

Media release - embargoed until 12.01 am 27th of March 2024

Today, Youth Action released a report with a comprehensive set of practical recommendations to assist young people, particularly those young people in conflict with law, to get a fair go. Generation Z and Millennials (also known as Generation Y) are making up a total of 39% of NSW but are they getting the support they need? Young people involved in the report were clear that they wanted more help, earlier and dedicated spaces after hours.

The key recommendations of the report called on Government to spend an additional \$52 million to expand youth service delivery, investment in setting up 5 new youth hubs and further support to 10 current hubs and the establishment of a state-wide working group on young people doing it tough, particularly those made vulnerable by poverty, the out of home care system, conflict with the law and homelessness.

The report also outlines key recommendations on legal reform, connection to Aboriginal culture in the community, youth services and supports in community, education, mental health and wellbeing, youth voice and participation and employment and training.

Young people involved in the report talked about the need for more programmes in places that were dedicated to young people. Young people spoke about the importance of centres being opened for extended periods. They stated that the hardest time for young people was after hours when nothing is opened as many young people do not have access to a computer or phone to contact help lines.

With increasing numbers of Aboriginal young people being incarcerated, Youth Action called for Aboriginal owned and controlled solutions be a matter of first principle in working with Aboriginal young people and any increase in investment must prioritise Aboriginal young people and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

The report calls upon the NSW Government to double down on diversion (directing children away from judicial proceedings and towards community solutions), and through the involvement of the young person provide alternatives to custodial sentencing through counselling, probation and community services dedicated for young people.

A move away from keeping young people in community with the proper supports will be counterproductive, what we need for young people is more investment and less incarceration said CEO of Youth Action, Kate Munro

Young people and the youth sector are calling for urgent investment in supports for young people doing it tough, particularly safe spaces that are opened after 6.30pm and individualised support, said Penny Lamaro, President of Youth Action

The report comes after a deliberative series of consultations and roundtable processes with the Youth Sector, young people and Government agencies. The campaign launch and report are coming off the back of the success of Saplings' run in the Sydney Festival, a play that was a partnership with Australian Theatre for Young People, (ATYP) and based off the voices and experiences of young people in conflict with the law

Youth Action is launching a campaign off the back of the report asking the general public to support a fair go for young people by posting a photo of thumbs up to support greater investment in young people. The tag line of the campaign is *'invest in young people because the consequences aren't minor'*.

Contact: Kate Munro, CEO Youth Action, 0407 248 488 & Penny Lamaro, Chair, 0481 533 394