



Donnybrook youth stakeholder engagement meeting

1st May 2023

1 – 2:30pm

About YACWA

YACWA (Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia) is the peak body in WA representing young people and youth sector interests to key decision makers. We work in the **policy and advocacy** space, striving to ensure that policies and programs best meet the needs of young people, particularly those experiencing disadvantage and/or from marginalised backgrounds and identities. We promote **youth participation and leadership**, seeking to ensure that young people have a seat at the table in decisions that affect them. As part of this we auspice or run several youth leadership projects. We know that best outcomes for young people are achieved through a **strong and connected youth sector** and we host networks, events and training to assist with this.

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About this engagement

In May 2023, we visited Donnybrook as part of a visit through the inner South West region, to engage with local youth stakeholders. Our objectives were to raise awareness of YACWA's work and to engage with individuals and organisations to deepen our understanding of issues impacting young people and services in regional communities and better highlight these in our advocacy work. This regional stakeholder visit was made possible by funding from Lotterywest as part of our Regional YACWA project.

We had 21 attendees at this session. We asked people to brainstorm strengths in the community, relating to young people. In addition, we had small group discussions centred on the challenges, gaps and issues for young people and those working with young people in Donnybrook and surrounding areas, and potential solutions or opportunities to address these. We have done our best in this document to capture what we heard from discussions on the day.

We'd like to thank all the stakeholders who attended this workshop and gave their time and energy to share what is happening in their local communities and identify opportunities moving forward.

We acknowledge that young people were not in attendance at this engagement. We understand there is local intention to host a youth forum or similar engagement to capture young people's opinions and voices and explore opportunities moving forward to involve them in planning and decision-making in a coordinated and sustainable way.

Strengths

Local people and community spirit

We heard of the willingness of the community to learn and work with young people. There are lots of passionate people in the community with knowledge and skills. There are engaged community members and stakeholders willing to champion change.

Sports

There were multiple mentions of sport as a strength in the community. This includes the diversity of sports for young people to choose from, including netball, football, basketball, cricket, hockey, swimming, dancing, badminton. Sporting groups have solid membership numbers each year.

Facilities

There are several facilities and recreational spaces in the community, including the skate park, pump track, fun park, basketball courts, recreation centre, ovals and reserves.

Natural environment

There are walking, hiking and biking options (including the Munda Biddi) in the local area.

Services and programs

There are several services and programs in town. Participants identified the Community Resource Centre, chaplains and pastoral supports at schools, Youth Emergency Service (YES) program (pre-cadets) and Scouts and Guides groups.

Gaps/Challenges and Opportunities

Greater diversity of activity options is needed

We heard that after-school activity options are currently limited to sports, and that there was a need for clubs and activities that extended beyond sports for young people. Opportunities to extend programming may exist through engagement with the various community organisations, individuals and volunteer groups such as Men's Shed, Landcare, trail groups, equine programs, and across areas such as arts, woodworking, IT, climbing, fishing and the environment. Communication of existing opportunities is important, whether through social media or other mediums.

There are opportunities to involve young people in volunteering

We heard of issues with lack of volunteers, and existing volunteer overload and burnout, with committees shutting down as a result. There are challenges as young people transition into senior high school; they go to Bunbury, which has flow on effects limiting involvement in local groups. Discussion was had on how to engage young people and new members on committees to expand diversity and extend the number of attendees and helping hands at events and activities. There can be generational perspectives such as 'older generation knows best' that impact on willingness to involve young people, and willingness of young people to be involved. Young people may also have different expectations of involvement to older members. There could be opportunities to upskill young leaders to take on roles in operations and club management for example. Young people are often early adopters of new technology and new ways of doing things, that can bring fresh skills, perspectives and innovation to existing groups.

Greater transport options are needed to facilitate access to services and programs

There are issues with accessibility and frequency of transport to get to and from Bunbury where education, programs and services are concentrated. This extends to lack of transport between towns in the Shire – Donnybrook, Kirup, Yabberup, Balingup, making it hard for people to access programs and activities, including after-school hours. It was identified that coordinated carpooling could help to address this issue. Group discussion identified that a childcare centre's 25-seater bus is currently under-utilised and is available to the community to use as a resource for programs and activities, requiring an MR or F-class licence. There may be an opportunity to explore a community bus run that supports connection between neighbouring towns in the Shire, as well as connection to Bunbury. There may also be opportunity to share resources and explore how others could utilise school and community group buses and investigate the need for a Shire-wide bus for all areas and activities.

Local access to mental health services needs to be addressed

Access to mental health services is an issue and people are required to go outside of town. We heard there is a youth counsellor available in town however knowledge of this appeared

to be limited, and it was identified this service cost money. There is not a headspace in town, and we heard that the nearest centre (Bunbury) doesn't outreach to town. There is also a need for access to emergency and acute mental health services.

Explore cost of living and wraparound supports with families and carers

Changes in working life may often result in parents working longer, which impacts on time to volunteer, and time spent with family. Cost of living is a challenge and we heard that families may be reluctant to accept help due to perceptions in a small community and lack of acceptance of difficulties by those not struggling. It was raised that programs such as Foodbank and Community Gardens may be a local solution to alleviate some cost of living pressures. It is important to engage with families to raise awareness of programs and services available, as well as support parents to be involved in groups/programs and the interests of children and young people. Parenting skills workshops may be of benefit, such as Tuning into Teens.

Young people need opportunities to have a voice in the community

There is a lack of youth voice in the local community and opportunities for young people to influence programming and decision-making. It was identified that a youth council or reference group is needed to provide such opportunity. These groups need to be culturally safe and inclusive for young people from a range of different backgrounds and identities.

Youth friendly spaces are needed

There are no dedicated spaces in the community for young people where the focus is on them, including venues and places to meet after school. Boredom was identified as a big issue. The need for a central Youth Hub was identified; concentrating services in one area, as well as providing a central point of coordination for community groups and a hub for information and support, including from youth workers. Such a space could bring lots of interests together and host a variety of activities and programs. We heard that there may be current buildings presenting opportunities to renovate, activate and utilise for this purpose such as the old netball/pump track building.

Coordinated approach between neighbouring communities is needed

It was identified that there is opportunity to explore how to better coordinate communication, resources, approaches and programs across Balingup, Kirup, Yabberup and Donnybrook. This may assist with addressing isolation, and improving access to programs and activities across towns, including after-school and on weekends.

Explore opportunities to best communicate local activities

It was identified that it can be hard to know what is going on in the community. Discussion was had on the value of exploring the best way to promote opportunities and find out about things going on, such as a Facebook page and working with local progress associations to disseminate information.

Intergenerational connection is needed to break down barriers

It was identified that programs were needed to bridge the gap between older and younger generations. This could provide the opportunity for each generation to get to know each other as individuals, and combat some of the stereotypes and negative attitudes towards young people that we heard are present in the community.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are needed

There are hardly any local apprenticeships and traineeships in the community for young people. There is an opportunity to engage with and support local businesses to take on trainees and apprentices and help provide opportunities to keep young people in the community. The local high school currently runs to Year 10, and there is a challenge around how to encourage young people back to community after they have left to complete their final years of high school. Engagement with businesses can help educate on the process of hosting an apprenticeship/traineeship and provide support throughout this process. Careers expos could help young people understand the opportunities that exist in the community.

Affordable housing is a real challenge

We heard the need for affordable housing for young people, and diversity of options including higher density housing and 1 - 2 bedroom units. We heard that it is one thing to retain young people in the community, but the challenge is where do they live? There are no housing or homelessness support services, requiring people to leave town.

Contact us

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