other than alcohol respectively. Referrals to government organisations were mostly regarding education and employment, mental health, homelessness, and domestic and family violence respectively. Requests for assistance which could not be met by the youth services were mainly concerning homelessness, mental health, alcohol, criminal justice, and drugs other than alcohol respectively. Other responses regarding services provided to adults of young people included the provision of parenting courses and responding to issues of bullying. These five categories are illustrated in Figure 17.

Figure 15: The types of assistance given to young people by youth services in NSW regarding a range of commonly presenting issues (n=70).

Figure 16 shows the main issues presented by adults to sixty youth services who answered the question, and the type of assistance given over a typical month.

When asked which were the three most common issues raised by adults of young people in an average month, the youth services involved in the survey reported nineteen separate issues (n=56).

- Overall, the three main issues presented by adults of young people relate to alcohol and drugs, safety and bullying and education, including truancy and tutoring.

- Other presenting issues can be seen in Figure 16, along with the number of services reporting not being able to meet requests regarding certain issues.

- The main unmet requests identified include homelessness, family counselling and support and transport respectively (n=30).
The process for referring adults of young people was very similar to the way in which respondents described the referral process for young people. As noted previously, this includes assessment and identification of need, provision of support/information/practical assistance at the service and discussing possible referrals with the adult (including providing information and, in some cases, providing assistance to access the service as required). It also includes utilising networks with other services within the social welfare sector.

Again, some services provided opportunities for self-referral only, where they discuss with the adult client services that can meet their needs, and provide contact details for the adult to contact the services themselves, whereas others provide a supported referral. As with referrals for young people, supported referrals include discussing needs and providing information about services that can help, and supporting the referral by taking the adult to appointments. In a few cases, respondents talked about monitoring the adults’ progress.
No service reported not undertaking co–case management with non–government services

The youth services were asked to indicate if they provided case management services within the past 12 months and, if so, for more detail about these. Other information requested included the number of hours for which they received funding, hours which they spent on case management, case loads per full time staff (pro rata), and co–case management with both government and non–government services. The services were also asked to provide information on the number of occasions when case management was not able to be provided, why, and the alternatives which they used.

• Around half the responding youth services provide case management services (53.7%, n=82).

• Half of the services providing case management (50%, n=22) were funded for less than 1,000 hours per annum.

• Another 36.4% were funded to provide between 1,560 and 6,200 hours of case management, and 13.6% were funded for 18,000 to 36,400 hours.

• More services reported providing responses to hours of case management given compared to hours of case management funded.

• A total of 8546 more hours were given compared to funded hours across the twenty–six services responding to the question. Of note is one service providing 1400 hours where no funding is allocated, and the two services receiving the largest amount of funding for case management who are contributing 3600 and 5200 hours respectively above their funding allocation.

• With a total of 497 cases across the respondents, the average case load is 18.4 cases per full time staff (n=27). This ranges from four to sixty–six cases. For the services with case loads of less than 10, the average was 7.1 per full time staff (n=14), and for those with larger case loads the average was 30.5 per full time staff (n=13).

• Of the twenty–nine youth services who responded to the question regarding co–case management with government services, three quarters (75.9%) had contributed to co–case management on less than 100 occasions (between 2–82) in the last 12 months.

• Another four services (13.8%) had co–case managed between 100–200 occasions, and one had co–case managed 1620 times in the past year. There was a total of 2,542 occasions of co–case management across the twenty seven services who stated they worked with government services. Two (6.9%) did not co–case manage with government services.

• 85.7% of youth services (n=28) had co–case managed with another non–government service less than 100 times (between 1–50).

• Another three services (10.7%) co–case managed between 100–200 occasions, and one service co–case managed 2500 times with non–government services.

• There was a total of 3,250 occasions of co–case management across the twenty–eight services who worked with non–government services. No service reported not undertaking co–case management with non–government services.

• Eighteen of the responding services reported that they were unable to respond to requests for case management (62.1%, n=29), amounting to a total of 2,267 unmet requests for case management.

• While eleven (37.9%) of youth services reported that they had no occasions of unmet requests for case management, fourteen reported up to 100 unmet requests in the past year.

• Another three services were unable to meet requests between 100–200 times, and for one service, approximately 1000 requests were unmet.
As with case management, more counselling services were provided than was funded

• Of all the counselling conducted by the youth services who responded, 68.9% was with young people independently of an adult, 20.1% was with adults independently of young people, and 11% was with both young people and their associated adult together (n=19).

Figure 18 illustrates the proportion of each client group (young people, adults of young people, and both together) receiving counselling for different lengths of time over the past twelve months. This is taken from data supplied by nineteen youth services.

• Of all the young people who were provided counselling services by themselves, 41.5% received counselling for 3–6 months, and another 28.3% received counselling for less than three months.

• Adults of young people were most likely to receive more than twelve months (34.6%), or between 3–6 months (30.4%) of counselling.

• Counselling involving both young people and their associated adult/s was most likely to be for less than three months (50.6%), or 3–6 (33.3%) months.

The few respondents who provided a comment about this question noted that case management was not provided for a couple of reasons. This included the request or need not meeting funding criteria, so immediately hindering the service from meeting the need; or insufficient resources available to meet the need.

Specifically, restrictions to funding criteria included simply not being funded to conduct case management, despite it being requested by clients, and so obviously a need; or the clients requesting such services not fitting within the age or other target criteria for the service, (for example, the service being restricted to work with young people with multiple / significant barriers but requests coming from clients who would fit more within a preventative definition).

Examples of insufficient resources include lack of staff hours, staff shortage, lack of paid staff, lack of financial support, case workers working at full capacity and lack of services to refer to.

When unable to meet a client’s need for case management, respondents talked about either providing limited informal support and counselling to the client as much as possible until the client can be seen by another service or a case worker in the service becomes available, referring the client to other services or having to turn clients away.

• Less than a third of youth services responding to the question provide counselling services (28.6%, n=77).

• The number of counselling sessions provided by those youth services over the past 12 months ranged from 5 to 1700 sessions (n=14). Half of these services provided between 100–1000 (120–728) sessions, while almost the other half conducted less than 100 sessions (5–85). The remaining service provided 1700 counselling sessions.

YOUTH WORK SNAPSHOT 2011

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Requests for counselling were not able to be fulfilled by half the services responding

• As with case management, more counselling services were provided than was funded.

• Six of the services who reported providing counselling also reported that they were not funded to do so (40.0%, n=15).

• Another 33.3% (5 services), were funded to provide between 30 and 672 hours, with 26.7% (4 services) funded to provide between 1,000–5,500 hours of counselling. The total of 13,198 hours of counselling provided by responding services was 13% greater than the 11,634 hours which were funded. The average counselling case load across responding services is 12.6 cases per full time staff (n=12), and ranges from two to forty cases. For the services with case loads of less than 10, the average was 4.9 per full time staff (n=7), and for those with larger case loads the average was 23.4 per full time staff (n=5).

• The number of referrals made to specialist counselling in the previous twelve months ranged from 0–1000 (n=20). Where the service with 1000 referrals and the two with none are excluded, the average number of referrals for the past year was twenty–two (n=17).

• Of the eighteen youth services who responded to the question about engaging in co–counselling with government services, seven had contributed to co–counselling on up to fifteen occasions in the last twelve months.

• Another service had co–counselling on 120 occasions, and another had co–counselling 500 times in the past year.

• Altogether there were 678 occasions of co–counselling between the responding youth services and government services.

• 47.1% of youth services (n=17) had co–counselling with another non–government service up to twenty times. One service co–counselling 120 times and another 200 times with non–government services.

• There was a total of 378 occasions of co–counselling between the youth services and non–government services.

• Seven of the services responding to the question (41.2%) did not undertake co–counselling with non–government services.

Requests for counselling were not able to be provided by half the services responding (50.0%, n=14).

• There were a total of 515 unmet requests across eight of the services, where seven services had up to 35, and one service had 400 unmet requests in the past year.

