

YLab 2020

Metropolitan Partnership, Office for Suburban Development

METROPOLITAN PARTNERSHIP YOUTH EVENTS

SUMMARY REPORT



We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and work throughout Australia. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge that sovereignty has never ceded.

Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	4
<u>Background and Context</u>	11
<u>Festival of Learning</u>	14
<u>Theme: Community Building</u>	19
<u>Theme: Mental Health</u>	23
<u>Theme: Employment</u>	38
<u>Theme: Other Themes</u>	54
<u>Insights From Young Leaders</u>	56
<u>Overarching Recommendation</u>	65
<u>Conclusion</u>	72
<u>Appendix</u>	74

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Metropolitan Partnerships commissioned YLab to create an engaging online event, to **hear from young people about issues they are currently facing**, including what they perceive as **barriers** and **solutions**. Selected young people already in the Metropolitan Partnerships were also engaged as part of a Co-Design Committee (CDC), who worked with YLab to determine the engagement themes of **Mental Health and Employment**.

YLab then designed an online engagement called **The Festival of Learning**. This was a unique online space for 37 young people from diverse backgrounds to learn about and share their general experience with **Mental Health** and **Employment**, and the effect of COVID-19 in both areas. YLab used online workshops, panels with young leaders and small group discussions.

The key findings on Mental Health were:

- Young people want investment in **preventative Mental Health services, agency to make choices** about their own mental health journeys and more **informal avenues** to access support.
- There is a lack of supply of **quality mental health services** for young people in Victoria, which extended to young people from **CALD communities**, wanting culturally appropriate services, resources and **community-led solutions**.

The key findings on Employment were:

- Young people have a **lack of understanding** about their **work rights**, difficulty finding **meaningful employment** and can face **discrimination** in the workplace. They are also **trying to build careers** where they can support themselves financially and develop their passions, **in an increasingly casualised workforce**.
- Young people **are finding it difficult to gain employment which also intersected with their mental health challenges**.

Executive Summary (cont.)

Despite the challenges these young people are facing, they are eager to use their creativity, strength, and innovation, alongside government to co-create solutions.

To respond to these findings we developed **four important Principles for Success** to guide the Victorian Government's future work with young people:

- Co-designing a young people led COVID-19 recovery
- More meaningful consultation, with more co-delivery
- A seat at a less formal table, having regular and easy communication with Government
- Designing solutions that are human-centred and intersectional

We also developed a suite of comprehensive recommendations throughout the report for both Mental Health and Employment, which have been rolled up into **six priority initiatives** in this executive summary.

The findings and recommendations from this report should be considered alongside the findings of the Eastern Partnership Engagement, which highlighted the need for **integrated health and social services** for young people, and the Inner Metropolitan Partnerships Engagement, which highlighted the need to **improve access to Mental Health Services**.

Principles for Success

Based on the recurring themes and insights raised by young people as part of this project, YLab have created a suite of guiding principles for Victorian Government's future work with young people.

Co-design a young people led COVID-19 recovery	More meaningful consultation, with more co-delivery	A seat at a less formal table	Intersectionality and human centred always
Young people are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 – especially in mental health and employment outcomes and reduced economic opportunity. Despite this, many young people are actively leading COVID-19 response initiatives in their own communities.* The Victorian Government's COVID-19 response must not only prioritise young people in the recovery, but also put them (their innovation and value) at the heart of solving the issues that directly affect them.	During our workshops young people said that they are regularly asked for their opinion from Government but don't hear how their perspectives have resulted in program or policy change. Young people shared that they would like Government to see them as co-delivery partners in solutions, and understand how their insights were being used. They emphasised that after they participate in consultation or co-design, Government needs to have a proper feedback loop about what has occurred.	Young people emphasised the importance of having easy and regular communication channels to Government so they can share their experiences and ideas. This is even more critical during a crisis like COVID-19 where their realities are changing rapidly. Young people emphasised the importance of public officials and politicians making effort to communicate with them at their level, using honest, personable and casual dialogue, rather than Ministerial style engagements.	Young people emphasised the nature of their aspirations and experiences being intersectional. For example, their experiences of mental health are uniquely connected to their cultural identities or employment experiences. For this reason it is vital that Government approaches to better supporting and enabling young people are holistic, not siloed and services easily connect to each other.

*Examples include young people translating government COVID-19 directives into local language, starting online engagements to help older and isolated members of their communities and delivering food during the public housing lockdowns. For a more comprehensive list see the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Emerging Leaders Program 2020.

Priority Initiatives

While this report provides detailed recommendations addressing each insight, here are a suite of overarching priority initiatives through which many recommendations may be channeled. They can be implemented as part of the upcoming Youth Strategy, or integrated into future whole-of-Victorian Government strategies.

1. A Youth Mental Health Strategy

- Mission Australia identifies that 1 in 4 young people are at risk of serious mental illness (2018), and this is only exacerbating due to the impacts of COVID-19 and extended lockdowns in Victoria
- We know from the [Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System](#) that young people are suffering the brunt of poor mental health and insufficient services.
- We need a state-wide, youth specific response to mental health that considers young people and the many intersecting experiences they have
- Responses need to be understood not in isolation but in deep connection to education, employment, housing, justice and health
- This strategy needs to be co-designed and delivered in partnership with young people with diverse lived experiences

2. Statewide Youth Jobs Strategy

- On 28th September Minister Pulford announced the [Working for Victoria](#) package to have a focus on young people, offering 400 jobs in government to young people
- In addition, Government should develop a statewide Youth Jobs Strategy that seeks to tie together a range of initiatives to support young people's employment over the coming decade
- This strategy should be refined and co-designed with young people
- This strategy should not just focus on skills for young people, but also stimulate the employment side of the economy to ensure good work is available
- Initiatives might include employer facing incentives that encourage employers to create great recruitment, training and retainment programs for young people and to hire a % of young people in their workforce

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3. An increased focus on International Students

- Through the events we heard how catastrophic the impact of COVID-19 has been on Melbourne's some 250,000 international students, many of whom are young people
- International students have been excluded from many Federal Government supports like JobSeeker and JobKeeper and are experiencing major disruptions to their education, employment, mental health and housing
- The Victorian State Government is uniquely placed to partner with local governments to explore what additional support might be provided to international students in Melbourne, this may be activated through [Global Victoria](#)

4. Connected up service models based on regional needs

- Throughout the events young people emphasised the intersecting nature of their experiences, particularly between mental health and employment challenges and aspirations
- The Department of Human Services ['Community services quality Framework'](#) reflects the importance of connected, human centred services
- Using the upcoming [Lilydale Youth Health Hub](#) as a model, the Victorian Government is uniquely placed to demonstrate more examples of connected services for young people
- These Hubs should incorporate an emphasis on agency for young people in being able to modulate their own services journey based on their needs

Priority Initiatives

While this report provides detailed recommendations addressing each insight, here are a suite of overarching priority initiatives through which many recommendations may be channeled. They can be implemented as part of the upcoming Youth Strategy, or integrated into future whole-of-Victorian Government strategies.

5. A regular learning and events program led by young people

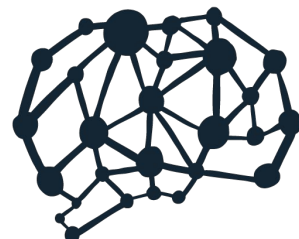
- In Australia, the \$36 billion events industry, was the first to be shut down when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and is predicted to be last to restart. The [WeMakeEvents](#) campaign is highlighting the loss of work 185,000+ workers are facing during this time.
- Event workers have independently adapted to delivering online during the pandemic, with minimal government support
- The Victorian Government should position itself as the events state, and encourage the event growth online – the Patternmaker's COVID-19 [Audience Outlook Monitor](#) show us that 77% of Victorians are engaging with online events, and 2 in 5 paying for the experience.
- The Victorian Government should hire young people to co-design and deliver regular online learning and events programs in each region
- The online events delivered should be informal, and welcoming for participants, and provide space for peer connection, and entertainment, and a focus on accessibility, and inclusiveness, as per YACVic's [accessibility guidelines](#)

6. New democracy initiative

- Throughout the events we heard that young people are seeking regular ways to engage with decision makers and have informal dialogue about their interests and experiences
- This initiative may include hiring and training young people to provide regular advice to Government on behalf of their lived experience cohort or their geographic region
- By increasing young people's interface with Government, particularly during COVID-19 recovery, services and responses will be designed to be fit for purpose for young people and young people will be active in creating future democracy

