

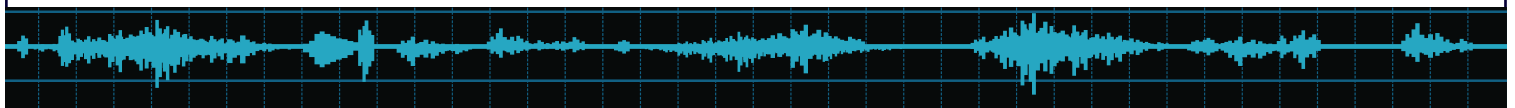


Anglican
Church Southern Queensland
Social Responsibilities Committee

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Southern Queensland

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LISTENING TO YOUTH VOICES





Contents

Tables.....	iii
Figures.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
About Youth Voices.....	2
Ethics.....	2
The research tool.....	2
Design.....	2
The SenseMaker® tool.....	2
Participants and the research process.....	5
Youth Voices workshop.....	6
Participants.....	6
The process.....	6
Insights.....	7
Insights from the workshop.....	8
First response to the data.....	8
Emerging thoughts and themes.....	9
And so to action.....	10
Emerging research questions.....	11
Some insights from the SenseMaker® analysis.....	11
Gender differences.....	12
Sources of help.....	12
Type of help.....	13
Reflections.....	14
Considerations and limitations.....	14
Communications.....	14
Concluding thoughts and an invitation.....	14
Appendices.....	15
Appendix A: The Cynefin framework.....	15
More information about complexity approaches and the Cynefin framework.....	15
Appendix B: Examples of workshop stimulus material (data extracts).....	16
Help and support.....	16
Choices and risk.....	17
Emotional state and identity.....	19



Tables

Table 1: First responses to the data8

Table 2: Emerging thoughts and themes9

Table 3: Summary of workshop action sheets10

Figures

Figure 1a & 1b: Examples of Youth Voices triads and dyads.....3

Figure 2: Example of Youth Voices SenseMaker® triad:
using drugs and alcohol, by gender3

Figure 3: Example of Youth Voices SenseMaker® dyad:
using perceptions of help, by gender and age.....4

Figure 4: Age and gender of Youth Voices participants.....5

Figure 5: Youth Voices workshop invitation6

Figure 6: Questions related to the experience11

Figure 7: Questions related to life circumstances11

Figure 8: Source of best information.....12

Figure 9: Experience of attention provided, by age and identification
as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.....13

Figure 10: Cynefin framework15

Figure 11: Experience of attention provided, by emotional tone (all ages)17

Figure 12: Help-seeking by emotional tone, all ages17

Figure 13: Risk-taking by gender and emotional tone (all ages).....18

Figure 14: Drug and alcohol use by emotional tone (all ages)18

Figure 15: Perception of adults in authority by emotional tone (all ages).....19

Figure 16: Description of young person needing help, by emotional tone (all ages)20





Introduction

Youth Voices was designed as a way for young people to influence youth policy, program development and service delivery in government, schools and community organisations — to share their experiences of help and support, and to communicate what they see as a flourishing life and the supports they need to achieve that.

The project has been a collaborative journey, in which young people have actively co-designed the questions; participated in the Youth Voices online research across 4 states and 15 sites; and engaged in a project workshop that brought together young people, teachers, youth workers, government policy officers and others to explore the data and how it might inform practical initiatives and outcomes for young people.

Even more importantly, Youth Voices is unfolding, not just as a research project with ‘findings’ and a final report that gets neatly filed away, but as an ongoing stimulus for an inclusive conversation about what’s good for young people in schools, community organisations, and the child protection and justice systems.

This report provides an overview of Youth Voices thus far: what we’ve done and why, the insights that have emerged; and possible opportunities for the future.



About Youth Voices

Youth Voices began as a small, locally-based project of the Anglican Church Southern Queensland Social Responsibilities Committee (SRC). The SRC has had a deep commitment to youth justice issues over a number of years, with ongoing advocacy for systemic improvement to support vulnerable children to lead flourishing lives.

The Committee recognised that youth justice (and youth policy more broadly) is a highly complex and fragmented social policy area, with multiple and diverse stakeholders. Narrow, more traditional policy and program approaches have been shown, over time and in many jurisdictions in Australia and internationally, to be less than effective in addressing these complex interrelationships. It was clear to the SRC that achieving different outcomes requires different input.

Over the same period therefore the SRC explored specifically designed 'complexity' methods and tools that work where traditional methods of analysis and design have not delivered the desired results. Youth Voices made use of some of these tools and processes to offer new insights into youth and youth justice issues, drawn unfiltered from the lived experience of young people; and to begin to identify small scale, low risk initiatives and strategies for improvement.

Intense interest in the project across multiple organisations and jurisdictions and its consequent expansion led to partnerships with Anglicare Southern Queensland (Anglicare SQ), now the main driver of the project, as well as Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT as an active contributor to the project team.

Ethics

Youth Voices had ethics approval from the Anglicare Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00341) for the participation of young people/children from the age of 10 years+; young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds; and young people in detention.



The research tool

Design

The Youth Voices questions were shaped by five workshops held with young people at a community college based on flexible schooling principles; an Anglican private school; INSYNC, an Anglicare SQ service supporting young people at risk of homelessness; a program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at a Queensland Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC); and with the CREATE Foundation young consultants.

We also held two general invitation workshops that included participants from INSYNC, as well as government youth and youth justice policy officers, teachers, staff from a community youth legal and advocacy service, and representatives from a multicultural community development organisation.

The workshops progressed through a series of activities and discussions that firstly identified themes of concern to young people, and then helped to collaboratively design, refine and test the questions.

The SenseMaker® tool

Youth Voices used the software tool, SenseMaker^{®1}, to collect data for the project. SenseMaker[®] was specifically designed to help understand change in complex social policy environments. It is a narrative-based research method that enabled us, firstly, to capture large numbers of stories and secondly, to recognise patterns and trends in the perceptions, behaviours and relationships in those experiences.

The SenseMaker[®] tool puts the participants at the centre of the research. In Youth Voices, it enabled the young people to explore experiences of particular meaning to them, rather than opinions or stories shaped by their expectations of what we wanted to hear.

¹ We acknowledge the invaluable in-kind contributions to this project of Cognitive Edge Pte Ltd, developers of the research software used for Youth Voices [cognitive-edge.com]; as well as the support of consultants from Complexability, particularly Viv Read and Sanura Gunatilake.



The prompting question that emerged from the design workshops with young people was:

Think of a time when you or a young person you know needed help and/or support.

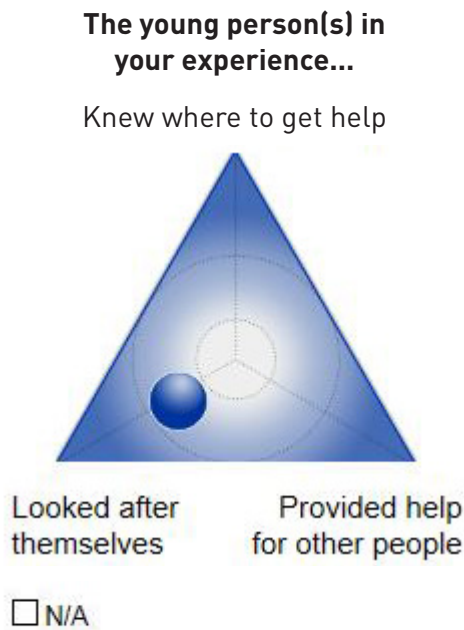
What happened — what experience would you share?

The question is deliberately not directive in any way — young people could engage at whatever level they were comfortable, describing an experience that was positive, negative, a minor incident, a major turning point or something in between.

The young people were then asked to interpret their own narratives visually, using 'triads' or 'dyads', against a set of co-designed themes such as 'help-seeking behaviour' or 'risk taking'.

The corners/ends of the triads and dyads describe different aspects of those themes, also decided in conversation with young people. The story teller positions a ball, or bubble, in the triad or dyad based on how strongly they feel each element is present within their story.

Figure 1, below, provides examples of a triad and a dyad.



11. In the experience you shared, help and support:



N/A

Figure 1a & 1b: Examples of Youth Voices triads and dyads

As increasing numbers of young people shared their experiences, clusters and patterns started to form around those interpretations. Because participants conducted the primary analysis of their own stories, the risk of 'interpretative bias' introduced by the researchers is much reduced.