• Reasons given regarding why counselling was not provided when requested by clients included limited funding and numbers of qualified staff available to meet the need, the referrals not being about the types of need the service is equipped to meet, limits due to service accommodation and lack of capacity to provide transport services for the clients, and waiting lists being long and thus restrictive. One respondent highlighted that despite high incidents of being expected to provide counselling (informal or incidental), and the fact that it takes a great deal of their time, it remains an unfunded service they provide. Others noted that when they cannot meet the requests for counselling they refer the clients to specialist services (this includes one youth service who noted that they have developed a brokerage partnership with a specialist service who provides such services at the youth service once a week), seek advice from specialist services, or have to ‘simply turn young people away’. However, it was noted by two respondents that they provide the service if the client is in crisis.
As with counselling and case management, more hours of mentoring are provided by services than they are funded for mentoring programs.

Youth services were asked to indicate if they provided mentoring programs within the past 12 months and, if so, for more detail about these. Other information requested included the number and types of mentoring activities, the number of hours for which they received funding, hours which they spent on mentoring programs, and case loads of full time staff. The services were also asked to provide information on the number of occasions when mentoring programs was not able to be provided, why, and alternatives which they used.

- Less than half youth services who responded to the question provided mentoring programs (40%, n=75). Of those who did, the youth services provided between 1 and 156 programs (n=22). This amounted to an average of 4 programs per service (n=21), when the one service with 156 programs was excluded when calculating the average.

- The types of strategies used by the youth services include one-on-one mentoring, and group mentoring, for both male and female clients, as well as mixed groups.

- Mentoring services were reported to include working with schools, focusing on cultural or social themes, and organising adult volunteers to work with the young people on educational, employment, practical or living skills. Another type of mentoring program mentioned was young people involved in youth councils, committees and advisory groups providing input into local council and youth centre decisions, as well as directing art, sport and event projects. Some youth services also reported providing youth leadership camps and programs where young people mentor the young people participating. It was also noted that youth workers provide an important mentoring role to tertiary students completing placements at their service.

There was a wide range of funding provided to the 20 services who reported they receive funding for mentoring activities.

- Nearly half the respondents (45.0%) reported not being funded at all, and another eight (40.0%) reported being funded to provide less than 780 hours per annum. The remaining two respondents reported being funded to provide 1,820 and 4,400 hours of mentoring programs respectively. Discounting the last two services mentioned, services were funded for an average of 95.3 hours each per annum (n=18). Furthermore, when the unfunded services are also removed, the average number of hours for the funded services is 214.5 (n=9).

- As with counselling and case management, of the services responding, more hours of mentoring are provided, in this case 982 more hours, than funding received to provide mentoring. Discounting those two services mentioned with the largest funding, who both provide their required amount of mentoring services, and one service indicating they provide no mentoring, the other youth services in the survey provide an average of 142 hours mentoring per service per annum (n=19).

- Just over one third (38.9%) of youth services responding to the question were unable to meet requests for mentoring programs (n=18). This ranged between 1 and 54 times per service in the past year, with a total of 149 unmet requests across the seven services.

- Reasons why respondents were unable to meet mentoring requests included client wait lists, limited resources and/or staff hours, or requests being made when the service is running at full capacity, or were staff on annual leave. When this kind of situation occurred, respondents noted they referred the client to groups or caseworkers within the service, or referred the client to other services offering the types of programs being requested.
parenting programs for young people

Youth services were asked to indicate if they provided parenting programs for young parents under 25 years of age within the past 12 months and, if so, for more detail about these. Other information requested included the number of hours for which they received funding, hours which they spent on parenting programs, the number of parenting programs conducted and the number of clients attending these programs. They were also asked about the number of parenting programs conducted in collaboration with both government and non-government services. The final question in this section asked respondents to provide information on the number of occasions when parenting programs were unable to be provided to young people, why this was so, and the alternatives which they used.

- One quarter of the responding youth services reported providing parenting programs to young people (25.0%, n=72).

- Half of the services providing parenting programs (50%, n=16) were not funded to run parenting programs, and the other half were funded for between 10 and 400 hours.

- More services provided parenting program hours than they were funded to, with a total of 1157 more parenting program hours provided to clients than funded hours across the eighteen responding services. Discounting the one service providing 550 hours, the youth services reported providing an average of 110.8 hours of parenting programs per service per annum (n=15). Overall, 559 young parents attended these parenting programs across sixteen youth services in the previous twelve months (n=16). Two of the services had 100 and 150 attendees respectively, and the other fourteen had between ten and forty participants each.

Just over one third (38.9%) of the youth services who responded to the question about conducting parenting programs for young people with staff from government services had done so (n=18). The seven services had conducted between 1 and 40 parenting programs in the last 12 months, amounting to a total of 100 programs across the seven services.

- Conducting parenting programs for young people with staff from non-government services was even more common, where 61.1% of youth services responding to the question reported doing so (n=18).

- A total of 354 parenting programs for young people were delivered by these eleven services, with ten services co-managing between 2—60 programs, and one service conducting 100 programs, with staff from other non-government services in the last year.

- Just over half the services (55.6%, n=18) responding to the question stated that they were unable to provide parenting programs for young people. Each of these services reported up to twenty unmet requests in the past year, with a total of 72 across the ten services.
Eleven of the services reported providing parenting programs to adults, four more than reported being funded. However, even with this additional work, the program hours provided across the services were 1042 less than the number of hours for which the services were funded.

**parenting programs for adults**

Youth services were asked to indicate if they provided parenting programs for parents of young people less than 25 years of age within the past 12 months and, if so, for more detail about these. Other information requested included the number of hours for which they received funding, hours they spent on parenting programs, and the number of adults attending the programs. They were also asked about the number of parenting programs which they conducted with both government and non-government services. In addition, the services were asked to provide information on the number of occasions when parenting programs were not able to be provided to adults of young people, why, and alternatives used.

- Just under a quarter of the youth services responding to the question reported providing parenting programs for adults over 25 years who are parents of young people (22.5%, n=71).
- Seven of the eleven services who responded were funded to provide between 25 and 936 hours of such parenting programs. Excluding the one service funded for 936 hours, the other 6 funded services receive funding for an average of 171.8 hours each per annum.
- Eleven of the services reported providing parenting programs to adults, four more than reported being funded. However, even with this additional work, the program hours provided across the services were 1042 less than the number of hours for which the services were funded.
- The services provided between 10—450 hours of parenting programs to adults (n=11). This amounted to an average of 47.5 hours (n=10) when the one service that provided 450 hours was excluded. This number of hours equated to between one and fifteen programs per service with an average of 4.3 programs per service in the past year (n=13).
- The number of adult parents attending these parenting programs ranged from 12 to 1180 over the year (n=13). When two services who had 1180 and 500 attendees respectively were excluded from the calculation, the average was 62.8 adult parents attending per service (n=11).
- One half of the youth services who responded to the question about conducting parenting programs for adults of young people with staff from government services had done so (n=12). Each of these services conducted between 2 and 12 such programs in collaboration with a government service, amounting to a total of 57 programs conducted in the past 12 months. While more services reported collaborating with non-government services to provide such programs (11 of the 13 services responding to the question), the total number of programs reported being provided was the same as provided in collaboration with government services. This also included each service similarly co-organising between 2–12 programs.

Only five of the thirteen services responding to the question about provision of parenting programs for adults associated with young people stated that they were unable to provide such programs. Each service reported between 1–20 unmet requests, with a total of 47 across the thirteen services. However, the other eight services reported that they had no occasions of unmet requests for parenting programs for adults over 25 years of age. Reasons for not meeting such requests included the request not complementing other activities provided by the service, lack of funds and resources to provide such activities, and limited availability of childcare. Respondents noted that when they are asked for, but unable to provide such services, they either refer the client to future such courses or to another non-government organisation running such groups, provide casework to the person making the request, and their family or promise to provide such a service in future.
activities for young people

Youth services were asked to provide information on the different types of weekly activities they provide. Within each activity-type, information was requested on the number of young people who attend, the hours per week for which they are funded to run the program, and for which they provide the program, and whether they have co–provided the program with staff from either government or non–government services. Please refer to Table 2 for the data, including the number of responses for each category1.

- The youth services responding to the question about provision of educational groups and courses provided such services to, on average, 19 young people per week. These services were funded to provide more hours of educational groups and courses than they delivered (40% less than hours funded), and more than half the services provided these activities in collaboration with staff from government services (60%) and non–government services (80%).

- The youth services answering this question provided holiday programs to an average of 32 young people per week of each school holiday. They provided a little over the calculated hours of funded program time (approximately 23% more). More than half the services provided holiday programs in collaboration with staff from both government (60%) and non–government services (80%).