Background and Context

Snapshot of Metropolitan Melbourne Young People



HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE

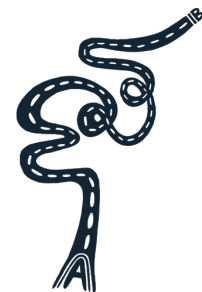
523,032+ young people* in the Melbourne Metropolitan region



DEMOGRAPHICS

21% of young people not studying at an educational institution

46% of young people not in the labour force,
35% employed in some capacity



DEMOGRAPHICS

62% younger people spoke a language other than English at home



% OF TOTAL POPULATION

Young people make up **11.7%** of the total population in the Melbourne Metro Region

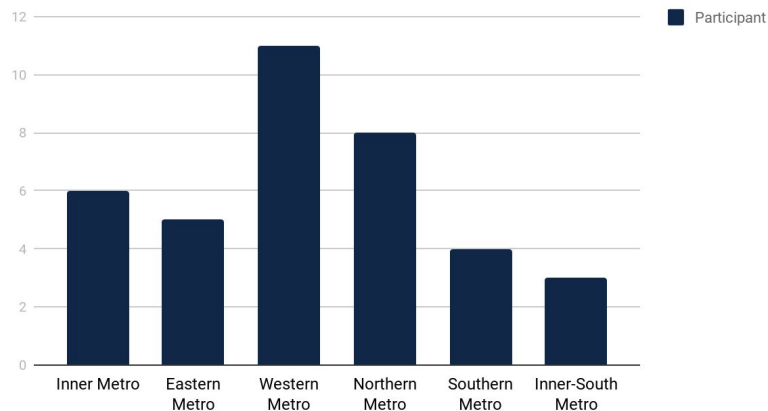
The Early Impacts of COVID-19 on Young People

- **COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting young people** – they will face the worst effects of the crisis over the long term. While older Australians are impacted by the immediate danger of the disease, young people are facing challenges in terms of unemployment, mental health, and education. According to Melbourne University, before COVID-19, “Youth unemployment rates in Australia were more than double the overall unemployment rate, and were almost three times higher than for those aged 25 and over.”
- **The road to recovery** from the COVID-19 pandemic **should be led by young people**. In delivering the Festival of Learning, and gathering insights from young people around **mental health** and **employment**, it became apparent that young people **want to be heard by the Government** about the issues they are facing, and **have the skills and insights to lead the recovery**.
- We know that the COVID-19 crisis has affected **young people’s employment rates**, and has affected **young people’s mental health**. However, the insights offered through this report, while presented in the context of COVID-19, are not new – instead, the current crisis is **exacerbating issues young people were already facing**, and young people are asking for adequate support to deal with them.
- Metropolitan Melbourne have faced the lengthiest restriction period in Australia in response to COVID-19. This has seen an increase in Mental Health issues, due to increased isolation and inability to access confidential spaces. We know that social connection is crucial in living through difficult times, and young Melbournians have had to learn to socially connect in new, online, ways. However, the challenges of socially connecting in these new, isolated ways is particularly felt by young people in diverse cohorts, where there is less support and connection available.

Festival of Learning

Attendee demographics

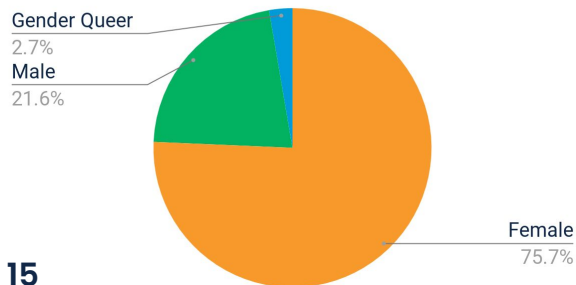
Region of Participants



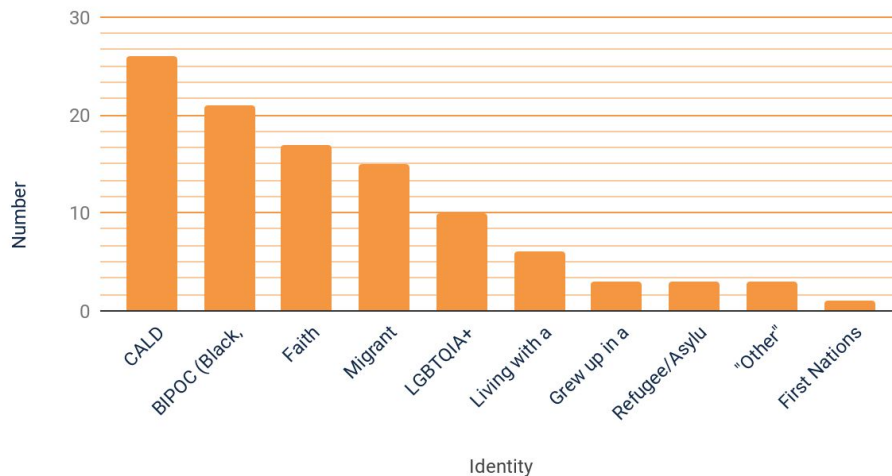
33/37
participants learnt a new
tech skill

22 years
average age

Gender of participants



Participant Identity



Event Overview – Project design principles in action

In designing the Festival of Learning, we prioritised **young people's engagement** (feeling comfortable to share views), young people's ability to **learn something** (either a new skill or piece of information they did not previously have), and **building young people's communities** (connecting with, and meeting, new young people).

Stay engaged in a safe, inclusive environment

- Have **short sessions** (1-3 hours), so young people don't get tired
- Offer **different types of engagement** – ie. Workshops, small group discussions, panels
- Allow young people to **choose their path** through the event, and **how they engage**, with both the Mental Health and Employment stream
- **Genuine listening and engagement** with young people by young facilitators, who are participants' peers
- Provide an on-call **Mental Health Practitioner**.

Learn something

- Offered activities with **different learning styles**
- Offering a **panel of speakers** who were not “professional”, and spoke in the language of young people
- Offering **skill-building workshops**
- **Following up** with participants with insights from the report, in a **language they understand**

Build network and community

- Provide an **open and welcoming space** by greeting participants by name, and informal engagement from the beginning
- Provide space and time to **make errors**
- Set aside time for **informal chats** with their fellow participants
- Provided a **google form** for participants to connect through social media post-event

Festival of Learning Overview

- The Festival of Learning was an event developed with **YLab** and **the Co-Design Committee** to gather insights into young people's **Mental Health** and **Employment**. The event was **two sessions** across **two days**, with day 1 focussed on **skill building, and community building** (activities, learning Miro), and day 2 focussed on **learning opportunities** (panels and workshops), and **gathering insights**
- The event as designed to be a safe space, which included having a Mental Health Practitioner on hand, which brought together 37 young people (17–25) from across Melbourne Metropolitan Region.
- The day was designed by, and delivered, by a cohort of young people. Led by YLab, with the inputs of the Co-Design Committee, the Festival of Learning showcased how when given the agency, young people are well equipped to develop and deliver a high quality event.
- The day also featured official proceedings, with the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Josh Bull, addressing participants on Day One, and the Minister for Suburban Development, Minister Shaun Leane, opening Day Two activities. Both representatives were introduced by members of the CDC – Carmel Guerra and Mohammed Yassin respectively.
- This event has been part of a series of Metropolitan Partnerships engagements, to hear from and engage young people, including the Eastern Metro online youth event, around connecting health and social services, and the Northern Metro focus group, which was also around access to mental health and employment. The findings of all these engagements echo each other – young people want to see an intersectional approach to the complex issues they face.

The Co-Design Committee Overview

- The **Co-Design Committee (CDC)** brought together 13 young people, from 9 different cohorts, including from:
 - Southern Metro Partnership, Western Metro Partnership, Inner Metro Partnership, Northern Metro Partnership, Eastern Metro Partnership, Inner Southern Metro, Youth Affairs Council Vic, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Youth Disability Advocacy Service, Vic Youth Congress member and YLab
- The purpose of the CDC was to ensure the project was building on past engagements and built through the team's networks, and experience. The CDC was fundamental in designing the event's **design principles**, and **best practice of engagement**.
- The CDC met 3 times across the project – twice in shaping the event, and once in reviewing the outcomes from the event. The team assisted in compiling the panels, as well as 7 members of the committee contributed as facilitators on the day.
- The CDC assisted with compiling Panelists, on the day facilitation, and formal proceedings.

