



Supplementary questions – Youth Advisory Council

1) **Can you outline the training or mentoring work that the Advocate provides to the YAC?**

ACYP provides a variety of training to the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) as part of their induction process. This training includes topics such as advocacy, media engagement, participatory practice, and cultural awareness.

ACYP also facilitates external training workshops to be provided to the YAC. For example, the YAC has previously undertaken Young Carer Awareness Training with NSW Carers, Vision Awareness Training with Vision Australia, and team building and empowerment training with the KYUP! Project.

2) **Has the YAC had any particular concerns over the last 12 months, especially coming out of COVID restrictions?**

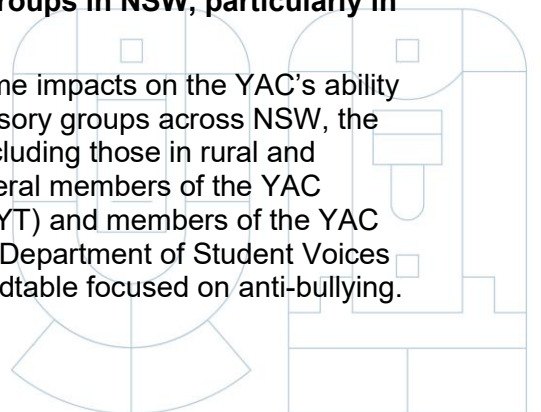
Coming out of COVID restrictions some Young People have felt increased levels of social anxiety around being social again after such long period of not being able to interact. Some young people have gone from having no social interaction with their peers to what seems like an overwhelming amount of social interaction with the return to school in such a short period of time and this can often leave young people feeling socially fatigued and more inclined to want to spend time alone.

Over the course of the pandemic, we have seen the mental health of young people be heavily impacted. Coming out of the lockdowns has been extremely positive for many young people's mental health however, the impacts on mental health from these lockdowns is still ongoing with young people still being affected.

One issue that the YAC has also been particularly concerned about coming out of COVID restrictions is the lack of accountability and response from service providers. Young people are tired of being told that they can't access things or being impacted by services having long wait times or delays because of ongoing COVID impacts. The YAC has also raised concerns that through focusing so heavily on COVID for a period of time, other concerns impacting young people have been put on hold.

3) **Does the YAC work with any other youth advisory groups in NSW, particularly in rural and regional areas?**

Whilst the past few years of the pandemic have had some impacts on the YAC's ability to regularly connect with and work with other youth advisory groups across NSW, the YAC does connect with other youth advisory groups, including those in rural and regional areas. For example, in the past 12 months several members of the YAC attended a meeting of the Regional Youth Taskforce (RYT) and members of the YAC also recently came together with the RYT and DOVES (Department of Student Voices in Education and Schools) group to participate in a roundtable focused on anti-bullying.





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YAC members also regularly engage with youth advisory groups in their local areas. For example, several members of the YAC sit on local youth advisory boards at a local council level, including those in regional and rural areas.

- 4) You mentioned that there was a benefit to having the school curriculum review as a standing item on the agenda of YAC meetings. Is there any downside to this, i.e. - Have other items of concern to children and young people not received the attention they should have?**

The YAC has had ongoing engagement with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) in relation to the school curriculum review. The benefit of this engagement has been that having regular engagement means that members have time to think, reflect and come up with new ideas to feed into the process. Each of the sessions with NESA has been focused on a different area of curriculum reform, which has also allowed focused discussions on different topics.

Whilst there are always going to be many items of concern to children and young people, school is a really central component to children and young people's lives. As a result, the YAC was really engaged in these conversations and could see the importance of this piece of work.

- 5) What do members of the Youth Advisory Council consider is working in relation to education of the issue of consent?**

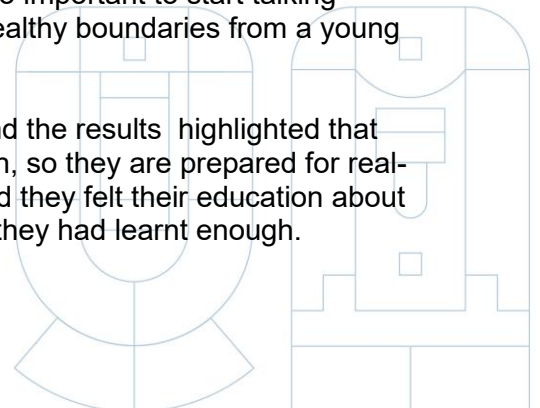
- a) Do young people think there is sufficient education at school on consent, and should there be any changes?
- b) Is consent education commencing at the right age?