Figure 2 provides an example of a triad addressing the use of drugs and alcohol. (All questions had the option of selecting 'not applicable'.)

Each dot represents a participant, and the various colours represent different genders, but we can also 'slice and dice' the data by geography, by organisation, by age and a range of other variables about life circumstances that we included in Youth Voices to help shed light on the emerging patterns.

For the young person(s) in your experience, using drugs and alcohol is about:

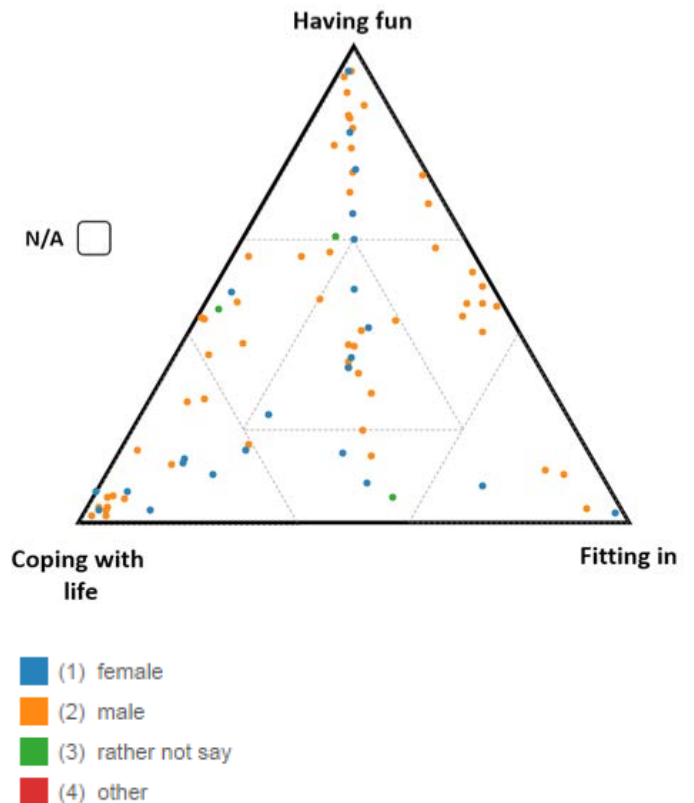


Figure 2: Example of Youth Voices SenseMaker® triad: using drugs and alcohol, by gender



Figure 3 provides an example of a dyad, exploring perceptions of help provided, by age and gender. Each bar represents a participant aged 18-21 years.

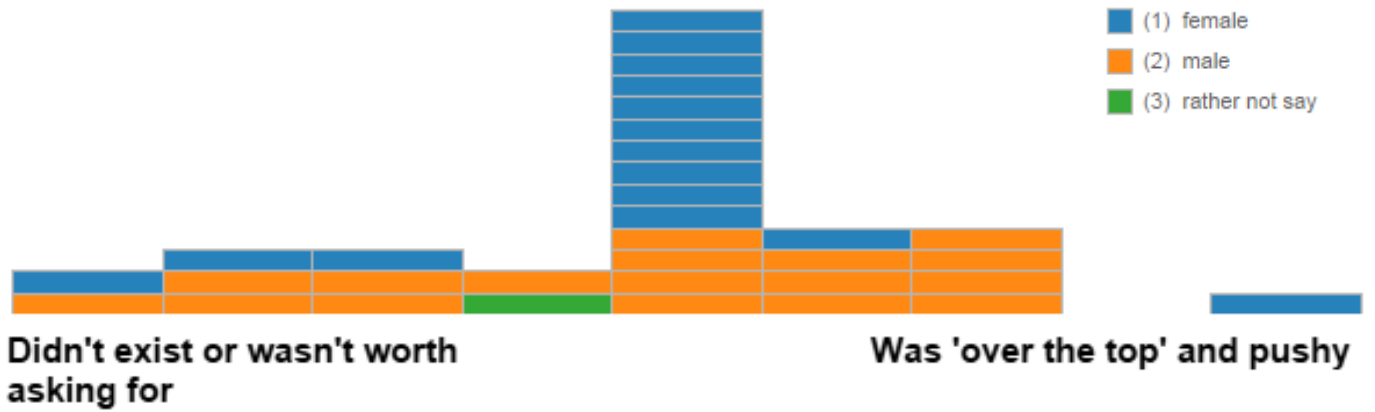
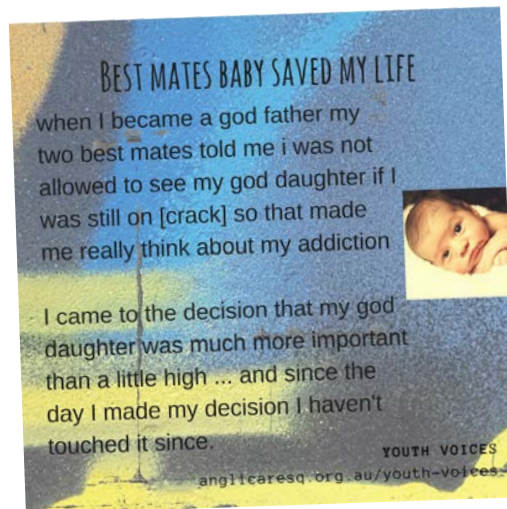


Figure 3: Example of Youth Voices SenseMaker® dyad: using perceptions of help, by gender and age

Young people were also asked to provide a headline or a name for their story, as if it was a newspaper or movie. This request often added an extra layer of depth to stories. *Can't Keep A Good Man Down* was the title for a story of being 'kicked out of home' and a subsequent experience of couch surfing; and one 16 year old girl called her experience *I wasn't good enough but I'm more than good enough now*. A story about "giving up crack because my god daughter was much more important than a little high" was captioned *Best mate's baby saved my life*.





Participants and the research process

Almost 150 young people from 10-24 years and diverse backgrounds participated in the research. Youth Voices was largely conducted over a six-week period from 17 August–30 September 2017, with young people from Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and South Australia taking part. Nearly all participants participated online (via web or iPad app), with eight young people completing hard copies that were later transcribed by the researcher into the online system.

Recruitment took place through more than 20 participating youth services/organisations, who raised awareness of the research and promoted the opportunity to take part among their young service users. The organisations received copies of the de-identified narratives from their own young people after the closure of the data collection period.

The support of participating organisations ensured that all young participants had local access to at least one trusted adult who had knowledge of the project and some familiarity with the research process, to provide practical or emotional support if required. As an additional precaution, the researchers personally worked with 10-14 year olds using the iPad app, to ensure that they clearly understood the informed consent statement and the implications of their participation.

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the gender and age group of young people who participated.

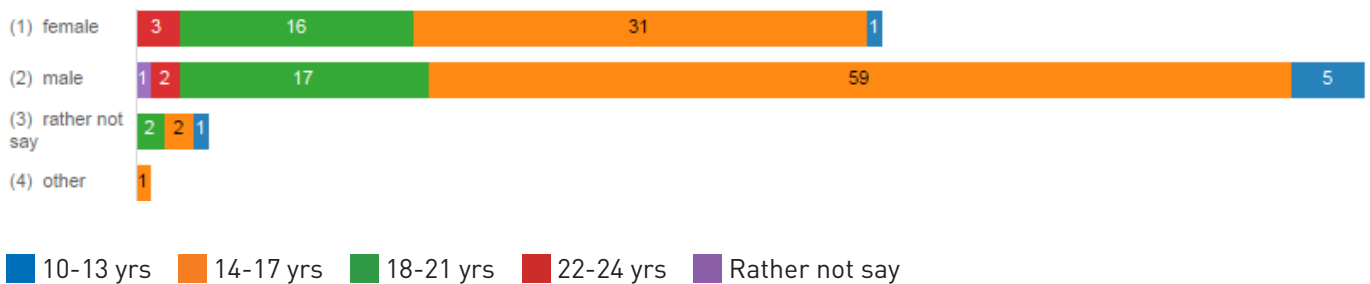


Figure 4: Age and gender of Youth Voices participants

The composition of the participant group was influenced by a preponderance of young men in the 14-17 year age group (n=39) who took part in the research from the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.