- On average, the youth services who responded they provided creative arts events and activities had 34 young people attending per week. They provided a little over the calculated hours of funded program time (approximately 12% more). Approximately half the services co–provided these creative arts events and activities with non–government colleagues, which was nearly three times as often as occurred with colleagues from government services (80% compared to 30%).

- An average of 31 young people per week attended the organised recreational activities provided by the 33 services responding to the question. These youth services provided a little more than the calculated hours of funded program time (approximately 21% more). Half the services provided organised recreational activities with colleagues from government services, while 70% provided such services in collaboration with colleagues from non–government services.

- The youth services involved in the survey spend, on average, just over 20% more time on activities than they have calculated that they are funded to. The educational groups and courses were the only activity where the hours of service funded was higher than hours of service provided. Collaborative service provision with colleagues from non–government services was consistently higher than with colleagues from government services. The activities with highest rates of collaboration was with colleagues from non–government services to provide educational groups and courses, holiday programs, and creative arts events and activities respectively, followed by organised recreational activities.

The numbers of responses suggests that more services involved in the survey provide Drop In and educational groups and courses, followed by organised recreational activities, holiday programs and creative arts events and activities respectively. Street Work is the least often provided activity amongst the respondent services. However, on examining Table 3, it can be seen that Drop In and Street Work are the highest attended programs respectively (although, these are also the activities with fewer restrictions on attendance numbers than the others).
Table 2: The number of clients, hours of service funded and provided, and occasions where services worked with government and non-government services reported for six types of activities by youth services in NSW. ‘n’ is the number of services which responded to this section of the question, ‘total’ is the sum of all responses, ‘average’ is average calculated per service.

The lowest rates of collaborative service provision were in the area of Street Work (regarding both government and non-government services), and with colleagues from government services in relation to providing creative arts events and activities.

Youth services were also asked to select activities they encourage young people to become engaged in during a typical month in their service. Ninety per cent of the seventy services responding to this question reported engaging young people in activities within the service, the youth community and/or the wider community. The most common activities which youth services provided for youth engagement in this way were creative arts, musical or theatrical performances (62.9%), contributing to surveys or needs analysis (57.1%), engagement in working parties for one-off projects (45.7%), and running peer support groups and mentoring (45.7%).

The youth services responding to this question also reported encouraging young people’s contribution by involving them in project steering committees and advisory groups (37.1%), social action and advocacy groups (30.0%), peer education or research (28.6%), and through management committees or boards (18.6%). Only one service reported engaging young people on interview panels for new workers.

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assistance to other services

Another survey question involved youth services reporting how often they have provided information or advice to assist government or non-government services, on a range of topics, in the last twelve months. They were also asked to indicate if there had been a time when they had not been able to assist another such service this way. The responses of the twelve services who answered are shown in Figure 19.

It can be seen in Figure 22 that the twelve services responding to the question assisted non-government services on more occasions than government services. Across the nineteen topics about which information, advice or assistance was sought, the youth services in the survey made 144 positive responses to non-government services; which is 75% more than the 82 responses to government services.

Further to the question of how the service supported other organisations, services were asked if the youth service building was used as a ‘community hub’ for other organisations to provide client services either to their own, or the youth service’s clients in the past 12 months. When this occurred, the responding service was asked about the number of occasions the building was used this way, the type of organisations using it, the type of activities provided, and the frequency of this type of use.

- The only topic in common with non-government services was drugs other than alcohol. At a total of five occasions across the twelve services who answered the question, there were very few instances when the youth services were unable to give information or advice in the past twelve months.

- Of the seventy-four youth services who responded to the question, the most common response was staff involvement in a local youth network or youth interagency (93.25%).

- The second most frequent type of activity staff were involved in was delivering events to young people (87.8%), which was followed by researching, planning, coordinating and evaluating local youth service provision (64.9%).

- Just over sixty per cent the services who responded to the question noted that staff were involved both a generalist community interagency and an issue-based or project-specific interagency (60.8% each).

- Less than half the respondents were involved in advocating or lobbying on youth or youth work issues to either local government bodies (48.6%), the NSW state government (40.5%), or the federal government (25.7%).

- About half of the youth services responding to the question reported that their building was used as a community hub space by other organisations (50.7%, n=71). Table 4 illustrates where the building housing the youth services who responded to this question are extensively used by other organisations. Government services were reported to use the space provided by these youth services on a total of 519 occasions and, at three times that number, non-government services utilised these spaces on 1694 occasions.

- On average, space provided by the youth services was used by government services 8.1 times per service per year, though this amounts to 6.6 times when the one response of over one hundred occasions is not included. In comparison, these spaces are used by non-government services on an average of 22.6 times per service per year; however, again, this reduces to 15.9 times when the six responses of over one hundred occasions are not included.
When asked about the frequency of the use of the youth service space, and the types of services this was for, twenty eight youth services responded. This related to a total of 101 arrangements.

- Most often the space was used by other services to provide their services to the youth service’s clients (35.6% of arrangements, n=101), and this was most often a monthly or weekly arrangement.

- The next most often reported use of the space was by outside organisation bringing their own young people with them (27.7% of arrangements), and this most often occurred on more than one day per week, or weekly.

- Services using the space to provide services to parents of the youth service’s clients (19.8% of arrangements) mostly used the space either more than one day per week, monthly, or once a term. The least frequent use of the youth services’ space that was reported involved outside services bringing adult family members of young people with them for activities (16.8% of arrangements). When this occurred, it was most likely to be more than one day per week or once a term. Overall, the youth services who responded were most likely to experience other services in their space more than one day per week (23.8% of arrangements), monthly (19.8%), weekly (18.8%) or once per term (17.8%).

Finally, in relation to provision of support to other organisations, the youth services were asked if they provided services to either young people or staff from other organisations (apart from schools) in locations other than those of the youth service itself. If they responded that they did, the services were also asked to report how many times and where such service provision occurred. A related question included providing information on service provision in schools specifically, including what types of services these were, whether they were happy with the amount of service they can offer and, if relevant, suggestions to increase service provision in schools.

- Over half the youth services who responded to the question reported providing services to young people or staff from other organisations (apart from schools) off site (58.1%, n=74).

- Providing services off-site to adults who were not staff members occurred much less often than providing service delivery to either young people or staff; being only 20.9% and 19.5% of occasions of service to government and non-government services, respectively.

- When youth services delivered a service in government organisations this fairly evenly split between young people (38.1% of occasions, n=1103) and adult staff members (37.5%).

- More services reported providing services in non-government services (29 services compared to 20).

- The youth services reported going into non-government organisations to provide services to young people more frequently than they do within government organisations (total of 727 occasions compared to 420), and this was 47.4% of the occasions of service provided off site in non-government services.
Of the services responding to this question, 90.8% would like to increase the work they do with schools and TAFE, including 27.6% who reported they would like to increase their work ‘lots’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provided</th>
<th>Government Services</th>
<th>Non-Government Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide their service to young people who attend youth service</td>
<td>23; total occasions: 266; average per service: 11.6; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 11.6</td>
<td>24; total occasions: 636; average per service: 26.5; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide their service to young people they bring with them</td>
<td>14; total occasions: 111; average per service: 7.9; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 7.9</td>
<td>22; total occasions: 524; average per service: 23.8; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide their service to adult family members of young people who use youth service</td>
<td>14; total occasions: 27; average per service: 1.9; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 1.9</td>
<td>17; total occasions: 340; average per service: 20.0; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide their service to adult family members of young people they bring with them</td>
<td>13; total occasions: 115; average per service: 8.8; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 13.0</td>
<td>12; total occasions: 194; average per service: 16.2; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64; total occasions: 519; average per service: 8.1; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 6.6</td>
<td>75; total occasions: 1694; average per service: 22.6; average discounting responses &gt; 100: 15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The use of youth service space in NSW as a community hub over a 12 month period, showing the type of service using the space and the type of clients service is being provided to. 31 services answered parts or all of this question.

- Supporting young people from the youth service to deliver services to other young people or staff was the least often given reason to provide service off site; at only 3.4% of times to government services and 4.4% of times to non–government services.

When asked how often youth services worked in schools or TAFE, 31% of those answering the question reported going into schools every week (n=71).