Community Building and Engagement Model

Community Building – Key insights

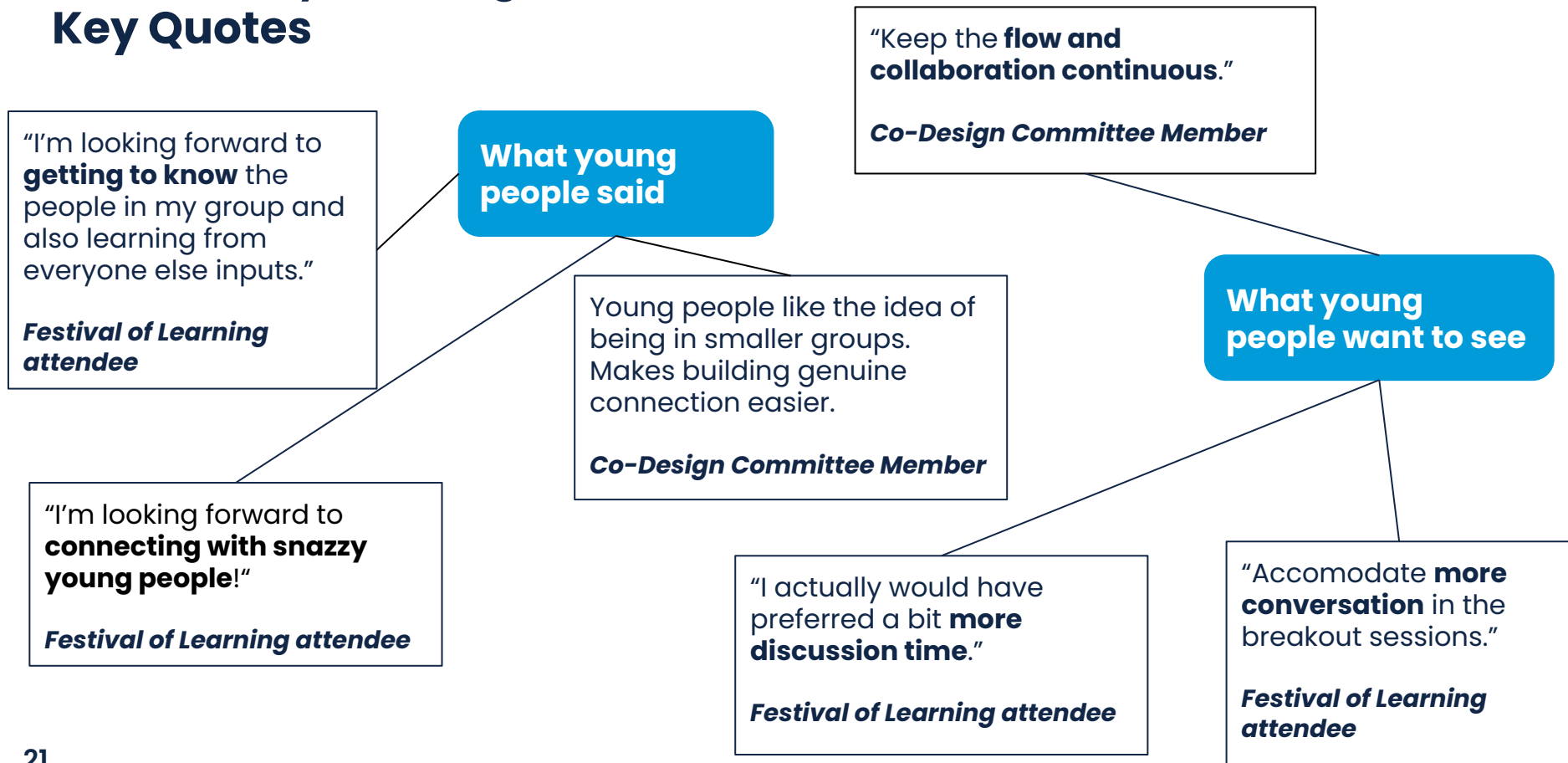
These insights were collected by analysing the comments and ideas of young people from the workshops

Young people want space and time to connect with their peers, and community.

- Participants expressed that they felt comfortable, engaged, and listened to by their peers, and wanted **more time to connect as a cohort**
- Feedback from participants indicated that young people were wanting more time to just have small discussions with each other, and fewer activities
- In future, the Metro Partnerships should prioritise events that build a sense of connection amongst young people, allow them to speak freely and feel like a dialogue between young people, not just between decision- makers and young people

Community Building

Key Quotes



Community Building and Engagement Recommendations

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Example in action
Young people want space and time to connect with their peers, and community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all engagements with young people are designed by young people, for young people.• Ensure young people have an opportunity for informal connection alongside the engagement.• Create an ongoing program of informal engagements, designed by young people, for young people, that prioritises space and time for young people to connect.	<p>The National Youth Disability Summit recently ran an event called 'Speaking Truth to Power' where senior decision-makers and politicians were invited to participate in informal, small group discussions with young people. Decision-makers were briefed to introduce themselves just with First Name and Pronouns, spend 80% of the time listening and the other 20% of time asking questions. This engagement model allowed young people to feel confident and respected in sharing their ideas bravely.</p> <p>The Education State Student Advisory Group (ESSAG): The ESSAG is made up of approximately 25 students from all over Victoria. The students range in age from 11 to 18 (Year 5 – Year 12) and come from government, independent and Catholic schools. The ESSAG meets with the Education State Board (ESB), a committee of senior Department leaders, including the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training. ESB is responsible for making decisions that shape the way education is delivered in Victoria.</p> <p>At the ESB forums, the ESSAG, as a group, will present their ideas regarding the themes they have workshopped and ESB will consider this advice to inform their policy and decision making.</p>

Mental Health Insights

Mental Health– Key Insights



1. Young people want investment in **preventative Mental Health services**
2. Young people want **agency** and to be able to **make choices** about their own mental health journeys
3. There is a lack of supply of **quality mental health services** for young people in Victoria
4. Young people want more **informal avenues** to access Mental Health support
5. Young people from **CALD communities**, want culturally appropriate resources and services and **community-led solutions**

Mental Health – Key insights

These insights were collected by analysing the comments and ideas of young people in the workshops.

Young people want investment in preventative Mental Health measures

*In 2018, Mission Australia identified that **1 in 4** young people are at risk of serious mental illness, and if young people don't have the tools to support themselves, they can reach a point of crisis. Young people are more **reactive** than **responsive** to mental health issues.*

*> In early August, **one week into stage one restrictions** the Victorian Government identified a **33% increase** in young people (under 18), and **9.3%** of young people (18-24) presenting to emergency departments because of **intentional self-harm**, compared to the same time in 2019. During the second round of restrictions, Headspace have noticed an overall **20% rise in people needing help** (source: [ABC News](#))*

- Young people are now considering the **causes that contribute** to poor mental health, and believe that we need a long term resolution as opposed to providing **band-aid solutions**. This is a call to addressing **system rather than treating the symptoms**.
- Some of the preventative measures young people want to see include **investment in their communities, addressing cultural barriers around mental health, and peer-led initiatives**. They want to see programs that **de-stigmatise** discussions around mental health, which allow them to address their mental health issues before reaching a crisis point.
- Young people want to see discussions about Mental Health within the **education curriculum from a young age**. They shared that there was **little to no structured discussion** about mental health at school.
- Young people want to see **emotional intelligence** viewed, and taught to be, as **important and valued** as intellectual intelligence. They want to see investment in prevention and emotional intelligence from an early age, particularly in educational curriculum, which would reduce stigma around mental wellbeing.

More investment into preventative measures is needed

Key Quotes

What young people said

"We live in a society that **sets us up** to be unwell."

Festival of Learning attendee

When asked: "**What does stress and anxiety look like to you?**"

Keywords used were:

- Overwhelmed
- Out of control
- Heart racing
- Overthinking
- Insomnia
- Self harm
-

Festival of Learning attendee

"A lot of mental illness can be contributed to **wider systems**, and **addressing the underlying drivers is super important**. It won't happen overnight, but it's really important."

Festival of Learning attendee

What young people want to see

"We should be **investing in prevention** and emotional intelligence **from an early age**."

