

9. Young People

Young People Nationally

Adolescence is a time of rapid physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. Intensive brain remodelling is underway and this continues through to the mid 20's. Peer influences become an important driver and this can be challenging for family relationships. Culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality become strong influences on the developing young person. Adolescence is marked by heightened emotional sensitivity and impulsive actions.

Care must be taken to guide and support young people to remain safe and engaged. Vulnerabilities can emerge which include social disengagement, mental health issues and extreme risk taking behaviours.¹ This highlights the importance of early risk identification and intervention and the provision of school and community supports for personal growth through learning and skills development.²

In 2016 Mission Australia conducted its 15th annual survey of young people aged 15-19 years. The survey was distributed nationally and aimed to identify the values and issues of concern to young people.¹ In 2016 young people of both genders nominated stress, school or study problems and body image as the three leading issues of personal concern.³ These three nominated areas have remained the top three since the surveys inception in 2012.

In 2016 Mission Australia consulted young people for the first time on whether they felt they had been discriminated against. 39.1% of young women felt they had discriminated because of their gender. Whilst 30.8% of young people surveyed felt they had been discriminated because of culture or race, 22.1% of young people felt they had been discriminated against because of their age.⁴

The three leading issues of concern for Australian young people were alcohol and drugs 28.7%, equity and discrimination 27% and mental health 20.6%.⁵ The area of concern that differed between males and females was not discrimination but rather mental health. Australian females who were surveyed were significantly more concerned about mental health compare to their male counterparts. 26.2% females felt that mental health was one of the most important issues in Australia today compared to 14.1% survey males.⁶

Youth and the Victorian Government

In 2016 the Victorian Government consulted more than 2000 young Victorians to obtain a better understanding of the issues young people identify as important and what areas require possible reform.⁷

Young people identified the importance of a having an equitable education system where there are supportive, flexible options to assist young people. It is very important to ensure young people remain engaged in learning and reaching their full potential and this can only be achieve with a system that meets a broad range of needs.⁸ Young people need to be provided with quality job

training opportunities, thus reducing barriers to employment for young people entering the workforce. Greater investment is required in youth mental health so that young people receive timely and appropriate support.⁹

The Victorian Government is investing \$4 million over three years to deliver an exciting new program – Empower Youth – to fund organisations to work with vulnerable young people who are at risk of disengagement to strengthen their health and wellbeing, their connection to community, their engagement in education and training and their pathways to employment.¹⁰

The development, design and delivery of local Empower Youth Programs will directly engage young people to ensure that the program meets their goals and circumstances.¹¹ Local government and community organisations, especially in priority areas, were encouraged to apply for this funding program.¹²

LGBTIQ Youth

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer/Questioning (LGBTIQ) youth are faced with many discriminatory barriers that may prevent them from expressing who they are and impact their ability in reaching their full potential. LGBTIQ young people:

- frequently do not access health services due to fear of discrimination;
- experience higher rates of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, homelessness, experience of violence, disengagement from schooling, and poor physical health outcomes;
- have poor mental health in comparison to their heterosexual peers¹³; and
- have higher rates of suicidality - suicide rates are 6 times higher for same-sex attracted young people (20-42% compared with 7-13%).¹⁴

The Victoria government strives to address the above mentioned issues through The Safe Schools Coalition who provide training and resources to Victorian Schools to increase teacher's capacity to support LGBTIQ students and to address issues such as bullying. The Victorian Government also offers Health Equal Youth Grants to promote the rights, health and wellbeing of young LGBTIQ Victorians.¹⁵

Young People in Monash

There are approximately 46,000 Monash young people aged 10-25 years accounting for one quarter of Monash residents 187,286 residents.¹⁶ Monash ranks second highest out of all 79 Victorian local government areas for the number of 19 year olds completing year 12 (97.1%) - this compares with a Victorian measure of 84.2%.¹⁷

Young People in the Monash community

Through consultations associated with the development of the City of Monash Youth Plan 2016-2017, Monash young people have identified five key focus areas: public safety, libraries, mental health, public transport and young people's constructed environment. Each of these areas have been provided with a range of actions attached to ensure that young people's needs or concerns are being addressed.

Monash young people are excited about the proposed new library in the Glen Waverley precinct and are keen to share their ideas on how this space can be activated and engaging for Monash young people.

City of Monash and Monash young people will continue to advocate for better mental health services in the City of Monash. Monash young people would like to be able to access support from a mental health service that is easy to access and located in the City of Monash.

Monash young people want to consult other young people about public transport in Monash and look at ways to improve the current services and advocate to the State Government to better accommodate the needs of Monash young people.

One of the strategic directions/broad areas for action identified in Monash's *Children, Young People and Family Strategy 2016-17* is Safety and Health - children and young people should feel safe and confident and have a strong sense of self. Their physical, developmental, social and mental health needs should be supported and developed so that they can adapt to new challenges and changes in their lives.¹⁸

The strategy recognises that parents and family have the most significant influence on a child and young person's learning, development and wellbeing. Monash Council is ideally placed to have a profound impact on the quality of life experienced by Monash children, young people and families and strongly believe that communities really matter. The strategy has been developed utilising a strong research and policy base that underpins positive child health and development outcomes across the life course.

Some of the services and facilities within Monash to support young people include:

- Generalist youth support available to young people aged 10-25 years with a significant connection with the City of Monash;
 - School Focussed Youth Service program that supports students in the 60 primary and secondary schools across Monash who are deemed to be at risk of disengagement;
 - Programs including Activate, Monash Youth Film Festival, Quiksound and Monash Young Woman's Leadership Program;
 - Coordination of the Monash Youth Workers Network for youth workers in schools and community agencies;
 - Coordination of the Monash Young Persons Reference Group and Youth Ambassadors Program;
 - Power Neighbourhood House in Chadstone delivers a 'Connecting Teens' program for young people seeking to build confidence and social networks;
 - Provision of civic facilities that support children, families and young people to be healthy and active;
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Families form a significant part of the Monash community, with almost half of all households being homes where there are children or young people. Children and young people in Monash are growing up in a place where they are highly valued, with strong communities and networks to support them to group, learn and thrive.

Young people account for a significant proportion of our community and each level of government is committed to providing better outcomes for our future leaders. In recent years each level of government have significantly improved how they engage and consult young people and this has greatly assisted in creating more inclusive, stronger communities.

9. Youth – Reference List

1-2 City of Monash, Children, Young People and Family Strategy, retrieved 15 February 2017, <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/About-Us/Council/Publications/Plans-and-Strategies/Children-Young-People-and-Family-Strategy>

3-6 Mission Australia, retrieved 15 February 2017, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-evaluation/youth-survey>

7-12 Victorian Government. (2016) Youth Policy: Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria: Victoria

13 Leonard et al. (2012); Corboz et al. (2008); Suicide Prevention Australia (2009)

14 Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (2000); Suicide Prevention Australia (2009)

15 Victorian Government. (2016) Youth Policy: Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria: Victoria

16-17 Monash Profile Id, retrieved 15 February 2017, <http://profile.id.com.au/monash/home>

18 City of Monash, Children, Young People and Family Strategy, retrieved 15 February 2017, <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/About-Us/Council/Publications/Plans-and-Strategies/Children-Young-People-and-Family-Strategy>