- Another 15.5% of the youth services reported providing such a service about once per month, but most commonly youth services reported delivering services in schools ‘a few times per year’ (36.6%).

- Some reported entering schools for service delivery about once per year (5.6%), and the remainder reported they do not work in schools or TAFE.

- The two most common reasons for service delivery in schools/TAFE were for programs being run during school hours (67.2%, n=67) and because of referrals being received from school staff (67.2%).

- Other common reasons for service delivery in schools/TAFE included speaking at school assemblies (56.7%), contributing articles to the school newsletter (37.3%), and running programs after school hours at the school (18.2%).

- Some other responses given included organising partnerships with the school staff or Parents and Friends committee for funding applications, work experience for TAFE students, contributing to information days and organised presentations with other services, and providing alcohol and other drug counselling.

- Of the services responding to this question, 90.8% would like to increase the work they do with schools and TAFE, including 27.6% who reported they would like to increase their work ‘lots’ (n=178).
Seventy-two services provided ideas on how to increase involvement in schools. By choosing answers from a given list, over half the respondents recommended that ways this could be achieved include:

- increasing awareness within schools and TAFE about the services offered by the youth services (80.6%).
- establishing a Department of Education policy which supports school–youth service partnerships (75.0%).
- establishing a local policy on school–youth service and TAFE–youth service partnerships (55.6%).
- better planning and co–ordination by the youth service (43.0%).
- working collaboratively with other community organisations to plan and deliver work in schools (38.9%).
- aligning funding contracts with school planning processes (34.7%).
- making a change to the programs currently offered by the youth service (23.6%).
youth worker survey
selected findings
profile:
age

Youth workers were asked to identify their age category from options including Under 25, 25–30, 31–40, 41–55, and Over 55.

- The largest proportion of youth workers involved in the survey are in the 25–30 years age range (31.7%).
- 25.4% are aged 31–40 and 23.1% are aged 40–55.
- The median age is 31–40 years of age where 47.5% of youth workers are under 30 years of age and just over half of the workforce are 31 years and over (n= 568).

gender

Youth workers were asked whether they were Female, Male, Transgender or Other.

- It was found that 71.0% of those responding to the question are female and 29.0% are male (n=567).
- No respondents identified as Transgender.
- 48% of both female and male workers are 31–55 years.

* Only one person identified as Other. As no further specification was available, this person was not included in this statistic or other statistics involving gender. This also helped to maintain the privacy of this person.
cultural background

Youth workers were asked if their cultural background was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), Both or Neither. Amongst the respondents:

- 16.0% are from CALD backgrounds.
- 6.0% are from an ATSI background.
- By far the greatest proportion of the respondents (78.0%), are from neither a CALD nor an ATSI background—referred to hereafter as being from an ‘Anglo–Celtic’ background.
- Most ATSI workers are between 25–30 years old—at 40%, this is higher than the other two groups.
- 28.6% of ATSI workers are under 25 years of age—9.5% higher than the CALD group, and double the 14.4% of workers in this age range for the Anglo–Celtic group.

Figure 20: The age distribution of surveyed youth workers in NSW from different cultural backgrounds (n=560)

Figure 22: The distribution of surveyed youth workers from different cultural backgrounds across the regions of NSW (n=558)

Only one person identified as both ATSI and CALD and was counted with ATSI in order to simplify the data and refrain from identifying that person more than necessary.
Youth workers were asked to identify the region in which they worked from a list covering regions in Sydney and in regional and rural NSW, or to indicate a state wide focus or regional and rural–wide focus (n=569).

- Almost half of the workers responding to the question operate from Sydney (48.5%), with 43.8% working outside of Sydney.

- The remaining 7.7% have a state–wide (n=23) or regional and rural–wide focus (n=21).

- In Sydney 38% of the youth workers are 25–30 years old, with the next largest age category being 31–40 years old at 23.9%.

- Outside of Sydney, the largest age group is 40–55 years old with 30.8% followed by 31–40 years old with 27.5%.

- The proportion of workers in the survey under 25 years in Sydney is 18.5% compared to 12.1% in regional and rural NSW.

Of the respondents, both services in Sydney and in regional and rural NSW follow the average ratio of female to male workers with 72:28 and 71:29 respectively.

- ATSI workers involved in the survey are concentrated in regional and rural NSW (71.6% of ATSI workers).

- CALD workers involved in the survey are concentrated in Sydney (83.1% of CALD workers).

- While a similar percentage of each cultural background was represented in state–wide services, there was no CALD representation recorded for the regional and rural wide services.
Table 4: The distribution of surveyed youth workers throughout the regions of NSW (n=569). For each region the number of workers who responded to this question is given, as well as the proportion of workers from that category and the proportion of NSW overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>% OF SYDNEY</th>
<th>% OF NSW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Sydney</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner West</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepean</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sydney and Beaches</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macarthur</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George &amp; Sutherland</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Suburbs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGION</td>
<td>RESPONSES</td>
<td>% OF REGIONAL</td>
<td>% OF NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illawarra</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far North Coast</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western NSW</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid North Coast</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina/Murray</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East NSW</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>249</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION WIDE SERVICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>% OF REGION WIDE</th>
<th>% OF NSW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State-wide</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional &amp; Rural NSW</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is much diversity in educational focus across those surveyed. 

11% of university level and 4.4% of postgraduate level qualifications are focused on youth work.
Youth workers were asked to indicate their highest level of education from Year 7–10, Year 11, Year 12, TAFE (trade/apprenticeship), TAFE (Certificate/Diploma), university degree, or post-graduate qualifications.

- 91.5% of youth workers involved in the survey have a tertiary level of education, of which 46.1% are university graduates and 45.4% have a TAFE qualification.

- Slightly higher percentages of women have university and post-graduate qualifications compared to their male colleagues (47.9% of women, 42.0% of men).

- 11.1% of male youth workers surveyed have secondary qualifications as their highest level of education, which is slightly higher than for the female youth workers across the survey (7.4%) (n=566).

- Youth workers from CALD backgrounds have both the highest rate of workers with a university degree (52%) and the lowest rate of workers with no tertiary education (6.7%).

- 91.8% of workers from Anglo Celtic backgrounds have a tertiary qualification, being evenly split between TAFE and university.

- While the rate of ATSI workers with no qualifications involved in the survey is at least twice as high as for the other cultural groupings, a total of 82.8% have tertiary qualifications.

- Almost half of surveyed workers from ATSI backgrounds have achieved TAFE qualifications, in addition to over a third having attained a university degree.

- Most workers in regional and rural NSW have TAFE and university qualifications, followed by post-graduate level qualifications.

- In Sydney, there are slightly higher proportions of university and post-graduate qualified youth than in regional and rural NSW.

- In regional and rural NSW there are slightly higher proportions of workers involved in the survey with Year 12 and TAFE qualifications than in Sydney.

Youth workers were asked to identify the major focus of their education from a given list, or by specification using ‘other’.

There is much diversity in educational focus across those surveyed (n=539).

- Just over one–fifth of those involved in the survey have completed studies in the area of youth work specifically (TAFE and university combined).

- 36.7% have completed studies in social, welfare and community work, and counselling, more generally.

![Figure 24: A comparison of the educational profile of surveyed youth workers in Sydney based and regional areas of NSW (n=556).](image-url)
• 65.6% have studied across the range of applied human services–related areas—including youth work, social and welfare work, counselling, health related disciplines, education and policing.

• 19.8% have studied in other areas of focus including arts, humanities, social sciences, economics, theology, science, environmental science, creative arts, theatre, media, communications, business, commerce, accounting, management, and trades.

• Youth work and social, welfare and community work are the focus areas most often studied by those involved in the survey at TAFE (38.5% and 43.7% of TAFE graduates).

• 28.5% of university graduates and 16.5% postgraduates studied social, welfare or community work.

• Other qualifications from university and post-graduate studies are most often focused on more general human services areas (25% and 56% of graduates), primarily counselling and education, or other fields not directly related to social and welfare work (35.5% and 33.1% of graduates).

• Only 11.0% of university level and 4.4% of postgraduate level qualifications of those involved in the survey are focused on youth work.

There has been a significant change over time in the focus of education that the workers involved in the survey are bringing to the workforce.

• Those workers with over ten years experience are primarily trained in social, welfare and community work (38.8%), followed by youth work (25.9%), other non–related areas (20.0%) and lastly other general human service (15.3%).