Because we were not seeking 'representativeness', however, the demographic breakdown of young people was not a sampling concern. The aim of Youth Voices was to seek insights rather than test a particular hypothesis — to identify questions and issues that we or others might explore further in an ongoing conversation about what's good for young people.

Youth Voices workshop

The project culminated in a 'co-analysis' workshop jointly hosted by Anglicare SQ, the SRC and the School of Justice at QUT.

Participants

Attendance at the Youth Voices workshop was not restricted to those who had participated in the project, but was a broad invitation both to young people themselves, and to people from any sector committed to the wellbeing of youth. More than 40 people participated, including young people aged from 10 years, senior government policy officers, youth detention centre staff, youth workers, counsellors, representatives from advocacy organisations, school chaplains and others.

The process

Data extracts from preliminary exploration of the data and examples from narratives were divided into three broad themes:

- help and support
- choices and risk
- emotional state and identity

These were 'convenience' groupings rather than rigorous categories, to support a smooth process as people moved from one cluster to the next — we recognised that the data could be interpreted in multiple ways, and we were keen not to pre-empt the insights of attendees.

Displays of this 'stimulus' material were placed around the hall;² and participants were equipped with Post-it notes and pens, different colours for the different sectors/cohorts represented in the room (eg government, not-for-profit, young people, education/academia).

Firstly, individuals scanned the material on the walls, writing down any issues, questions or concerns they saw in the material presented (one item per Post-it) (see Table 1 in the 'Insights' section below).

Having scanned each of the three groupings, people were then asked to place their Post-its under one of three headings:

- things that could be addressed with some simple policies and procedures
- things that need further research and analysis, involving people with particular expertise
- things that we could try right now — small scale, low risk, ideas that we don't have to commit a lot of money to, so we can let them drop if they don't work, or expand if they do.³

In the next session, we encouraged individuals to create groups with people they didn't know, to have conversations about why they had come to the workshop, and to highlight the questions or concerns the material had created in their minds so far. These insights were again captured on Post-its, and started to reflect a consolidated view of the emerging themes for the group (see Table 2 below).

After two rounds of these discussions, attendees chose other individuals or a group they wanted to work with, and selected an issue to discuss in greater depth. They collaboratively created an action sheet around the issue of their choice, exploring the issue in more detail and identifying a set of suggested actions. Examples from the action sheets are provided below in Table 3.

Aside from a brief welcome and Acknowledgement of Country, there were few preliminaries to the workshop activity and the facilitator made no mention of the roles or organisations represented. This was a deliberate strategy to 'level the playing field' and open unexpected channels of dialogue as people shared thoughts, ideas and insights over the course of the day.



Figure 5: Youth Voices workshop invitation

² See Appendix B for examples of the stimulus material in each of these groupings.

³ These headings correspond to the Simple/Obsvious, Complicated and Complex domains identified in the 'Cynefin' framework for decision-making in complex environments developed by Professor Dave Snowden — also the developer of the SenseMaker[®] software. See Appendix A for a diagram of the framework and further references.



Insights

One of the core understandings of 'complexity' approaches is that people often have deeper understandings of an issue or experience than they know, and that they know more than they tell. Recognising that people at the heart of the research are best placed to interpret their own experiences transfers some of the power of interpretation away from the 'experts' to become a shared process of sense-making, grounded in the real life experience of and interaction with participants.

Marks and Snowden (2017) note that one of the most common responses to complexity methods and tools such as SenseMaker® is to suggest that participants are not interpreting their narratives correctly. In reality, however, "no one can interpret their own narrative incorrectly; if you don't understand the interpretations, then you are seeing their world differently".⁴

Experiences that we might usually interpret as negative can turn out to be positive in the mind of the story teller. In one of our early design workshops, for example, where the young people shared experiences of when 'things were going well' as well as when 'things were going badly', some stories (such as broken bones and being 'kicked out of home') appeared in both categories.

A second key principle of complexity approaches is the importance of diversity — firstly, in capturing the unfiltered and distinct experiences of participants; and secondly, by opening the analysis process to a wide range of stakeholders. Welcoming the wide-ranging perspectives of all those who have 'skin in the game' helps unexpected patterns and connections to emerge, and increases the possibilities for innovation.

The section below provides summaries of the insights from the various sessions of the Youth Voices workshop, as attendees responded to the stimulus material provided on the day.



⁴Marks, A. and Snowden, D. (2017) Cynefin: a tool for situating the problem in a sense-making framework, in De Savigny, D., Blanchet, K. and Adam, T. (eds) *Applied Systems Thinking for Health Systems Research: A Methodological Handbook*, Chapter 5. London: Open University Press, p. 87.

Insights from the workshop

First response to the data

This summary captures the 'first thoughts' of individual attendees as they scanned the stimulus material around the walls of the workshop venue. Their responses were varied, including questions, interpretations, observations and suggestions. These first, unfiltered responses provided a starting point for later dialogue across the various groups, organisations and sectors represented at the workshop.

Co-design with young people	Government	Youth justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and programs for young people with young people • Build capacity of young people to influence policy – move away from paternalism • Involvement of a broad cross-section • Making involvement interesting and engaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to young people BEFORE making policy • Smooth transition from youth to adult support services and/or increase age limit for the services • More collaboration between services and government departments • Surveys to young people • Empower youth so they know they matter • Seek youth opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid system • Needs rehabilitative focus – whole family approach • Doesn't consider the complexities • Focus on improving family relationships and resolving family conflicts • Places for young people to go when home is not a viable option • Alternatives to detention – holistic family support/ intervention
Social media communication	Representation	Service delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street engagement needed to complement social media — information available at all youth venues eg transport hubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be broadly based • Not homogenous in same age group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuum of responses – location/ age/vulnerability appropriate • Free of judgement • Education about consequences, options, learning opportunities not judgements • Organisations working together to change policy
Emotional resilience	Services	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship/leadership • Support for goals • More counsellors at schools for everyone (that includes bullies) • Nobody knows what someone is feeling/going through unless you support them/talk to them • Young people need more people to trust, more options for support • Student grievance meetings to help them get through what they are going through • Increase support systems • Educate more young people to get rid of stigmas • Recognise accomplishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community spaces — free spaces, safe places • Peer support networks • Opportunities to build healthy relationships • Support role models (Blue card reform/ process) • Life skills • Community capacity • Face to face conversations (internet is one size fits all) • How to identify potentially homeless young people? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers need more time to support, guide mentor and coach students • Education system with multiple streams and pathways • Truly student focussed • Work with strengths of each child rather than label as a failure • Passion – creativity – community • Create alternatives to school • Youth support groups at schools

Table 1: First responses to the data

Emerging thoughts and themes

Over several rounds of dialogue, subtle differences in the perceptions of attendees from different cohorts began appearing; and common themes started to emerge across and within groups. While all groups of participants acknowledged issues around violence, for example, it was a significant and recurring topic for the young people who attended. Across groups, the unexpected data regarding the use of social media/internet to access help was a common topic of conversation and conjecture.

	Young people	NGOs (policy and management)	Front line service delivery	Education/ academia	Government
Main themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of bullying • Strong concern for violence against young people especially by parents and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs of homeless young people • Voice in political sphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people feel judged • Similarity of patterns across Australia • Building resilience • Access to appropriate support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special needs of homeless young people • Issues of risk, mental health • Young people 'acted on' not own agent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building resilience • Closing the gap between adult perceptions and young people's realities • Young people engagement in service planning, delivery
Emotional resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most young people in the research were struggling emotionally and financially • Uncomfortable with their voice • High levels of emotional abuse • Schools often mean stress • Violence causes loss of self esteem and confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention • Reduce the need for drugs and alcohol • Reduce stigma around mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional struggle pivotal to decision making • How to develop emotional resilience in young people • Role for parents • Role for peer support • Access • Skills for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of family/ friends • Special needs of homeless young people • Trauma compounding adolescent difficulties • Fear of stigma with mental health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This seems to be the key — need stronger more innovative approaches • Need structures to support various emotional stages • Resources/ support for those providing support • How to build on what currently works
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media not the best answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the resources will be useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media as a tool not working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access • People not technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media not regarded by this cohort as important??
Risk taking			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage to be healthy • How to have fun without risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage healthy risk taking • Apparent link between emotional struggles and lack of concern for risk taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to change attitude of young people • Adults think it is decision making – young people are emotionally struggling – closing the gap?
Help and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence is a big issue • People close to you can help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much is as bad as too little • Who you know most critical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessities of life fundamental to confidence 	
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexible schools are needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More alternatives to current school system • Community led diversionary programs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of stigma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need flexibility • Youth justice needs to take account of complexity of drivers

Table 2: Emerging thoughts and themes

And so to action...