Festival of Learning attendee

"There should be programs and workshops in **primary school** about your **worth as a human** rather than what you can DO"

Festival of Learning attendee

Mental Health – Key insights

Young people want agency to be able to make choices about their own mental health journey

- Young people shared that they often either **internalise their mental health challenges** or were more likely to talk to **immediate friends and family** prior to reaching out to external services
- Barriers young people face when reaching out to mental health services include **lack of representation**, with mental health services not sharing the same identity, or being the same age – young people want to talk to someone who **understands their experience**. Young people are already having discussions with their friends, and want to see **more young, diverse mental health professionals**.
- Young people are starting to feel **alienated from generic and commonly used terms** such as '*resilience*'. While young people are resilient and have coping mechanisms to survive/live/work, **there is a stigma around the word "resilience"**, as it can be seen to devalue mental health experiences, in circumstances where they want genuine, practical, support.
- Young people are recognising the trend of **toxic positivity** (insincere positivity or an overly positive bias, [Macquarie University](#)), and are actively rejecting it – they want **meaningful, honest, de-stigmatised conversations** around mental health.

2. Managing mental health is a personal journey

Key Quotes

What young people said

When asked: **"What common strategies do you use when dealing with stress/anxiety levels?"** Key answers were:

- Slowing down, taking things into perspective
- Building structure and routine to their days
- Reaching out to friends and family
- Self-harm
- Alcohol
- Drugs

Festival of Learning attendee

"It will get better – can do more harm than good. **It's not good now**, I don't care what happens in two to three years."

Festival of Learning attendee

"The word "Resilience" almost dampens our resolution to change things. It falsely makes us feel that everything is okay. Dampens that drive to make it better."

Festival of Learning attendee

"Bodies recognising the different intersectionalities of communities "

Co-Design Committee Member

What young people want to see

"We want to see more than just 'awareness' being spread"

Festival of Learning attendee

"Sometimes you want someone to acknowledge that you feel shit and it's not that false positivity."

Festival of Learning attendee

Mental Health – Key insights

There is a lack of supply of quality mental health services in Victoria

- There is a **growing demand** for young people accessing mental health services, but **supply is not meeting his demand**, which is a **barrier and deterrent** to young people who **want to access** help.
- Young Victorians are seeing the traditional services offered as being **over-accessed**, and **overworked**, especially in the COVID-19 crisis. **Lifeline** saw an increase of **30%** of calls by Victorians with the announcement of stage 4 restrictions, **Headspace** saw an overall **20%** rise in people needing help during the lockdown, and Beyond Blue saw an increase of **66%** of calls from April.
- Young people shared that there are **insufficient resources available** at these support services, and find them **difficult to access**
- An investment, and promotion of, accessible resources outside the traditional services would benefit young people. An investment in **youth peer support workers**, who are “better able to promote hope, recovery, and empowerment” (Orygen) for young people, would address young people’s need to be represented in mental health services

3. Formal Mental Health Help is hard to access

Key Quotes

What young people said

"I want to **see and feel represented** in these services"

Festival of Learning attendee

"Support services are **overbooked** so they are **not accessible**"

Festival of Learning attendee

"There are **minimal range** of healthcare options are available"

Festival of Learning attendee

"The **number of sessions** under the mental health care plan are insufficient"

Festival of Learning attendee

What young people want to see

"Having young people send out the **communications** on behalf of government."

Co-Design Committee Member

"We need **more people of colour** as **support counsellors**"

Festival of Learning attendee

"Having a **list of clinicians** and **list of expertise** or background for mental health support services"

Festival of Learning attendee

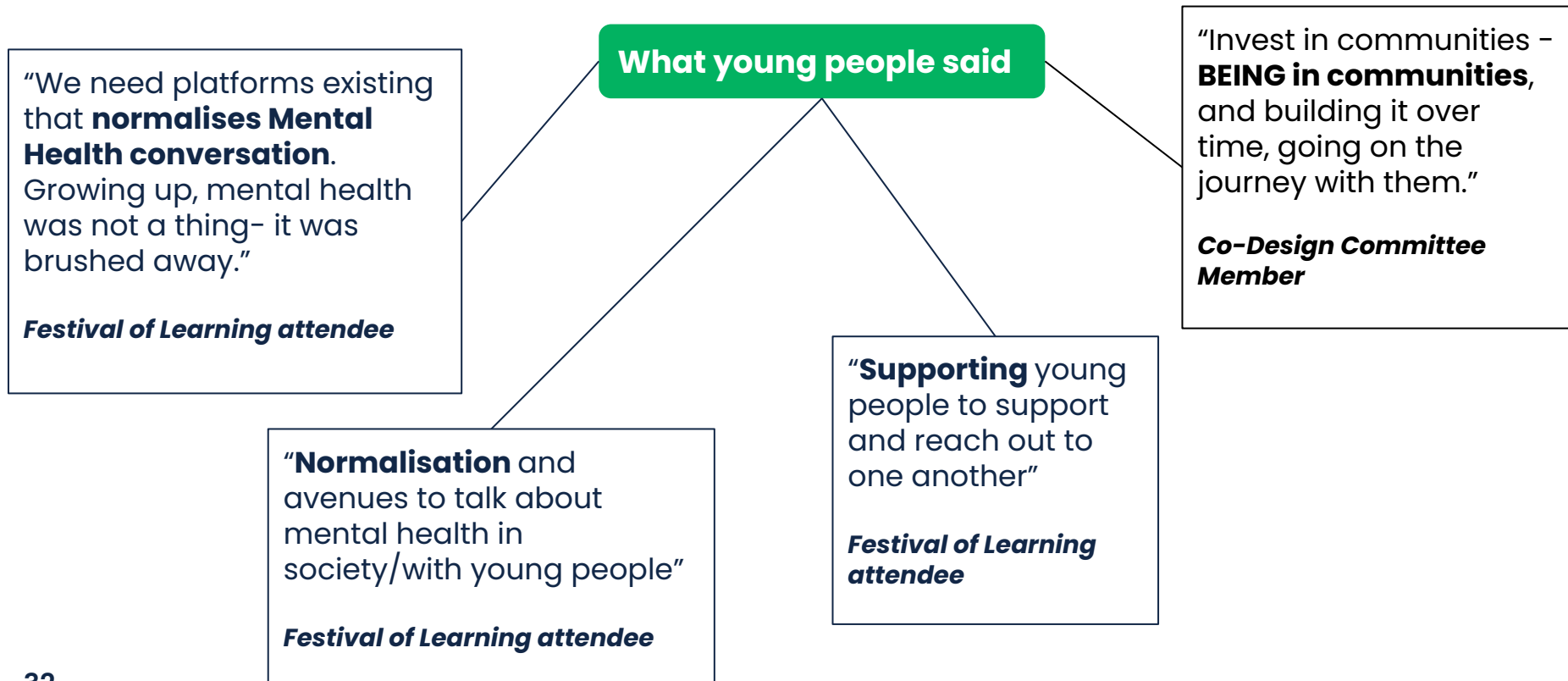
Mental Health – Key insights

Young people want more informal avenues to discuss mental health

- Young people want to see mental health resources become more accessible in the way of **direct availability** and **spreading of ideas in the way of conversations, and stories.**
- Young people want mental health services **delivered in informal and casual ways.** They want to see mental health services be easily accessed by young people who need them.
- Young people want resources to **use language young people can understand and connect with.**
- Young people want to have **casual conversations** of mental health within their **diverse communities**
- Young people want that **reassurance** that **they are not alone** by **connecting with other people** and listening to more stories