• However, those workers with less than one years experience have primarily focused on general human services (40.9%) followed by social, welfare and community work (27.3%), then other non–related areas (20.5%), and, least of all, youth work (11.4%). This trend can be seen in Figure 7.

There has been a significant change over time in the focus of education that the workers involved in the survey are bringing to the workforce.

Figure 25: The educational focus of youth workers surveyed who have studied at tertiary level according to the level of educational achievement (n=515).

Figure 26: The change in the educational focus of youth workers surveyed between those who have been working for over 10 years compared to those who have started more recently (n=299).
experience

In this section youth workers were asked to indicate how many years they have worked as a youth worker. They could select from a number of set categories, that is, less than 1 year, 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years, 6–7 years, 8–10 years, and more than 10 years.

- Almost one quarter of workers involved in the survey have 6–10 years experience, and just over 15.0% have more than 10 years’ experience in the sector.

- Almost 60.0% of respondents have less than 5 years of experience, and almost 10.0% have less than one year experience (n=627).

- Slightly more male workers (3.7%) have more than 10 years working experience in the sector, compared to females, and 71.1% more of the females than males had less than 1 years’ experience (n=565).

- The numbers of years’ experience working in the youth sector amongst those responding are relatively similar across workers from a CALD and Anglo–Celtic background, however there is a smaller proportion of experienced youth workers from ATSI backgrounds.

- There are at least 16.3% more workers from ATSI backgrounds with 1–5 years experience compared to both CALD and Anglo–Celtic backgrounds.

There is a fairly even distribution of workers with different years of experience between services in Sydney and services in regional and rural NSW (n=333). However, regional and rural NSW has a slight polarisation in the experience of youth workers in the sample with 2% more workers with less than one years’ experience, 3% more with over 10 years’ experience and between 0.8% and 3% less in the medium ranges.
employment conditions

Youth workers were asked to describe their employment status, which is, whether they are employed full time, part time, or on a casual, contract or voluntary basis.

• Nearly two-thirds (61.5%) of those youth workers involved in the survey are employed full time. This leaves approximately one quarter (25.7%) of survey respondents employed on a part time basis and approximately ten percent employed either casually (6.75%) or on contracts (3.9%). Volunteers make up 2.3% of the respondents (n=571). Statistics for the youth workers in the survey from different cultural background did not vary much from this (n=559).

There is a slight gender segregation of status across the sample, with 8% more of the male youth workers working in full-time youth work positions compared to females, and 5.8% more of the females working in part-time work compared to males (n=565). 68

17% of workers are employed part-time

26.4% of workers employed casually are working 33 hours or more which could be considered full-time
Youth workers were asked to select how many hours they usually work each week from the following set categories: 0–8 hours; 9–16 hours; 17–24 hours; 25–32 hours; 33–35 hours; 36–38 hours; 39–40 hours; and more than 41 hours.

- Over half the youth workers involved in the survey work more than 36 hours per week. This includes 73.2% of full time workers, 49.9% of youth workers on contracts, 8.8% of workers employed part time, and 13.2% of workers employed casually.

- At 37.4%, most part time workers in the survey are working 17–24 hours per week, although almost as many (36.1%) work 25–32 hours per week.

- At 31.6%, casual employees involved in the survey are most likely to be working 17–24 hours per week.

- 17% of workers involved in the survey employed part–time and 26.4% of workers employed casually are working 33 hours or more which could be considered full–time.

- The biggest difference in the hours worked by those involved in the survey between the genders was 6.1%, where more females work 17–24 hours, than males.

- There are proportionally more females working in the four categories with the lowest number of hours (less than 32 hours), ranging from 1%–6.1% more females than males.

- For each of the four categories with the highest number of hours (33 to 41+ hours), males involved in the survey are represented proportionally more often than females (by 1.9%–3.3%).

- Anglo–Celtic and ATSI youth workers work very similar numbers of hours, although proportionally, more workers from CALD backgrounds (at least 6.6%) work 36–38 hours, and proportionally less (at least 5.3%) work 17–28 hours.

- One third (33.0%) of full time youth workers involved in the survey who are working directly with young people work 39 hours or more per week (n=327). This includes 34.1% of full time youth workers in a youth work only role, and 31.8% of youth workers in a combined direct youth work and service management role.

- In contrast, only 17.8% of workers involved in the survey employed full time in youth development roles work 39 hours or more per week.

- The biggest difference in the hours worked by those involved in the survey between the genders was 6.1%, where more females work 17–24 hours, than males.

- There are proportionally more females working in the four categories with the lowest number of hours (less than 32 hours), ranging from 1%–6.1% more females than males.

- For each of the four categories with the highest number of hours (33 to 41+ hours), males involved in the survey are represented proportionally more often than females (by 1.9%–3.3%).

- Anglo–Celtic and ATSI youth workers work very similar numbers of hours, although proportionally, more workers from CALD backgrounds (at least 6.6%) work 36–38 hours, and proportionally less (at least 5.3%) work 17–28 hours.

- One third (33.0%) of full time youth workers involved in the survey who are working directly with young people work 39 hours or more per week (n=327). This includes 34.1% of full time youth workers in a youth work only role, and 31.8% of youth workers in a combined direct youth work and service management role.

- In contrast, only 17.8% of workers involved in the survey employed full time in youth development roles work 39 hours or more per week.

- Just over three quarters of those involved in the survey (78.7%) are covered by various industry awards.

- Approximately one fifth (20.5%) are covered by enterprise agreements, organisation’s awards, or individual contracts.

- Contract and volunteer positions have not been discussed due to low numbers of responses within the survey.

- Industry awards includes Social & Community Services Awards, specifically the Social and Community Services (SACS) and Community, Education, Training and Support Services (CETTS) Awards, the Local Government (State) Award and a variety of other awards.
Youth workers were asked to select their annual pay (before tax) from a list of pay scales, namely $0–$27,000, $27,000–$30,100, $30,100–$34,499, $34,500–$38,700, $38,701–$41,900, $41,901–$45,100, $45,101–$48,300, $48,301–$50,500, $50,600–$53,800, $53,800–$55,000, $55,000–$60,000, $60,000–$65,000 and more than $65,000.

- 14.4% of youth workers involved in the survey earn less than $27,000 (before tax) per annum.
- less than 3% earn more than $65,000 (before tax) per annum.
- the median income is between $41,900–$45,100.
- there are consistently higher percentages of women than men in the lower pay scales ($0–$48,300), and consistently higher percentages of men in all categories greater than $48,300 (46.4% of men and 33.3% of women; n=559).
- Where workers with two years experience are grouped between $30,100 and $50,600, workers with 4 years experience tend to be grouped between $41,900 and $48,300, and workers with 6–7 years experience are grouped between $41,900 and $60,000.
- Those with over 10 years experience, while more spread than the others, are more likely to earn between $34,500 and $60,000.
- Ninety per cent of the workers with fewer than 12 months experience earn less than $48,000, while forty per cent of these earn less than $27,000.
- at less than 4 years experience there seem to be more workers involved in the survey in lower rather than higher pay categories, a trend which is reversed for staff with 6–7, and more than 10 years experience, which trend towards higher pay categories.

There are consistently higher percentages of women than men in the lower pay scales ($0–$48,300), and consistently higher percentages of men in all categories greater than $48,300.
types of jobs

To gauge the type of work roles that the youth workers who responded to the survey are engaged in, they were asked to select from a list of set categories of the kind of work they might be engaged in. This included in combined direct youth work and service management roles, in direct youth work only, in management only, in administration only, in policy and/or research only, in youth development (e.g., Youth Development Officer). Respondents could also nominate ‘other’ as a category.

• A very high proportion of youth workers involved in the survey (97.4%) work directly with young people. This includes workers providing direct youth work only, those combining a management role with direct youth work, and those working in youth development roles.

• Anglo–Celtic and CALD workers involved in the survey are fairly equally represented across both combined direct youth work and service management roles and direct youth work only roles.

• There are at least 12.7% more ATSI workers employed in direct youth work only roles across the respondents, and at least 8.8% fewer ATSI workers employed in the combined direct youth work and service management roles.

• In youth development roles, there is equal representation from each of the different cultural groupings across the respondents (that is Anglo–Celtic, CALD and ATSI).