In the final session of the workshop, groups worked with action sheets that comprised the following headings: What actions need to be taken? Resources needed? Who needs to be involved? How will success be measured? They explored a chosen issue in more detail and identified a set of suggested actions — some of which have been taken back into various organisations for further consideration.

	Suggested actions	How will success be measured?
Emotional resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of resources • Support for parents • Creation of more safe community places • Face to face conversations (internet is one size fits all) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of emotional health skills and capability for young people and their support networks • Understanding of the consequences of risk taking behaviour
Peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review, evaluate, modify and extend existing programs • Increase the number of programs • Pathways for friends to help each other that are seen as OK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity for young people to support each other • Early detection of young people needing support
Mental health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing strategies between organisations • Policy/legislation reform • Specialised Indigenous services • Educational interventions • Organisations working together to change policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster response to young people with mental health difficulties • Reduced stigma about mental health issues • Increased support and rehabilitation services • Continuum of responses — location/age/vulnerability appropriate
Changes to youth justice system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places for young people to go when home is not a viable option • Alternatives to detention – holistic family support/intervention • Increase the age of criminal responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rehabilitative focus – with a whole family approach • Focus on improving family relationships and resolving family conflicts • Minimum age of criminal responsibility raised
Proposed government initiatives/policy considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to close the gap of misunderstanding between policy makers and young people's lived experience • Require evidence of co-design of service delivery and evaluation for funded services • Ensure the smooth transition from youth to adult support services and/or increase the age limit for the services • Increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific initiatives to encourage the engagement and participation of young people • Greater collaboration between services and government departments, including sharing information and resources • Consideration of the impact of domestic violence on young people in the current DFV strategy • Minimum age of criminal responsibility raised
Engagement and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people engaged in all levels of service planning and evaluation; not just at micro level • Increase participation at the political level • Develop appropriate platforms for continuous dialogue with young people on issues relevant to them • Designing feedback and complaint processes that are appropriate and responded to • Consultation prior to developing policy • Street engagement needed to complement social media • Information available at all youth venues eg transport hubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are meaningful ways for young people to be listened to, to influence, to be valued. • Evidence of reduced gap of misunderstanding between policy makers and young people's realities. • Young people have increased skills and capabilities to influence policy, and move away from paternalism
Education and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student grievance meetings to help them get through • Youth support groups at schools • Education programs about options and consequences, not judgements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexible options than the traditional school system; multiple streams and pathways • Early detection of young people in trouble • Counsellors including for bullies

Table 3: Summary of workshop action sheets



Emerging research questions

Some of the actions suggested above fall into the categories outlined previously under 'Workshop process': that is, things that can be addressed in a fairly straightforward way with policies or procedures, or small scale 'experiments' we could try out without major risk. Others need the input of experts to dig deeper, explore the issues, and/or translate their findings in a way that is meaningful to those developing policy or programs, and delivering on-the-ground services.

Some of the questions for further exploration that emerged from discussion of the exploratory Youth Voices dataset included the following:

1. How does gender interact with personal characteristics or life circumstances such as age, geography, ethnicity, homelessness, exposure to the justice system, level of education etc to impact on help-seeking behaviour and the type of support that young people find valuable?
2. How does the information about risk taking connect with what we know about adolescent brain development?
 - What are the differences between male and female attitudes to risk taking, and what does this mean in practical terms for policy, programs and service delivery?
 - What is the relationship between risk taking and the young people's level of confidence about the future?
3. What role does social media play in help-seeking behaviour?
 - Are there differences in use for help-seeking between urban/regional/rural locations?
 - What community perceptions exist around the use of social media by young people, and are they accurate? What does this mean for online service delivery initiatives?
 - Few Youth Voices participants identified social media as a significant means of support in the experience they shared. Further analysis showed that social media was even less likely to be used for help-seeking by those who identified as 'struggling emotionally' at the time of the experience; but more likely for those who felt they were 'not being listened to'. Did these patterns emerge because of the particular demographics of the participant group, issues of social media access, the perceived trustworthiness of the source, or other reasons?
4. What is the particular impact of violence and bullying trauma being experienced by many young people, and what is its relationship to addiction? What does this mean in practical terms for schools, education and other policy, programs and service delivery?

Some insights from the SenseMaker® analysis

As would be expected, we collected significantly more data through the Youth Voices research tool than we were able to share with attendees at the workshop. Each of the 146 responses could be explored through a range of lenses, individually or in combination, providing a vast number of potential combinations that could inform particular interests.

Some of these 'lenses' related to the experience itself (see Figure 6); while others provided demographic or other information about the young participant's life circumstances (see Figure 7).

The experience you shared was: (select one)

<p>The experience you shared was: (select one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strongly positive</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Positive</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Neutral</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Negative</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strongly negative</p>
<p>The experience you shared represents: (select one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very important life event</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important life event, but not a big deal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not that important at all</p>

Figure 6: Questions related to the experience

<p>Where do you live?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a capital city/suburbs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> regional city/suburbs (eg Townsville, Dubbo, Ipswich)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> rural, but not too far from a city or large town</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> rural or remote, maybe in/near a small town (but a long way from a large city or town)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> rather not say</p>
<p>Who do you normally live with?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> with parent/s</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> with other family</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I live alone</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I live with friends</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I live in supported accommodation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I move around a lot (couch surfing etc)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> rather not say</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify)</p>

Figure 7: Questions related to life circumstances

The section below provides some further examples of insights from the data, assisted by the SenseMaker® software. It is important to note that these are simply observations of patterns in the data, intended to stimulate thought and discussion rather than provide 'answers' or 'findings', particularly given the skewed composition of our participant group. Some observations or interpretations may even contradict others — an indication of the complexity of human experience, and the need to be both flexible and agile in developing effective policy, programs and service delivery in a constantly shifting environment.



Gender differences

The following observations relate to 14-17 year olds, which was the age group comprising most girls (34% of participants).

Across a number of the dimensions in this age range, and in relation to the experience of help-seeking they shared, girls:

- identified more often as 'struggling emotionally' — 42% compared to 32% of boys. Girls tended to share experiences that they perceived as negative or strongly negative (45%) more than boys (18.7%).
- perceived 'what you know' (35%) as most important, compared to boys (14%). Boys in this group identified 'who you know' as most important (35%) compared to girls (10%).
- thought that violence 'happens to all young people' (16%) and 'is sometimes excusable (eg if the person being violent is sorry afterwards' (16%). The corresponding percentages for boys were 10% and 7%.
- Girls in this age group were more confident of their futures than boys: 42% of girls felt confident 'most or all of the time' compared with 29% of boys. While the numbers were very small, this pattern reversed for girls who had been in contact with the justice system (n = 12), with no girls in this group feeling confident about their futures most or all of the time, but 26% of the 49 boys doing so.

Gender was not a key focus of the project. However, these insights suggest that girl's experiences and voices are an important area for future research.

Sources of help

As indicated earlier in this report, few Youth Voices participants identified social media as a significant means of support in the experience they shared. Figure 8 below indicates the pattern of responses to this question (all ages) and the perceived importance of the experience to the young people.