4. YP need more informal avenues to discuss mental health issues

Key Quotes



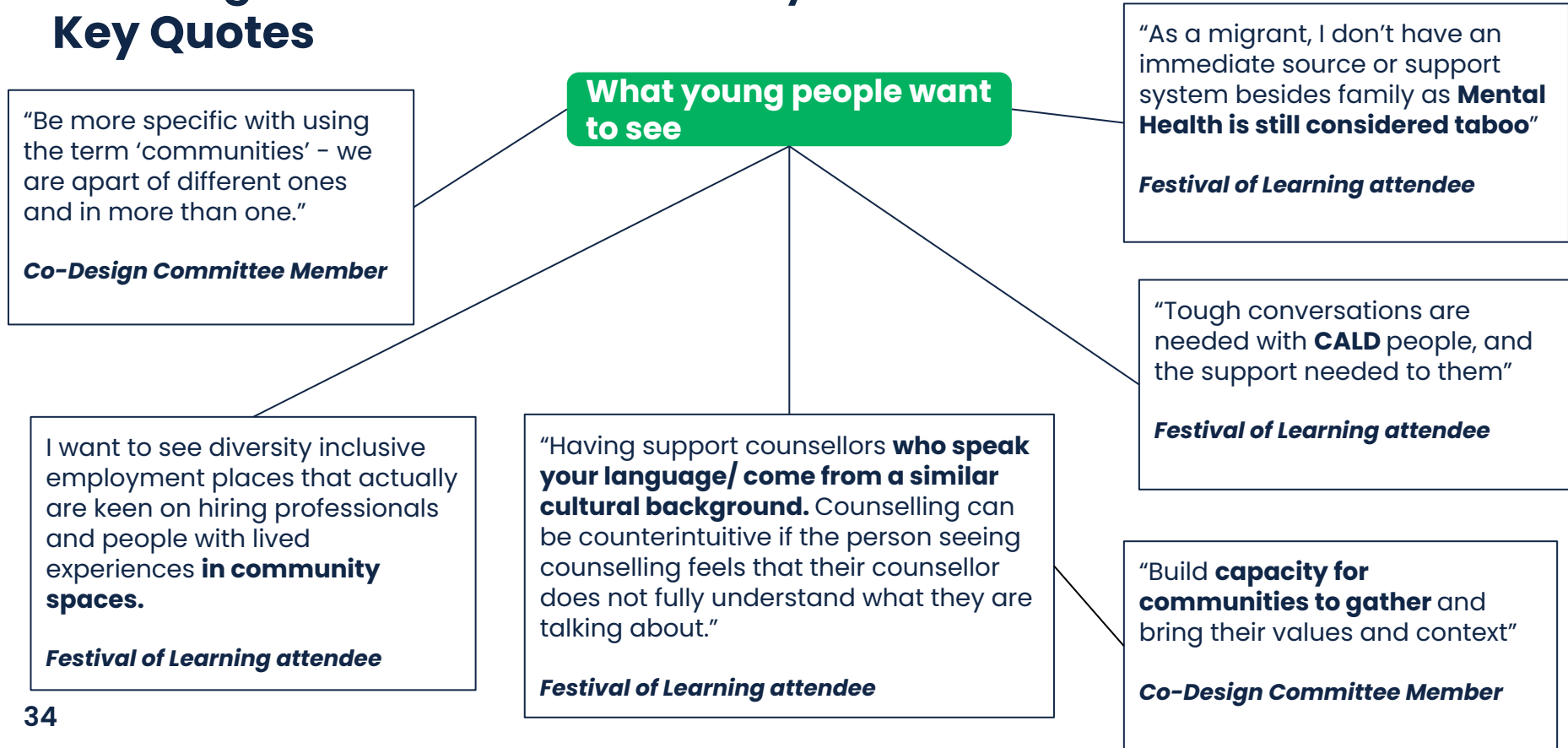
Mental Health – Key insights

Young people from CALD communities experience unique challenges and need community-led solutions

- Young people from marginalised and diverse backgrounds (immigrants, disability, CALD, PoC, International students) shared that they have **insufficient support** in accessing services
- Young people from diverse identities (immigrants, CALD, PoC, International students), shared that there is a **cultural barrier** to accessing mental health, and a **community stigma** that needs to be overcome, before they are able to access formal mental health
- The Centre for Multicultural Youth's [submission](#) to the Royal Commission highlighted that while “young people from humanitarian backgrounds have much greater psychological stress” there are “lower than expected numbers of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds presenting to mental health services.”
- Young people from CALD communities want to see the **de-colonisation of mental health support services** – young people from diverse and marginalised backgrounds want to see more representation in these services so that they **feel comfortable** accessing these services.

5. Young people from CALD communities experience unique challenges and need community-led solutions

Key Quotes



Mental Health Recommendations

Primary recommendation: A Victorian Government **Youth Mental Health Strategy** focused on initiatives that support young people's mental health as a key pillar of COVID-19 recovery.

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Example in action
Young people want investment in preventative mental health measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs focused on preventative mental health care should be embedded in learning environments from Primary School through to Tertiary settings. With the Minister for Education taking on the Mental Health portfolio, there should be a focus on intersectional policies. A potential avenue could be late primary school into early high school, possibly in the transition to high school work that the Department does.• Create a statewide Youth Mental Health Strategy and Youth Mental Health Minister to lead a range of work that deals with systemic issues facing young people, particularly in COVID-19 recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live4Life empowers rural Victorian Communities, by working with schools, run mental health training in the community, and provides a youth leadership program. This preventative measure can be implemented in more communities, creating nuanced approaches
Young people want to be able to make choices about their own mental health journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fund regional models of mental health care that provide young people with the option to select a suite of services based on their needs eg counselling, group support, health and fitness options, culturally relevant options and peer work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This model could be prototyped through the upcoming Lilydale Health Services Hub that sees mental health, justice, housing and employment services colocated for young people.• Young people could select from a suite of service options, rather than linear responses to particular issues

Mental Health Recommendations

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Example in action
There is a lack of supply of quality mental health services in Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funding for FREE quality mental health support across Victoria that includes support for young people from particular minorities including LGBTIQ+ young people and young people from CALD communities • Invest in regional peer support models that enable young people to receive support and connection while they wait for counselling or psychologist appointments to become available 	<p>Orygen Peer Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orygen's youth peer work model can be used as a model to have young people feel comfortable reaching out for early support,
Young people want more informal avenues to discuss mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in young people co-designing mental health programs where young participants can access support that is in their language, and feels accessible • Hire a young person to run social media, and run a mental health de-stigmatising campaign sharing resources, to meet young people where they are, in language they understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMY Reverb work - Mental health workshops co-designed and delivered by multicultural young people, leading the peer support model. • Jimmys Place offers a safe environment for young people to access mental health in a holistic way

Mental Health Recommendations

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Example in action
Young people from CALD communities face unique challenges and need community led solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in programs that empower young CALD people to lead the de-stigmatisation of Mental Health in communities where it is still seen as taboo Implement a diversity inclusion plan, which supports the professional growth of mental health workers, with shared lived experiences, within communities Bring together young diverse community leaders to co-design inclusion plans that support CALD communities accessing formal mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation House: offers a 16 week refugee support program to assist new refugees in settling into the community. They are peer led, and are able to address specific mental health challenges within that community. An example of how in-community programs can operate. Emerging Leaders program funded by DPC is building the capacity of young CALD people who have designed solutions to help their communities through COVID_19 The AMSSA youth connect response to the Towers Lockdown, who were part of the community, and able to offer practical food support, alongside being a voice for the mental health issues occurring for people in their community.

Employment Insights

Employment- Key Insights



1. Young people have a **lack of understanding** about their **work rights**
2. Young people's **difficulty finding employment which intersects with mental health challenges**
3. Young people are **trying to build careers** where they can support themselves financially and develop their passions, **in an increasingly casualised workforce**
4. Young people have difficulty finding **meaningful employment**
5. Young people face **discrimination** in the workplace

Employment – Key insights

These insights were collected by analysing the comments and ideas of young people in the workshops.

Young people have a lack of understanding about their work rights

- With the rise of the casualised workforce, alongside a greater demand for jobs, **young people are unsure about what their working rights are**. This results in a **power imbalance** in favour of the employer. In the last 3 years, the gig economy has grown by **340%** in Australia. Across the country, **51%** of young people are working in casual arrangements without access to sick or annual leave. In Melbourne, young people (18–24) make up **24.5%** of the gig economy workforce.
- Young people have **a varied understanding of flexible work** – their **knowledge is based on their lived experiences** in contrast to formal education on work
- “Young Australians are collectively earning an estimated \$3.5 billion less in wages per annum compared with what they would earn on the adult rates.” ([McKell Institute](#)). On average, **young people are paid less**, due to a variety of reasons, including earning Junior Pay Rates, working in casualised jobs (such as hospitality, gig work) on minimum pay, with no wage increase, **but are working just as hard as their older counterparts**. This is leading to them being less financially secure and is an outcome of more casualised work. (Gig Economy - FYA Report, [Good Work Standards](#))
- **Young people find it difficult to establish boundaries with their employer** and know how much they need to and want to work, especially in times of stress.

1. Young People have a lack of understanding around work rights

Key Quotes

"I want to see **clear outlines of the rights of young people** in the workforce, especially in "flexible" work."