• The survey yielded no responses from ATSI and CALD for management only positions or for policy and/or research positions (n=557).

• There exists a fairly similar spread across the job categories between males and females, with two differences being 10.0% more of the males work in combined direct youth work and service management roles, and 9.0% more of the females working in youth development positions. (n=563).

• Just over half of workers involved in the survey who are employed in youth work only roles have
completed TAFE level qualifications. This is followed by almost forty percent having qualified from university, and slightly fewer than ten percent having attained secondary education as their highest level of education.

- Of those involved in the survey working in combined youth work and service management roles, approximately the same proportions have achieved either TAFE or university tertiary level qualifications (45.6% TAFE and 46.1% university).

- Of those working in youth development roles, 70.4% have completed university, a quarter have completed TAFE and less than five percent have completed secondary education as their highest level of education.

- There are people ranging from less than 1 year to greater than 10 years experience in direct youth work, combined youth work and service management and youth development roles.

- Most workers involved in the survey with less than seven years experience are undertaking direct youth work.

- Workers with more than 10 years experience are more often found in combined youth work and service management roles.

- A third of workers with more than 10 years experience are working in direct youth work roles.

- Very few of those involved in the survey with over ten years’ experience are working in management, policy and research roles within the youth sector in NSW.

- 26.9% of the workers with less than one year experience, and 25.0% of the workers with two years’ experience are managing services.

- 43.1% of the workers with 6–7 years experience, along with 35.5% of the workers with more than 10 years experience, are working in direct youth work only roles.

Figure 33: The distribution of surveyed youth workers with different levels of years experience across the youth work roles (n=330).
Further to the kinds of jobs, youth workers involved in the survey were asked to nominate the percentage of their time spent in direct service provision, administration tasks, applying for grants, research activities, networking, supervision, training, mentoring activities, team activities and travel. They could also nominate other tasks that may not have been listed.

- **on average, youth workers responding to the question spend around 50% of their time working directly with young people (including being involved in mentoring activities), 40% of their time on administrative tasks (including other administrative tasks such as grant writing, research and miscellaneous), 17% of their time networking and involved in team activities, 15% of their time in supervision and training activities, and 7% of their time travelling.**

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12 Due to the way in which the youth workers answered this question, the percentages of time do not total 100%. However, in order to represent the proportions provided by respondents truthfully, the percentages have not been altered.
professional/ career development

supervision & staff appraisal

Youth workers were asked to nominate how often they receive formal supervision. This was defined as ‘interaction with manager/colleagues for the purposes of education, providing support, reflecting on practice, discussing work/life impacts, etc.’ Respondents could select from the following categories: daily (ongoing supervision), formal supervision one time last week, formal supervision one time last fortnight, formal supervision one time last month, formal supervision one time in the last three months, formal supervision one time in the last six months, formal supervision one time in the last three months or not in the past 12 months. Further to this, youth workers were asked to answer with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in response to a question asking if they had a staff appraisal (a formal appraisal of your work performance) at least once in the past 2 years.

- Almost three quarters of the youth workers involved in the survey (72.8%, n=567), reported receiving formal supervision at least once a month.
- The most commonly reported experience of supervision (34.4%) is of monthly supervision.

- A higher proportion of the workers based outside of Sydney are less likely to receive medium-term supervision (monthly, 3-monthly, or 6-monthly) than their Sydney-based colleagues, but more likely than these same colleagues to receive supervision on a daily, fortnightly, or annual basis.

- Across those involved in the survey, only 37% reported receiving supervision no more than once a year and 76% reported having not received supervision in thepast 12 months.

- Workers based outside of Sydney are more likely to have not received supervision in the past 12 months, compared to their colleagues based in Sydney.

- Formal staff appraisal process was undertaken by 71.9% of the respondents (n=563) at least once in the past two years. This left 28.1% of the youth workers involved in the survey having not experienced this important professional development mechanism.

- 63.2% of the casual and 50.0% of volunteer staff involved in the survey have not received an appraisal in the past two years—higher than for the full time and part time staff.

Figure 35: Profiles of the amount of formal supervision received by surveyed youth workers in different regions in the past year (n=564).
training

Regarding training and professional development, the youth workers were asked to write the number of days of training and other professional development (e.g., conferences) they have attended in the past 12 months. They were also asked to answer with 'yes' or 'no' in response to a question asking if there are any barriers to accessing training. Further to this, the youth workers were asked to mark the possible reasons for barriers. A list was provided and respondents were invited to mark all that apply to their situation. They could also nominate an alternative. The options included: cost of training too high, not enough money in the training budget, travel, lack of priority from management, times when training is held, not enough information on what training is available, and relevant training not available.

- On average, the youth workers involved in the survey attended an average of 9.3 days of training in the past 12 months (n=563).
- The workers from CALD and Anglo–Celtic backgrounds attended slightly more, with an average of 9.5 and 9.4 days respectively, while the staff involved in the survey from ATSI backgrounds attended slightly less, at 8.6 days (n=553).
- The men involved in the survey attended on average 10.3 days of training per year. This was 1.4 days more than the women involved in the survey, who attended on average 8.9 days (n=560).
- There is a noticeable decrease in the number of days attended by those involved in the survey as length of time in youth work increased. For example, those with two years’ experience attended, on average, 13.2 days of training per annum and by ten years in youth work, this decreased to 7.6 days per annum (n=325).
- Workers involved in the survey employed part time received the most training, having attended 12 days training in the past 12 months, compared to the full time workers involved in the survey, who attended 9 days.
- Contract workers responding attended 7.5 days and the volunteers attended an average of 7.1 days training in the past 12 months.
- Casually involved in the survey receive the least amount of training, with an average of 4.6 days in the past 12 months (n=563).
- Just over half of youth workers involved in the survey felt that there were barriers which prevented them from attending training (55.4%, n=316).
- Slightly more women report feeling there were barriers to attending training, compared to men (57.2% compared to 51.6%) (n=566).
- More of the workers based outside of Sydney reported feeling there were barriers to them attending training than their colleagues based in Sydney, 68.0% compared to 44.0% respectively. Contract and casual workers involved in the survey also feel there were barriers to attending training, with just under two thirds of contract workers (63.6%), and just over one half of casual staff (52.6%) reporting this perception (n=567).
- Approximately two thirds of respondents (n=569) identify costs of attending, and the related factor of limited training budget, as barriers to attending training. Across the same group, slightly less than one quarter of responses identify travel (23.2%), and one fifth identified timing of training (20.7%), as barriers to attending training.

In addition to the categories that could be selected in the survey, respondents identify 'other' barriers to training as being workload commitments, lack of substitute staff, being a part time worker, family commitments and being restricted due to having a disability.

### Table 5: Barriers to attending training as identified by surveyed youth workers from different regions in NSW (n=399).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BARRIER TO ATTENDING TRAINING</th>
<th>SERVICES IN SYDNEY</th>
<th>SERVICES IN REGIONAL/ RURAL NSW</th>
<th>STATE WIDE SERVICES</th>
<th>REGIONAL &amp; RURAL WIDE SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of priority from management</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough information on what training is available</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of training too high</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough money in the training budget</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too far to travel</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times when training is held</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant training not available</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
stability
In trying to understand youth worker movement within the workforce, youth workers were asked to note how many of the different types of jobs they have held during their youth work career. They were asked to nominate if they have had 1–2, 3–4, 5–10, 11–20 or more than 20 jobs across the different job status categories, that is, casual, part time, full time and volunteer. To assist with this calculation, youth workers were also asked to nominate how long they have worked in their current job.

One quarter of the youth workers involved in the survey have been in their current job for less than 12 months, while two thirds have been in their current job for 1–5 years. The remainder of those youth workers responding have held the same position for more than six years, with 3.7% exceeding 10 years in the same job (n=570).

Due to the way in which the original survey data is grouped, it is not possible to calculate turnover in the sector. However, a proxy for workforce stability has been developed, where stability is measured by movement over time. This has been achieved by cross tabulating data on the number of jobs respondents’ have worked in, by the data relating to a youth work career of five or more years duration, where two years in a job is considered a minimum amount of time to achieve stability. This has been completed for full time jobs (Figure 21) and casual jobs (Figure 22), where casual jobs have been selected out for special consideration, due to a perception that casuals experience high turnover (Reference needed here eg from ASU).