For the young person(s) in your experience, the best information was given by:

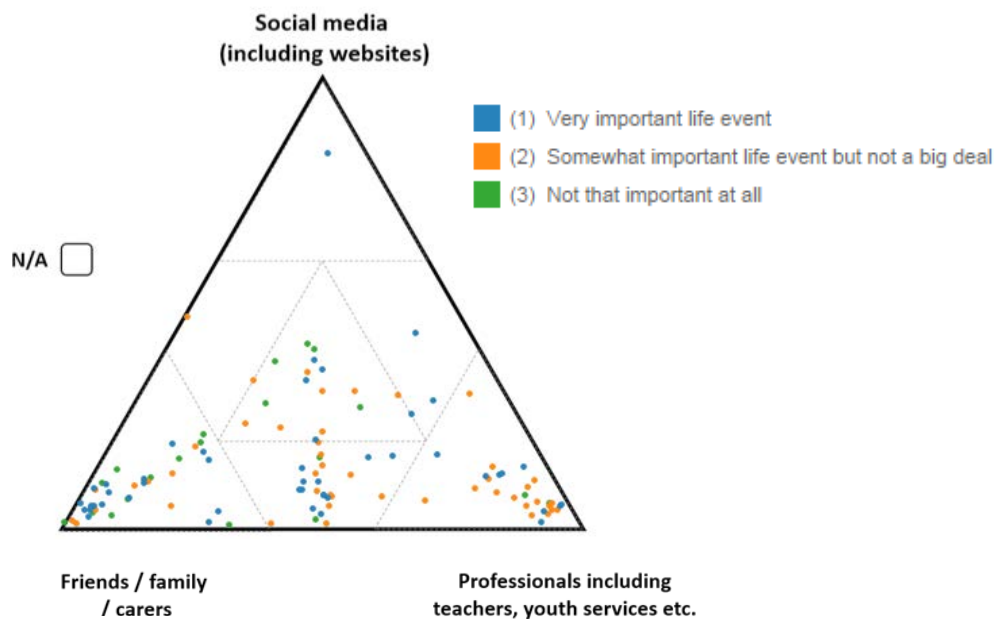


Figure 8: Source of best information



Type of help

Figure 9 below captures young people's experience of help on a continuum from 'non-existent' through to 'over the top', through the lens of age (14-17 years) and identification as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Young people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were slightly more likely to perceive that help and support were 'over the top and pushy' compared to the rest of the group.

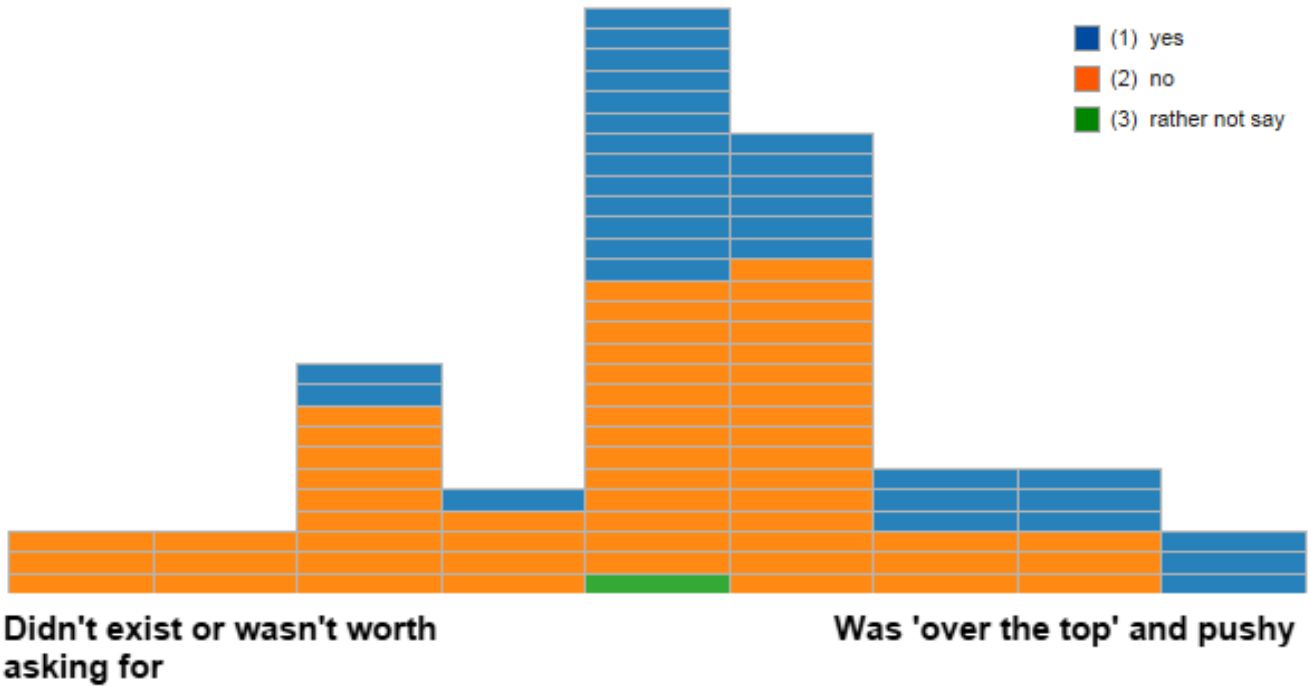
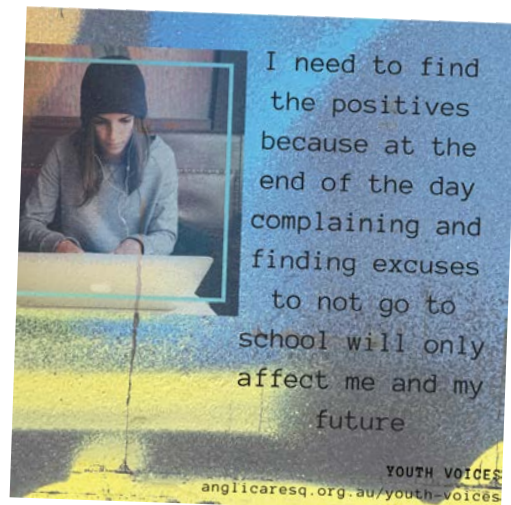
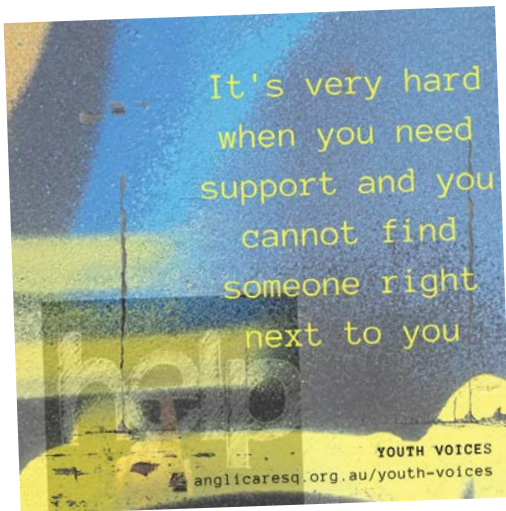


Figure 9: Experience of attention provided, by age and identification as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



Reflections

Considerations and limitations

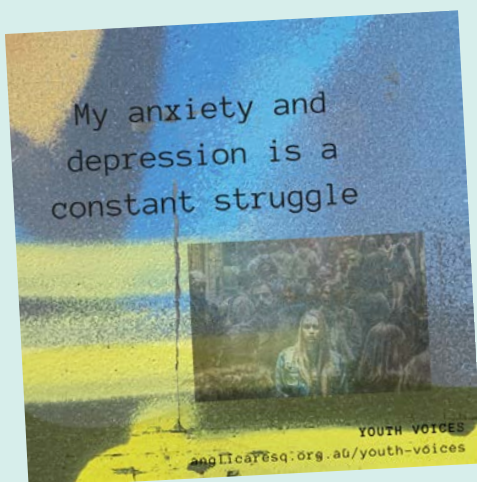
It's important to note that the experiences and insights outlined above are largely limited to young people who have had significant experiences of adversity; and participation across gender, location and age group was skewed for a variety of reasons.

Several organisations that were keen to take part were ultimately unable to participate because the particular young people they were supporting during the data collection period were too vulnerable to be approached about the research — a point that, in itself, speaks volumes about the issues some young people face.

We were also largely unable to access schools for the data collection, given tight schedules and the multiplicity of activities that already take place in most educational facilities.

We were privileged to be able to gather the experiences of young people at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, and their willingness to participate (made possible by the support we were afforded by staff at that location), provided valuable insights into their experiences of help and support. As mentioned earlier in this report, the preponderance of young men in the 14-17 age group, and the large number of participants (nearly half the young people 'on centre' in the two days we visited), comprised almost one-third of all participants in the research. As an exploratory project which was more about identifying 'questions to ask' than finding answers, this was not a concern in Youth Voices. Future related research may need to consider the issue of representativeness in more depth.

Finally, while the Youth Voices instrument was co-created with young people from a variety of locations, we would have benefited from establishing a youth/adult project advisory group from the beginning of the project. Such a group could have offered ongoing advice across all of the project activities, and provided valuable input to the project implementation and communications.