Festival of Learning attendee

What young people want to see

"I want to see **funding** towards **affordable and accessible education** and opportunities leading to employment"

Festival of Learning attendee

"I want to see **greater protection** for young people, especially with the casualisation of the workplace – **protocols in place** to reduce taking advantage of youth without lack of workplace experience"

Festival of Learning attendee

"I'm looking at Mt Everest wearing shorts and a T-shirt. I can't afford hiking boots- and **I don't know where to even start.**"

Festival of Learning attendee

What young people said

"Government should ensure youth are aware of their **employment rights** and the legal obligations of their employers"

Festival of Learning attendee

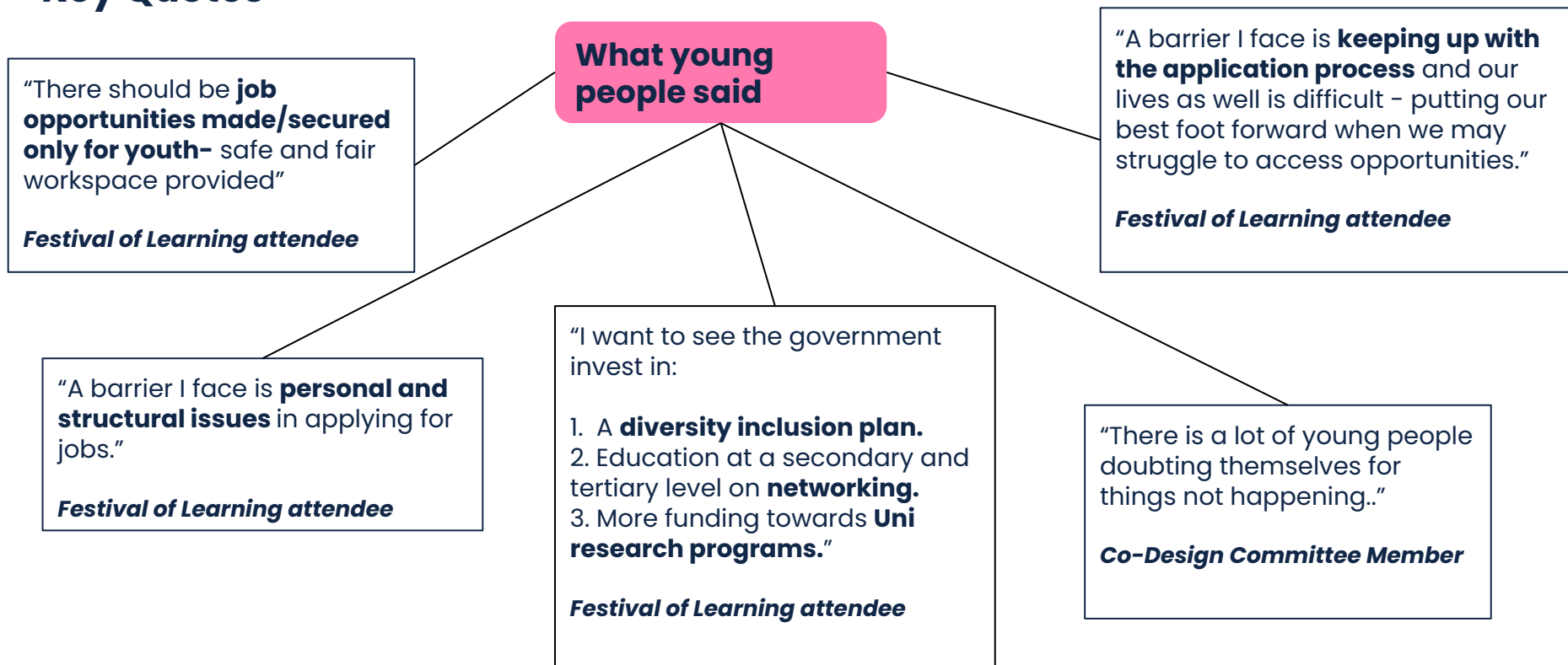
Employment – Key insights

Young people's difficulty finding employment intersects with mental health issues

- **Young people feel less isolated with peer community support**, to navigate the societal pressure on individuals to navigate the workforce alone, and the shame attached to being unemployed or looking for work.
- In **sharing their experiences** with their peers, **young people felt less alone**, and **validated in their experiences** – the workshop acted as an informal “networking” session
- With constant rejection, **young people need to find the resilience to continually apply for jobs**

2. Young People's difficulty finding employment intersects with Mental Health issues, and they feel isolated and alone

Key Quotes



Employment – Key insights

**Young people
have difficulty
finding
meaningful
employment**

- There is a strong lack of knowledge around why young people were rejected from jobs – and **want feedback and guidance in understanding the job market and how to best apply for jobs**
- Discussions around the need for internships, and unpaid work – young people recognise this as a necessary part of the work environment, however, find this **mentally exhausting, and feel as though they are not valued**
- To access work, **young people have to network** – young people are still learning about how to network, with LinkedIn, coffee catch-ups, and reaching out to people, particularly in a COVID -19 context
- With around 1 in 10 young Australians aged between 18–25 experiencing an anxiety disorder in any given 12 month period ([Orygen](#)), the pressure of creating social connections with strangers, and putting one’s “best foot forward” while networking for jobs, adds to young people’s anxiety.
- **There is a rise of anxiety around “networking” in young people, and the idea that doing is required for professional development** and is a curated skill of effective communication. In having young people share their experiences in employment, and the search of ongoing work, the young people in the workshop were effectively networking.

Young People have difficulty accessing work

Key Quotes

What young people said

"Recruitment process- grad roles- TESTS - there should be a **more simplified way of doing this** without these **mentally exhausting things**"

Festival of Learning attendee

"If I don't get a job, it's hard to know why e.g what criterion did I not meet/ how could my application be better?"

Festival of Learning attendee

"I would like to see **feedback loops** and **government consistently interacting with young people**, not just a one off panel/ workshop."

Festival of Learning attendee

"Provide resources around worker rights in **language young people can understand..**"

Co-Design Committee Member

I want to see the government:

1. **Implementing employment-awareness/skills** in the Victorian school system.
2. Improving the **current careers offices** in place (these are incredibly under-supported especially in public schooling, which probably needs it the most).
3. **Encouraging more diversity programs** -- not just as external orgs but within the system itself'

Festival of Learning attendee

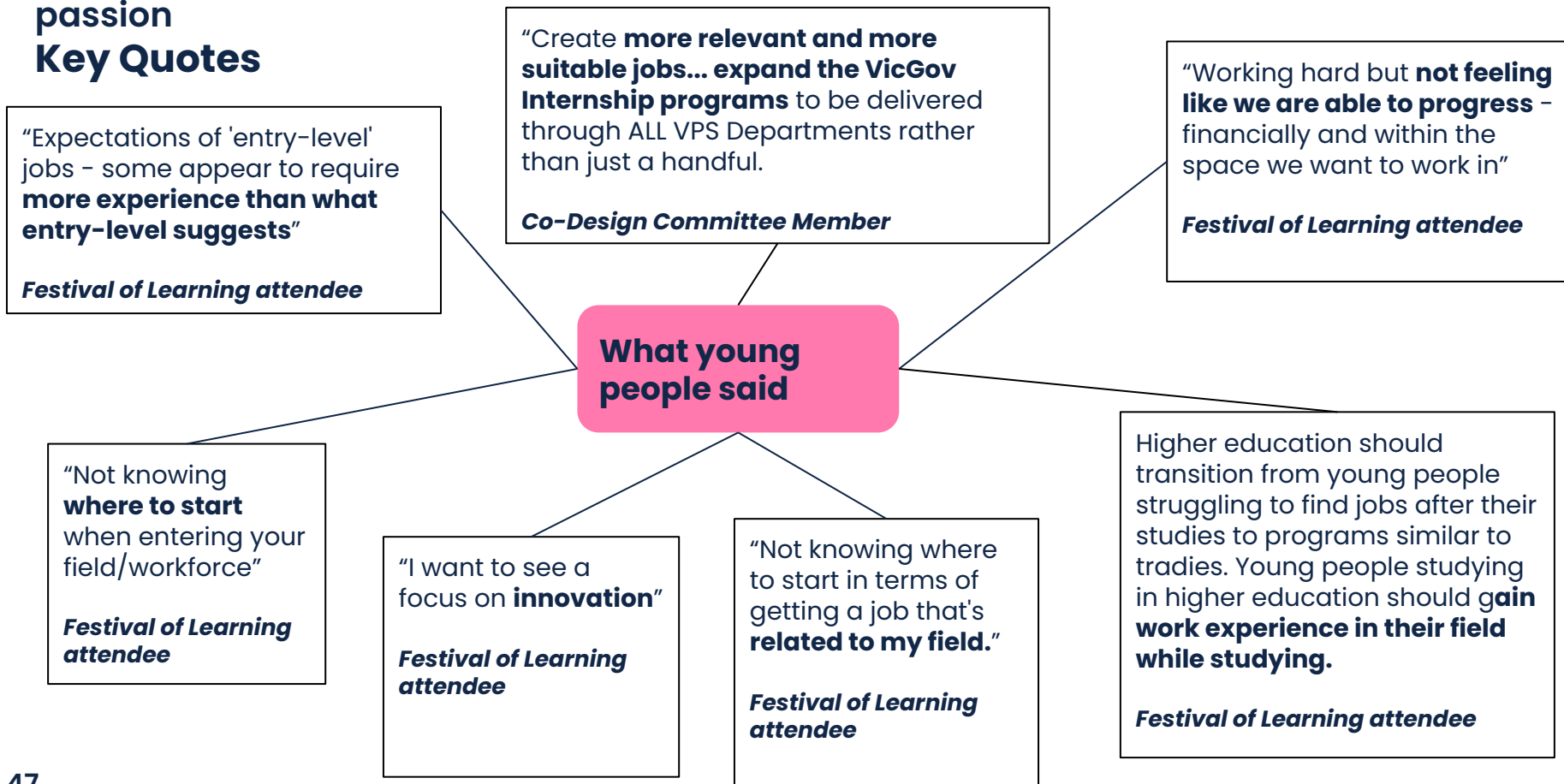
Employment – Key insights

Young people are trying to build careers where they can develop their passions and support themselves financially