When looking at respondents with youth work careers of over 5 years duration (n=311):

- 64.1% have had 1–2 full time jobs.
- 22.9% have had 3–4 full time jobs.
- 3% have had five or more full time jobs.

It was found that

- Approximately 19% stayed in full time positions for less than two years duration and, conversely, 81% stayed for longer than 2 years (n=262). Of this same group of workers, 60.7% have had 1–2 casual positions, 30.7% have had 3–4 casual jobs and 8.6% have had five or more casual jobs.

- Approximately 18.4% stayed in casual positions for less than two years and, conversely, 81.6% stayed for longer than two years (n=163).

- Of those who had part time work, only around 7.7% of youth workers left before two years, making them the most likely to stay (n=155).

- Youth workers were most likely to move on from volunteer positions with 26.5% leaving before two years (n=113).
YOUTH WORKERS SURVEY—STABILITY

satisfaction

Youth workers were asked to rate their current level of job satisfaction as very low, low, average, high or very high. Of the youth workers involved in the survey (n=567):

- 61.5% rated their job satisfaction as higher than average.
- 14.8% rating their satisfaction as very high.
- 8.8% of the youth workers involved in the survey rated their level of job satisfaction as less than average.
- Across all age groups job satisfaction was most commonly 'High'.
- Respondents aged between 41–55 years were the most likely to feel 'Average' satisfaction with 38.2%, almost equal to the proportion feeling 'High' job satisfaction.
- The youth workers at either end of the age scale were more likely to feel 'Very high' satisfaction with their current job.
- The workers between 31–40 years were most likely to feel 'Very low' job satisfaction.
- Overall, job satisfaction was similar between males and females involved in the survey (n=566).
- For youth workers from ATSI and Anglo–Celtic backgrounds involved in the survey job satisfaction was most commonly 'High' (51.4% and 49.5% respectively) followed by 'Average' for those from CALD backgrounds involved in the survey job satisfaction was most commonly 'Average' (39.8%) followed by 'High' (n=559).
- By far the greatest proportion of youth workers involved in the survey (61.5%), see youth work as their career. 30.1% are not committed to youth work in this way, and another 8.4% are undecided.

13 Since satisfaction was rated overall, data in this section cannot be used to comment on individual aspects of work, for example status, pay or supervision.
14 Where respondents answered ‘other’ the responses were manually redistributed into the set category they were most closely related to.
improving youth work

The youth workers were provided an opportunity to report from their experience on ways in which the youth sector and youth work–related issues could be improved across NSW. Their concerns and suggestions fell broadly into five categories regarding different dimensions of youth work. These areas related to young people, workers, youth sector organisations, government approaches and policy, and youth work as a sector and the profession more widely. The following section briefly describes these concerns and suggestions.
Some youth workers focused on young people, in particular they way they are perceived by others and matters relating to their participation in the community. These youth workers perceive that young people sometimes do not feel valued and part of the wider community across NSW. They also reported their own perception of experiencing this devaluing and negative appraisal of young people through their position of working with young people.

Specifically, it includes a perception that it is not uncommon for parents, some social welfare organisations, including some who are supposed to be youth focused, and schools to be intolerant of some young people.

“Often young people are seen in a negative light rather than acknowledging any of their strengths. This negative way of talking about young people can either come from parents or even service providers and can influence the way young people see themselves, eg. as a failure or trouble maker who just needs to do as they are told. Youth services need to be focused around individual agency and possibilities.”

While these workers did not specify the groups or traits in young people they were referring to they did mention that it is concerning that many young people disengage from youth work services, and the community more widely. To combat this they called for more opportunities for involvement of young people in service delivery, service and project development and community events, and more ownership over decisions that directly affect them. These workers argued that this will both provide a way for the ‘voice’ of more young people to be heard than currently, where they can provide their perception of the gaps in activities and service delivery. It also means that the notion of community will become more meaningful for these young people as it will more likely reflect their needs and perceptions, but also develop a sense of agency across the younger members of the community.

People in government decision making and policy positions were identified as needing to change their perceived current focus on the numbers of programs delivered as a way to value the sector. This will involve becoming more focused on facilitating more youth participation in service development and delivery than currently exists, and to measure this according to what is actually improving youth and community relations and engagement.

“[We need] more focus on empowering young people and communities to make significant change instead of endless band aid solutions.”

As implied in this worker quote, the youth workers who reported on this also suggested greater community involvement in youth focused events, as it will:

• help fill current gaps in understating of issues faced by young people,
• increase the focus on the strengths young people have,
• help service providers and members of the community develop understanding of what young people are realistically capable of, and
• provide greater mass of people to help alleviate these issues.

Finally, it was felt that this level of involvement should include people in decision making and policy positions across all government levels (Federal, State and Local), and not only those working with young people.
“youth work seems to be seen as a ‘fun’ industry, where the key focus is on providing activities, which isn’t always what clients need”

workers’ professional quality, education and experience

“Youth services provide such a vital role within society; if wages were better for staff and more attractive as a career option, we would retain more individuals with the drive to keep the sector on its toes in terms of training and professionalisation.”

In the words of this worker, remuneration, staffing, career progression, motivation, relevance, training and professionalism are all linked. The following section further explores the perceptions of youth workers regarding areas for improvement related to youth workers themselves.

Many workers noted that there needs to be higher numbers of trained and qualified staff across NSW within the youth sector, in particular this includes more staff with ‘formalised’ education. This is because, in the words of one worker, ‘youth work is incredibly important and complex work!’ Some workers also argued that a more highly educated, qualified and trained workforce is a benchmark factor in a professional workforce.

Where workers generally did not distinguish between university and TAFE when discussing qualifications, it seems that some equate university qualifications with quality, for example:

“I’d improve on the quality of youth workers. Many have only TAFE quals, and are great at organising activities etc for young people, but that seems to be as far as they go. Youth work seems to be seen as a ‘fun’ industry, where the key focus is on providing activities, which isn’t always what clients need.”

However, others do not, for example:

“You can have a degree. Doesn’t mean you can work with young people.”

Regardless of the level of education, it is clear that there is a perception that ‘formal qualifications’ assists workers to better help young people deal with their diverse issues and reduces negative impacts on young people, for example, it reduces the chance of issues relating to the professional boundary between workers and young people. Other areas reported as gaps include training around dealing with challenging behaviours, professionalism and diversity.

As regards career development, including training when youth workers are in employment, a number of workers noted that this needs to be more available and more appropriate. Some argued that training also needs to be more related and structured to career development, rather than the ad hoc approach currently taken. Others suggested that it can be conducted with staff from multiple organisations combining to share resources.

Many workers argued that there needs to be more experienced staff working in the sector. An important aspect of this, as noted by workers, includes increasing efforts to retain the experienced staff currently working in the industry. Ways to achieve this include training, as already mentioned, but also remunerating youth workers more in line with their qualifications.
Many workers linked remuneration, qualifications and experience. They argue that not remunerating staff in line with their level of qualifications and experience, but also comparably with other workers in other parts of the social welfare sector, who are completing similar tasks, contributes to high turnover within the youth sector. One suggested improvement to the sector relates to greater provision for employment security and was in the form of a call for funding that supports longevity in positions.

Furthermore, a few workers linked the lack of parity with government workers to recognition and they argued that low levels of remuneration contributed to reduced levels of self-respect, value, enthusiasm and professional dignity. The point was also made that this situation is even more pronounced for casual staff. One worker summed it up the following way:

"The wage difference means a high turnover of staff and a low value toward the work of youth workers within the wider community. Youth workers are often doing equal to, or more work than those that are in government departments such as Human Services, however their effort is undervalued as they are under paid and often over worked. If this inequity was resolved a stronger and more consistent youth sector would exist, resulting in improved service delivery to young people."

In addition to the factors mentioned above, which some workers included in requirements for a supportive work environment, a number of other dimensions of support were reported. These include making improvements regarding the reflective function of supervision, increasing flexible works arrangements, and improving staff safety.