Communications

As a collaborative project with participating organisations across four states and many others actively interested, communications were a key enabler to expand the reach and impact of Youth Voices. The communications included:

- a Youth Voices web page at anglicaresq.org.au/youth-voices
- YouTube videos available on the above site
- monthly newsletters distributed to a mailing list of 200
- a project Instagram account at [anglicare_youthvoices](https://www.instagram.com/anglicare_youthvoices) (continuing into 2018).

The audience for these communications was largely youth sector organisations and government, rather than young people themselves. An advisory group that included young people, as mentioned above, would have helped to shape appropriate youth communications as the project progressed. We are currently exploring the possibility of working with a group of young people to create a more youth-friendly outcome from the project in addition to this report.

Concluding thoughts and an invitation

This report began by expressing the hope that Youth Voices will continue in various forms to help stimulate an ongoing conversation with young people about what kind of lives they want, and how we can best support them to achieve that.

To support this dialogue, we're making the Youth Voices research tool, in whole or in part, freely available to others (in Australia or internationally) who might want to duplicate the same or similar, project with their own young people. This substantially decreases the costs and effort involved in running a similar project.

There is a condition, and another benefit, attached — that the de-identified data sets from other Youth Voices projects are added to ours, and become a shared Youth Voices resource. The joint data set can be sorted by organisation/s, geography, age group, living conditions or any of the other demographic characteristics included in the research instrument. But the more diverse and extensive the dataset, the more value it offers to all those who care about young people and the quality of their lives.

We are also continuing to explore the ideas and opportunities that have emerged from the project, particularly via the action sheets developed by participants at the final workshop. We hope the Youth Voices web page⁵ will become a hub for information about a whole range of youth-centred activity into the future, both within Anglicare SQ and in collaboration with others. We invite you to stay in touch, and look forward to new opportunities that support young people to have a voice about things that matter.

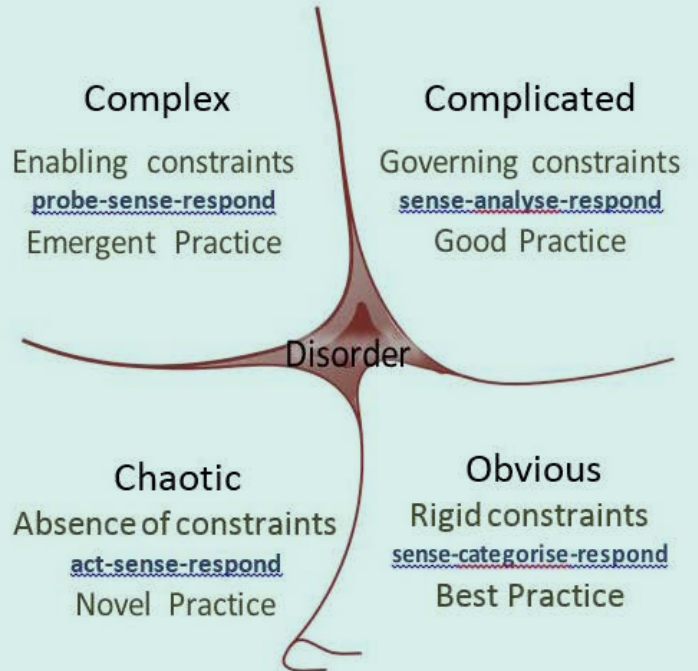
⁵ anglicaresq.org.au/youth-voices



Appendices

Appendix A: The Cynefin framework

- There are three basic types of system: ordered, complex and chaotic.
- Complex systems have propensities and dispositions but no linear material cause
- In the Cynefin framework, order is divided into *obvious* and *complicated*
- The boundary between Obvious and Chaotic is shown as a cliff, or a catastrophic failure arising from complacency
- There is a fifth domain *disorder* which is the domain of not knowing. Yet.



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Figure 10: Cynefin framework

More information about complexity approaches and the Cynefin framework

Conklin, J. (2005) Wicked problems and social complexity, in *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems*, Chapter 1, Wiley, October. At: cognexus.org/wpf/wickedproblems.pdf

Marks, A. and Snowden, D. (2017) Cynefin: a tool for situating the problem in a sense-making framework, in De Savigny, D., Blanchet, K. and Adam, T. (eds) *Applied Systems Thinking for Health Systems Research: A Methodological Handbook*, Chapter 5. London: Open University Press, pp. 76–96.

Snowden, D. and Boone, M. (2007) A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making, *Harvard Business Review*, Nov. At: hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making



Appendix B: Examples of workshop stimulus material (data extracts)

Help and support

I don't know

Well when I needed help with being suicidal I was too embarrassed to tell my family, and I built all that stress up till my friends started to notice me changing and then they helped me out and it felt really good.

Age: 14 – 17
Male
Education attending: Alternative/ flexi-school
State: Queensland

Unlikely saviour

I was the one who needed help I was going through the roughest stage of my life going through depression and anxiety, I had attempted suicide twice and through all my struggles my closest friend was there to help me through it all, he didn't do much but just being there, being able to talk to him helped me more than you could imagine, I think if he hadn't of helped me I wouldn't be here today.

Age: 18 – 21
Male
LGBT
Education attending: Alternative/flexi school
State: Queensland
Confidence: Sometimes confident
Confidence free text: I put myself down a lot and that impacts it a lot.

No Longer Alone

I was needing help with accommodation after finding myself homeless due to family circumstances. This is when I became linked in with two services working together, through a program called OurPlace, one of which being Anglicare. The service interviewed me and gave me the option to move into an apartment which was overseen by them and supported by them. I took this opportunity which is where I began work with Anglicare through my worker, who has supported me from day 1 and helped me to problem solve any issues that have arisen in relation to my accommodation. The relationship I have formed with my worker and the support she has given me, has been crucial in my transition to independent living. It has been a blessing to have her support available if/when I need her.

Age: 14 – 17
Female
Lives with: Supported accommodation
State: ACT
Importance of life event: Very important life event
When did it take place: This is ongoing
Life confidence: Confident most of the time
Life confidence free text: It has put me in a good position to further myself in terms of education, work and relationships.

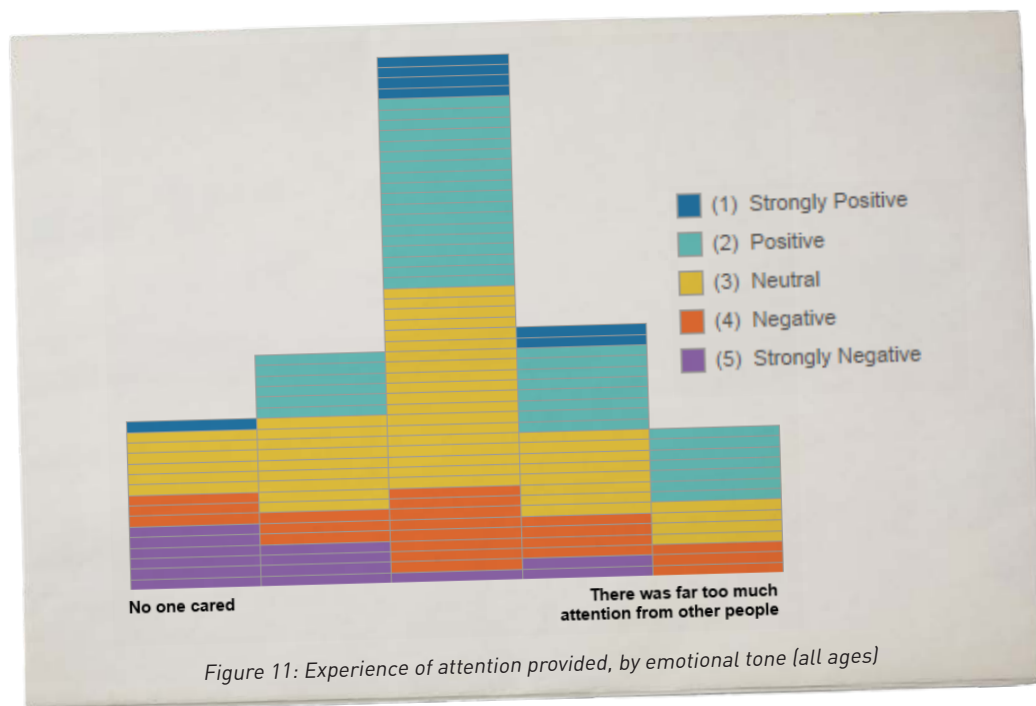


Figure 11: Experience of attention provided, by emotional tone (all ages)