- On average, young people are going to have 18 jobs, and 6 careers in their lifetime – **need to be adaptable, and have transferable skills** (FYA, the New Work Standard)
- **Jobs as a constant movement** – it's not about what career you choose, it's about pursuing happiness, normalising changing careers, and doing things you love
- Young people are experiencing a longer transition from school to work (FYA, new work standard), and young people shared that the education system does not support them, or prepare them for, the **transition from school to work**
- Young students think they need to go through a “right of passage job”, which is a terrible job, or unpaid internship. **Young people need to be empowered to spend time finding the right passage for them**, and to #Kickdownthedoor.

2. Career Building- Young People are trying to navigate work as both a necessity, and a passion

Key Quotes



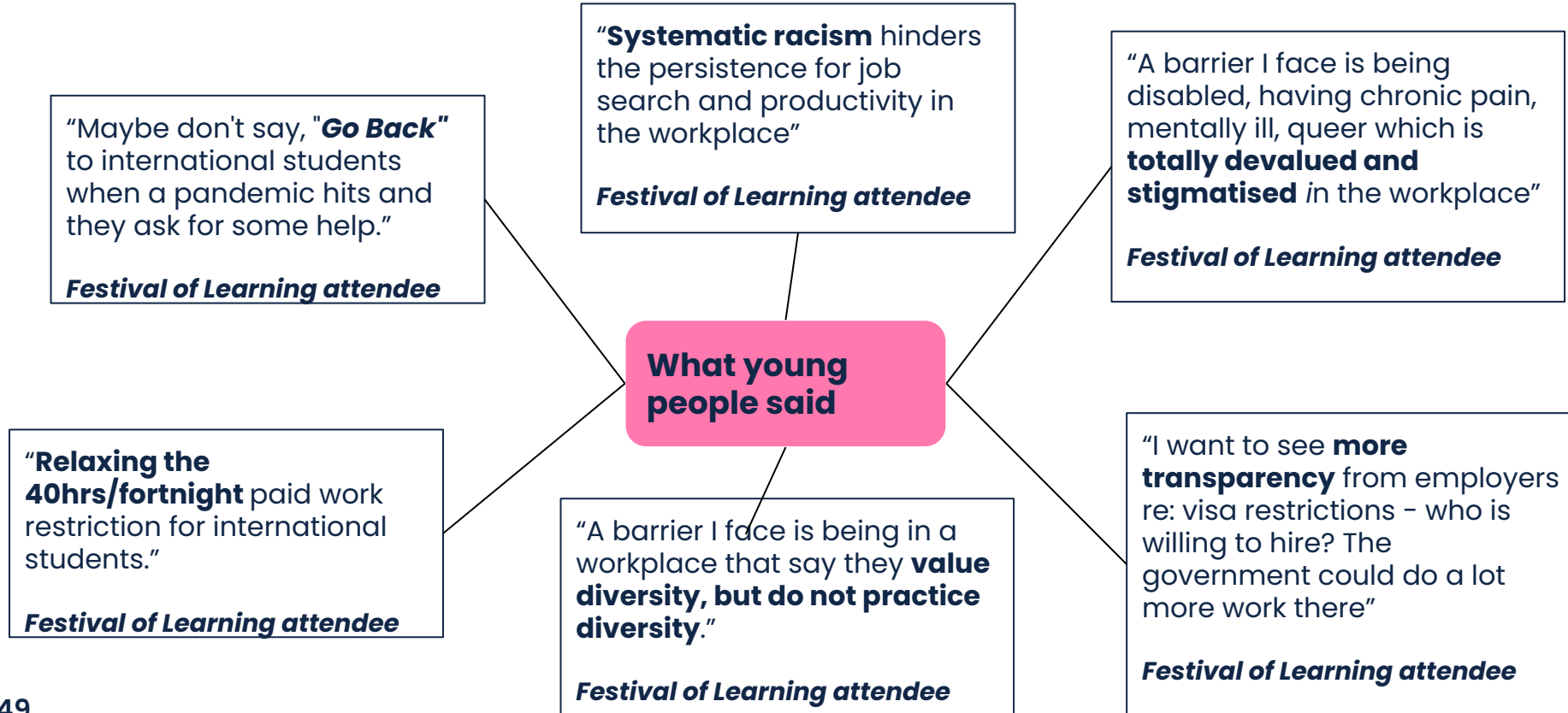
Employment – Key insights

Young people are still facing discrimination in the workplace

- International Students are facing issues with finding work on their visa, the limit of hours they are allowed to work, and the **lack of security** that comes with the employment they can find
- Participants who came from migrant backgrounds, International students, and a lived experience of disability, identified that they still **face experiences of discrimination** in the workplace, or accessing work.
- Migrant workers are not finding jobs in their fields and “**settling**” for jobs that they are **overqualified** for.
- **37.3%** of Australian workers with a disability experienced discrimination in the workplace ([AIHW](#), 2019). Young people with a lived experience of disability shared experiences of workplaces **not accommodating** their disability, especially chronic illnesses – these illnesses still are **facing stigma**.
- YP feel as though they are **not valued for themselves** in the workplace – YP want to lean into lived experiences – finding the **courage to bringing their identity to the workplace**, and being accepted for it

4. Young People still face discrimination in the workplace

Key Quotes



Employment Recommendations

Primary recommendation: Ensure the Victorian Government expands the Working for Victoria program to create a Youth Jobs Strategy

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Example in action
Young people have a lack of understanding about their work rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build upon existing information on work rights by paying diverse young people to translate this information into accessible mediums to engage a broad cohort of young people. Then run a social media campaign targeting specific communities using platforms like Instagram Live	Partner with an organisation like Young Workers Centre to design and deliver a social media campaign that reaches young people, where they are and in their own language, using workers rights info that arguably already exists
Young people's difficult finding work intersects with Mental Health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish networks in regional hubs where young work and career seekers can connect with peers (and access formalised advice from services) to reduce isolation and strengthen their resilience through sharing experiences and advice	Look to examples of localised peer support networks and community groups. Identify a local service/services to engage young people to facilitate these groups (creating an employment/work experience opportunity itself).

Employment Recommendations

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Recommendation in Action
Young people are trying to build careers where they pursue their passions while supporting themselves financially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide workshops (within regional hubs) or through an online mechanism where young people can explore and develop mindsets and pathways to a financially stable and passion focused career • Within the Working for Victoria initiative, ensure that young people are not only employed but receiving on the job training that is focused on a range of enterprise skills, not just skills for the current jobs they're in 	Level Crossing Removal Project's GEN44 program seeks to ensure diverse young people are given pathways into careers in infrastructure and major projects. The unique element of the program is that it also gives young people training in skills and ideas like leadership, working with managers, taking a social impact approach to work and enterprise skills
Young people have difficulty finding meaningful employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support young people into jobs with targeted resources and strategies that enable them to navigate pathways. These programs could be regionally managed and tailored to promoting emerging industries to young people • The government should review with young people, the way people access the "Working for Victoria" scheme, and ensure it's in accessible language for young, diverse, workers. 	The State Government's Working for Victoria focus on young people could be expanded to include the expansion of its program beyond the current 400 jobs with government, offering incentives to employers in emerging industries to hire young people, and to train their young employees, to meet the Foundation for Young Australians Good Work Standard .