"Many youth workers are at risk due to not knowing the best way to discipline and support youth with challenging behaviour. And management often do not understand what it is like to have very little power or support as a worker."
Many workers reported experiences of a gatekeeping element to the way services are run where youth workers have fewer opportunities than they used to have to make decisions at the practical level of service delivery. They argue that a bureaucratic and hierarchical dimension has entered the youth sector that has slowed the time it takes to make decisions about service delivery, making the process more rigid and less responsive to need. They also argue that this has distanced workers at management level from young people across NSW, and, importantly, from being able to understand and thus respond to young people’s needs. This is reflected in the words of one worker who stated:

“There appears to be a real disconnect between senior management (not face to face) and the coal face. Youth workers should have a voice in the delivery of service and a collaborative approach taken to the care of young people. Many services appear to have a top down management style and this clearly doesn’t work.”

A lot of workers noted that there needs to be more collaboration between all agencies working with young people. At a practical level, this includes coordinating with each other to advertise and deliver services together (and lessen the duplication that currently occurs), sharing costs and resources providing joint case management and training, and greater sharing of information about young people’s needs, challenges and history. Furthermore, it was reported that there has been an increase in a competitive environment between non-government agencies over the past few years which is counterproductive to meeting young people’s needs and building trust with young people, as expressed by one worker:

“[To improve the sector we need] better communication and networking between service providers that offer services to young people. At the moment it seems that there is much more competition than cooperation and this is not good for the young people as they miss out on assistance and support.”

And another, who along with others, also argued that competition between services makes it more difficult for young people to access services:

“A collaborative approach would yield more sustainable and long term outcomes because at present many young people end up confused, unsure, overwhelmed and disillusioned by the number of services competing for their ‘business’ and end up being more disadvantaged.”
Furthermore, the point was made that government agencies still operate as though they are silos independent of each other. Schools were especially singled out for a mention as needing to work with youth services more collaboratively and flexibly than they do currently:

“In my experience and in the region that I work in, there is a lack of collaboration and communication between services. This evident in the poor attendance of network meetings, lack of response from services to form partnerships on projects or to form working parties to tackle an issue. It seems as funding becomes limited that individuals and services become introverted when they should be looking to work with others and tap into knowledge, skills and resources that are within their reach, outside of their organisations.”

A lot of comments related to schools utilising the expertise of youth workers within school environments; a few even argue for this to be made compulsory. The workers argue that this will support those young people who are in danger of disengaging from school to remain engaged, and it may assist those who have already disengaged, to reengage with education. The workers would like to be able to access teachers, parents and young people during school hours, and, as a preventive measure, to educate them about the resources within the community designed to support young people:

“[An improvement to the sector would be] providing access and education about services to young people at young ages, e.g. at schools, so young people are aware of services that they can access as opposed to being referred later when problems may arise. Also providing this information to the wider community, in particular parents.”

Finally, some workers also noted that families need to be accessed more readily as a resource that can be utilised to meet young peoples’ needs:

“The family unit remains a great resource and support for young people in equipping them for personal growth and readiness for adult life.”
government provision

inadequate, insecure, and inequitable

“Having the staffing levels to properly meet the needs of young people and their families—for these not to be hamstrung by regressive and limiting contractual cycles, for allocation of funding to reflect a real and genuine long–term investment in the mental health, wellbeing and future of our young people and their communities—so we can do the job of supporting and empowering our young people the best we possibly can.”

When asked an open question about what could be done to improve the youth sector, funding received the most comments by far. The key messages related to funding were that it is grossly inadequate, insecure, and inequitable.

A lot of people spoke about how inadequate government funding provisions are for youth work, especially where there are known gaps in service delivery. Some argued that the levels of funding only enable a focus on crisis, not prevention and early intervention. Others singled out rural and regional areas as areas of great need. For example, where one rural–based worker reported that there is currently one worker funded for 24hrs per week in a town of more than 12,000 people, while another said,

“The government needs to inject a huge amount of cash into youth services. There are so many young people out there unable to access services, especially in regional Australia. This is basically because there aren’t any to access. The services that are available are understaffed and therefore cannot help those that really need it.”

One factor that also relates to inadequate funding is that the sector is therefore not able to be flexible enough to meet the multiple and complex needs that exist for young people.

“Young people don’t fit into the boxes most governments expect. The services need to be more flexible.”

Furthermore, workers were very clear that funding and policy decisions need to relate to the real needs of young people. For example, a number of people noted that youth services need to be able to provide a service to people over 18 years of age, as this is a difficult transition period for most young people. Furthermore, it was noted that recent changes to eligibility criteria that restricts services to supporting the most in need or at risk young people is counterproductive as it creates stigma, which keeps young people way from services.

Workers argued that they need flexibility and funding to provide a greater range of innovative programs and projects. They provided a number of examples that they think are required in their respective areas which covered the gamut of social welfare domains and intervention approaches. One of the main points was that funding needs to be flexible enough to ensure services are easier for young people to access (‘youth friendly’), in particular outside of school and business hours and taking services to where the young people are rather than expecting them to come to the services.

“[An improvement would be], increased hours of access to services, e.g. access till later hours since this is when we have found many young people approach us with serious matters.”
“The added stress and pressure in regards to the funding is constantly hindering the ability of agencies to plan ahead and lock in services”

According to many workers, lack of core funding for services and a tendency for project funding to be short term creates a lot of insecurity, instability, inconsistency and duplication throughout the youth sector. It also does not enable services to become well known in the community and to establish stable, consistent and trusting relationships with young people.

“[An improvement would be] more ability to deliver services where young people are, like outreach to shopping centres and fast food hangouts. I find many young people never access youth services due to a perceived stigma, or because they are not confident to come into a youth centre/community centre, so engaging young people where they are already comfortable would overcome this.”

Other key points were that the funding needs to focus on whether young people are actually better off, rather than on how many services are being delivered, and that decisions about funding need to be informed by evidence rather than the current competitive generalised approach to allocating money. For example, where evidence exists that a program is successful, and that young people and communities are better off, then these services and programs need to be given priority.

The consensus amongst those who mentioned this was that this could be reduced if funding periods were longer, there was a tendency towards core rather than project funding, organisations did not have to access multiple small grants and the sector wide environment was not as competitive (all of which relate to issues noted above).

Related to this was the issue that youth work jobs require a lot of unnecessary administration time, which smaller services find especially burdensome and inequitable.

“[An improvement would include] less applying for funding to maintain our position and services to young people. It’s crazy to think that as youth workers, we would have to chase funding to keep our jobs, instead of spending that time doing our jobs.”
“[It would be an improvement] to have a support system in place from the higher ranks in NSW in a way that encourages young people to access our services, encouraging young people to access their local youth service.”

**YOUTH WORK AS A SECTOR**

**PROFILE, PROFESSIONALISM, EVIDENCE INFORMED PRACTICE**

There were a number of comments about perceived low profile of the youth work sector amongst young people and throughout the social welfare sector and community more widely. More specifically, workers argue that much more needs to be done to value youth work as a profession. They argue that more needs to be done to explain the complexities involved in youth work, the specialised and diverse range of skills of youth workers and what the youth sector contributes to the community. Regarding this, some commented that there needs to be a sector wide dialogue about what it means to be youth worker.

This includes comments reported earlier that more effort and resources are required to market the youth work sector more comprehensively and appropriately to young people. This includes making it easier for young people to find out what is available in their area, and to informally tell youth workers and policy makers what they need and want in their area. Some suggested this might include facilitating greater opportunities for youth workers to speak in schools, local advertising, a youth friendly interactive web site, communicating the message to parents and developing television advertising about youth work as something they can attend.

“[It would be an improvement] to have a support system in place from the higher ranks in NSW in a way that encourages young people to access our services, encouraging young people to access their local youth service. Youth workers have enough support, but there is not enough knowledge in the youth culture about accessing youth services.”

When speaking about raising the profile of youth work and valuing the professionalism within the sector, a number of youth workers commented on the need for a standardised approach. They noted that the development and implementation of standards and quality assurance mechanisms would certainly improve the youth sector across NSW.

They argue that there needs to be greater commitment and resources applied to researching and evaluating programs for young people. Youth workers want to be running programs that are informed by evidence about what is improving young peoples’ lives. Further to this, some argued for establishing a ‘Best Practice’ Program and linking funding decisions to this rather than the competitive processes currently available.

Finally, standards would include a code of ethics and developing a focus on strengths-based approaches to working with young people. Some even suggested that this be a national approach. Furthermore, training in the standards would be required and some would like to see assessment criteria and eventually a minimum standards accreditation system for workers.
references