Members of the YAC been pleased to see that over the past few years there has been more attention and awareness around the issue of consent, including a shift in language and information around recent legal changes in NSW. It is important that there is more focus on consent education, and that it is done in a culturally sensitive way that is more relatable to real-life situations. It is also important to start talking about respectful relationships and how to implement healthy boundaries from a young age.

ACYP conducted polling with young people in 2021, and the results highlighted that young people want access to holistic consent education, so they are prepared for real-world situations. Over half of young people in NSW said they felt their education about consent was insufficient, or they were unsure whether they had learnt enough.

The ACYP polling found that:

- Among young women:





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- 22% said they didn't learn anything about sexual consent during high school
- 41% said they only learnt a little about sexual consent during high school
- Among young men:
 - 10% said they didn't learn anything about sexual consent during high school
 - 35% said they only learnt a little about sexual consent during high school
- Just 15% of young people said they had learnt a lot about sexual consent in high school.
- The issue was more acute in regional areas with only 8% stating they had learnt a lot.
- Almost 2 in 3 young women who said they had learnt something about sexual consent at high school thought their education about the topic was insufficient (52%) or they were unsure whether it was sufficient (14%)
- Around half of young men who said they had learnt something about sexual consent at high school thought their education about the topic was insufficient (34%) or they were unsure whether it was sufficient (15%)
- Young people with a disability were more likely to feel their education about sexual consent was insufficient (52%)
- Most young people felt the topic of sexual consent should be taught by year 8 (72%).

One of the key priority areas for action under the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024* is focused on addressing concerns around consent and respectful relationships. The YAC provided feedback on the Department of Education's 'Statement of Intent' and have also been engaged in consultation with the Department of Communities and Justice in relation to this topic. ACYP has also recently supporting the work of 'Consent Labs' by jointly funding a regional consent labs roadshow to Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo, in partnership with the Office of Regional Youth.

- 6) **From your evidence, we understand that some members of the YAC are young carers. There is frequently concern from carers about getting support and how to be well networked with other carers. This could be particularly so for young people, given the time requirements for school / university education. How can we ensure that young carers are sufficiently networked and supported?**

At the moment there are a range of support systems in place to support Young Carers, The **Carers NSW Young Carer Program** provides information and referral support to young carers in NSW and the professionals, educators and community members who



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support them. As a peak organisation, Carers NSW have a strong focus on raising awareness of young carers in the community and systemic advocacy. The Program can support young carers through:

- Having a chat and linking them in with practical supports that meet their needs, such as other services and programs
- Providing information to the community through monthly eNewsletters
- The development of resources for young carers and to raise awareness of young carers in the community

The Young Carer Program also offers Young Carer Awareness Training, a free professional development opportunity for educators, community workers and other professionals to learn more about young carers in NSW.

Carer Gateway is an Australian Government program providing free services and support for carers. Carer Gateway can provide many services to support carers in their caring role, including in-person and online peer support groups, tailored support packages, in-person and phone counselling, in-person and online self-guided coaching, online skills courses, and access to emergency respite. Carer Gateway includes some supports targeted at or reserved for young carers. However, young carers may experience difficulty accessing support through Carer Gateway as support may be prioritised for 'primary carers', and young carers are often not the 'primary' provider of care and assistance for their family member or friend, despite providing a significant amount of care which impacts on their daily lives.

Young Carers can also be financially supported through accessing the **Young Carer Bursary Program** (Carers Australia) which aims to support young carers in continuing their education. The program offers 1,000 bursaries of \$3,000 each year to assist with education needs and resources.

However, there is a huge barrier in Young Carers accessing these supports as Young Carers often do not recognise that their role in supporting and caring for their loved ones classify them as 'young carers'. Currently there is common misconception that you have to be receiving a carers payment or be the primary carer to be eligible for Young Carer support which is simply not the case. The NSW Government could aim to raise the profile of young carers and provide more resources and information in schools to allow students and teachers to be able to readily identify Young Carers. Similar to the NSW Health Anti-Vaping Campaign that the YAC provided feedback to, posters could be placed in NSW School explaining who is a 'Young Carer', what support is available and also busting common misconceptions about Young Carers.

In addition to this due to recent reforms in the carer support sector, some programs and opportunities that enabled young carers to network are no longer available and these opportunities have not been replicated fully within the Carer Gateway framework. There is currently an opportunity for the NSW Government to invest in regular, meaningful networking opportunities for young carers that supplement the peer support available through Carer Gateway, enabling young carers to connect, share ideas and build their skills and confidence.