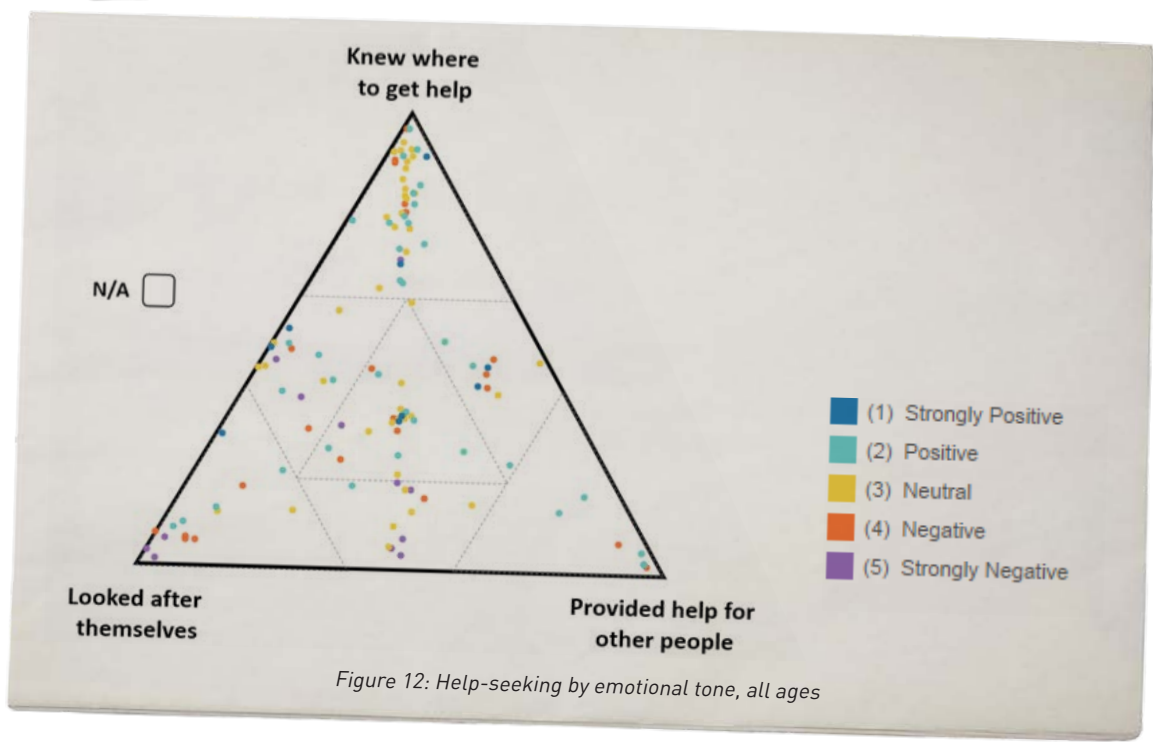


Figure 12: Help-seeking by emotional tone, all ages

Choices and risk

About violence (free text, from multiple participants)

I ripped them off so it was fair enough that they wanted to bash me

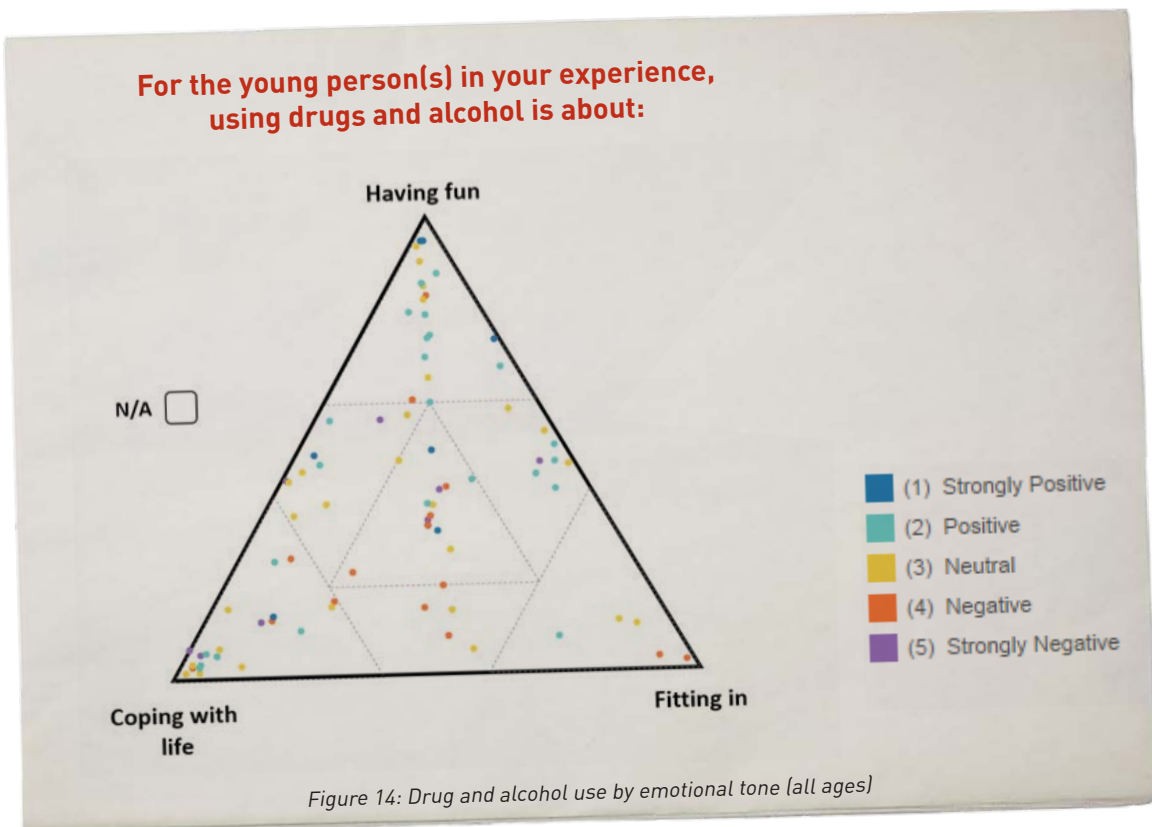
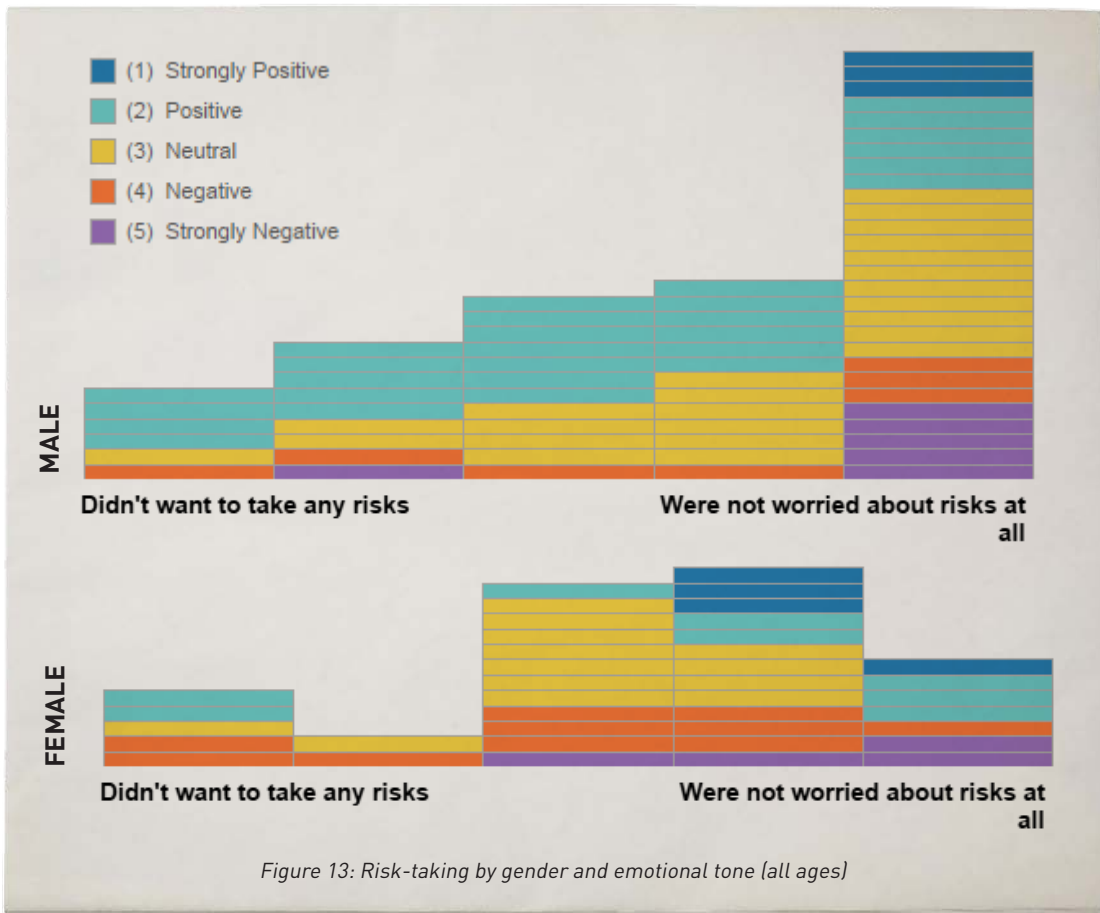
The violence was the reason i became homeless and so at the time i came into contact with Anglicare and my worker [Brianna]. I was a broken young girl who didn't have much or much confidence in who she was.

Violence is never the answer nor solution in disciplining children. It is never deserved or okay no matter what the child has done. My father was quite aggressive in this way because of the way he was raised. If my parents had addressed my behaviour punishments differently things would be different now. maybe we would be able to talk to each other with open communication rather than silence.

There seems not to be enough attention to emotional abuse.

It does not happen to all young people. It is incredibly sad that it happens as often as it does

On the street you cannot avoid violence you have to learn to stand up and fight back



Emotional state and identity

my story

I was kicked out of my house just before my sixteenth birthday in 2016. It was originally brought upon by a series of arguments between my parents and i. My parents had many high expectations on me to be the perfect eldest daughter which simply wasn't realistic. I had many responsibilities and no freedom as a girl in the big family. There were double standards compared to my two other brothers. My parents also didn't support my boyfriend as he wasn't Croatian which was a big part of our culture.

I had little to no communication skills, i was immature, I didn't know how to ask for help and had no confidence in myself. I needed a place to stay and i needed financial support as my parents didn't give me any money. I also didn't have any of my belongings which also made it very difficult. I needed help to learn how to have effective communication around conflict situations. i also needed encouragement and reassurance that i had made the correct choice to not go back home. I needed living skills and budgeting assistance.

Lives with:	Supported accommodation
State:	ACT
Age group:	14 - 17
	Female
Reason for telling narrative:	Inspire and Encourage Positivity

6. Adults in authority thought the young person(s) in the experience were:



Figure 15: Perception of adults in authority by emotional tone (all ages)

1. In the experience you shared,
the young person(s) who needed help was:

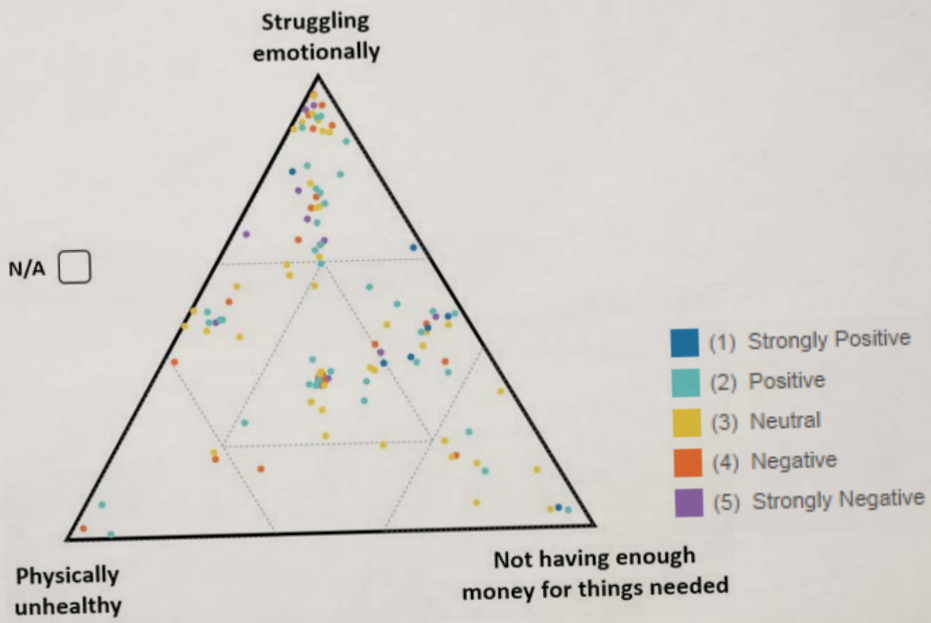
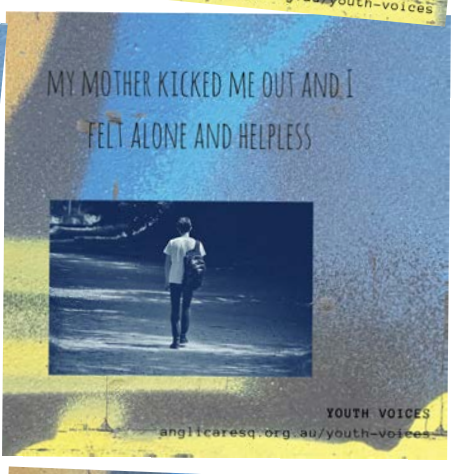
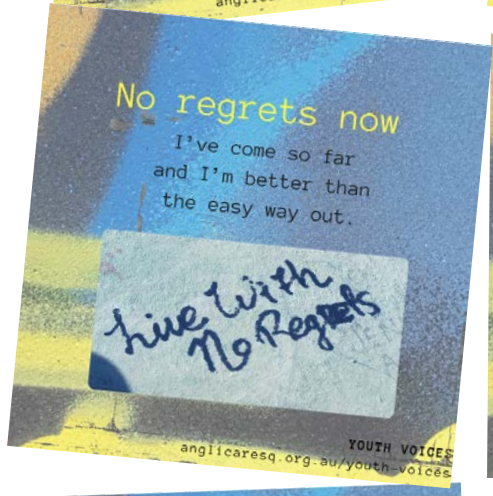
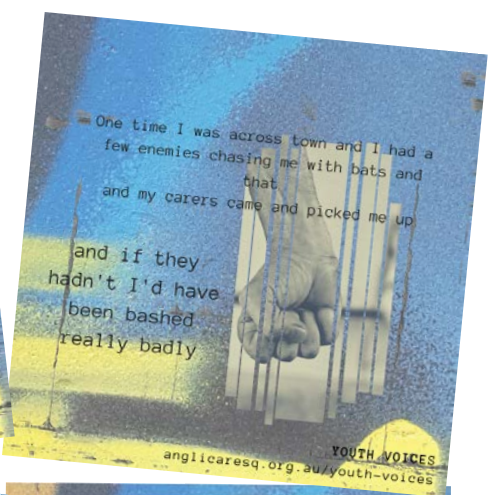
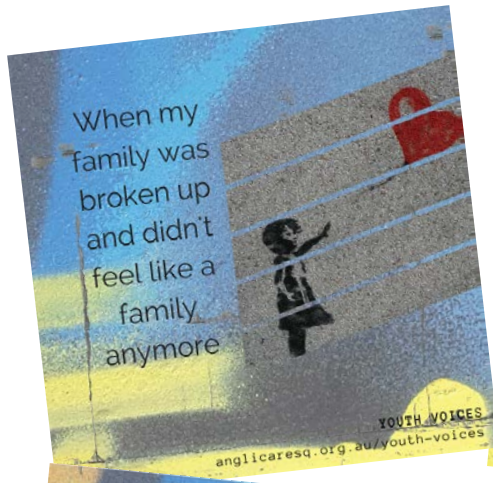


Figure 16: Description of young person needing help, by emotional tone (all ages)



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LISTENING TO YOUTH VOICES