Employment Recommendations

Summary of Insights	Recommendation	Recommendation in Action
Young people face discrimination in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">As part of the Youth Jobs Strategy, organisations in growing industries are incentivised through a stimulus to create young person friendly policies, undertake certain relevant training and hire a % of young workers. The current Victorian Government Social Procurement Framework may provide a pathway for this.	Project BrimPACT is a project funded by the Federal Government's Regional Employment Trials that saw YLab work with Brimbank City Council. JobActive, local employers and social procurement agency Arc Blue to co-design a suite of initiatives that incentivised employing young people for local employers. Local employers were asked to advertise their policies about creating a great work experience for young people as part of job ads and incentivised to hire young people in their business.

Other Themes

Other themes identified

In an activity in the Small Group Workshops, at the end of Day 2, we asked young people what other issues, other than Mental Health and Employment, they want Government to address.

Co-design + co-delivered initiatives are vital

Young people expressed the importance of being part of co-designing services and leading initiatives was essential.

Representations and diversity

Young people mentioned the need for their to be an intersectional approach adopted by Government when thinking about young people as a cohort, and understanding the differences between ethnic groups in this.

Gendered violence, and criminal reform

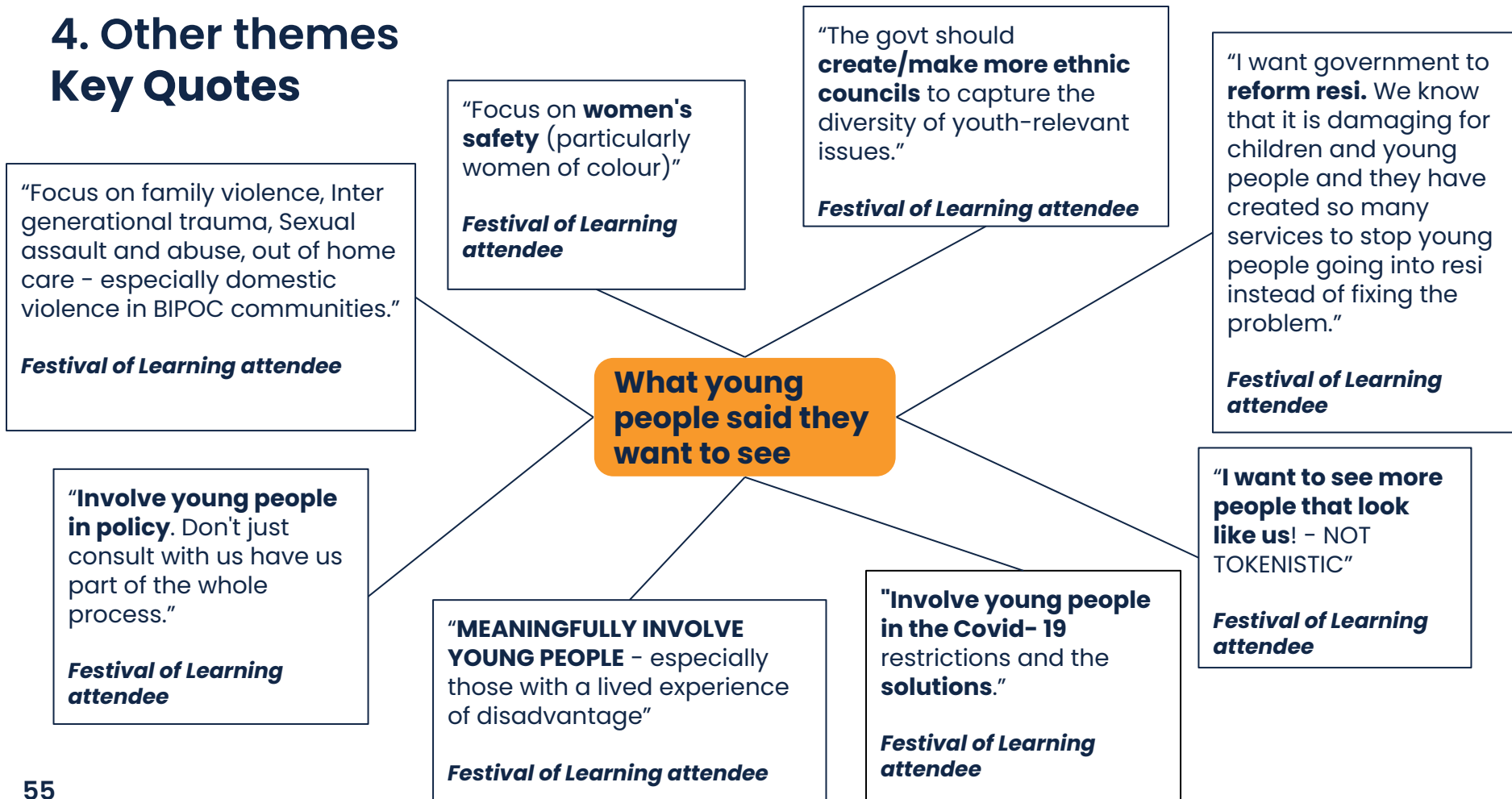
Young people want to see criminal reform, with family and gendered violence (sexual assault and abuse, family violence) addressed in an intersectional manner. They want to see support and funding channelled into community preventative interventions, like [Bystander Intervention](#) models, creating safe, accessible, inclusive community spaces to seek access and support, and Community-Led prevention projects [funded by the Federal Government](#).

Focus on preventative measures

Young people want to see Government take a preventative approach to issues across the board, including mental health, employment, residential care, and the criminal justice system.

4. Other themes

Key Quotes



Insights from Young Leaders

Insights from Young Leaders

As part of the Festival of Learning program, YLab and the Co-Design Committee, recruited a group of seven young leaders to speak on the panels about Employment and Mental Health. They all are leaders in their respective fields, and brought a range of insights, and experiences to the discussion.

In speaking to a cohort of young people, with a diverse range of lived experiences, and knowledge, all our panelists spoke in **clear, accessible language**, which the young participants found easy to engage with.

The following slides offer their insights, and advice to young people, about the needs and opportunities for young people in the Melbourne Metropolitan Region.

Tips from the Employment Panel



Khayshie Tilak Ramesh,
Commissioner for Youth Multicultural
Victoria

- Move away from asking **what** you want to be, and focus on **how** you want to be – start by looking at the things you love doing
- Spend time **finding the right passage** for you, rather than just taking a crap job because you have to.
- Chase **knowledge** over chasing **certifications**
- **Reach out** to people as **lots of people are at home** right now – **LinkedIn** is your best friend and where you'll get a lot of help

Tips from the Employment Panel



Luke Rycken, Youth Affairs Council
Victoria Policy Manager

- **Apply for as many jobs as you can** to get a foot in the door and get paid – you will have access to better opportunities from there.
- Don't be anxious about **changing careers** – it allows you to build skills
- It's important to **know and understand your rights** at work, **especially during a pandemic** when there are many 'desperate' people looking for work
 - Young workers' centre – provide practical advice
 - Fairwork's Commission
- It's important to **establish boundaries** with your employer and **know how much you need to and want to work**, especially in times of stress.
- Dedicate time to look after yourself and your mental health – reach out to services.

Tips from the Employment Panel



Yasmin Poole, Award winning speaker, writer and youth advocate

- If you are CALD, **tap into cultural groups**. As a young woman and Asian-Australian, I've already encountered racism and sexism. Navigating spaces can be tricky. You need to know when to **stand up for yourself and when to sit back**, and what that looks like.
- Reflect on your **own life experiences** and where it **becomes a job**, that isn't just a job, but **a job for the soul** – thinking about your career needs self-reflection and understanding
- **COVID** in a weird way has made things more **accessible**. **Conferences** and **these spaces**, if there are people doing interesting work – **follow up and reach out**.
- **Do a good old search** – if there is a field you're interested in or someone with a cool **LinkedIn profile**, connect and **ask to have a chat**.

Advice from the Panel



Amelia Morris, Orygen Youth advisory panel and The Victorian Youth Congress member

- You'll feel anxious when you don't know where your next meal will come from. Mental Health is an illness and it can **coexist** with other things
- It is important to acknowledge that things may not get better, but that **recovery is possible**
- One day you won't feel like this, and it'll be **worth it**
- Mental Health is something very important and **unique** to each person's **lived experience**. It is something that is **under-discussed**. It is important how we talk about mental health
- Mental health support needs to be **affordable, inclusive and accessible and integrated** within the community to address those underlying drivers.

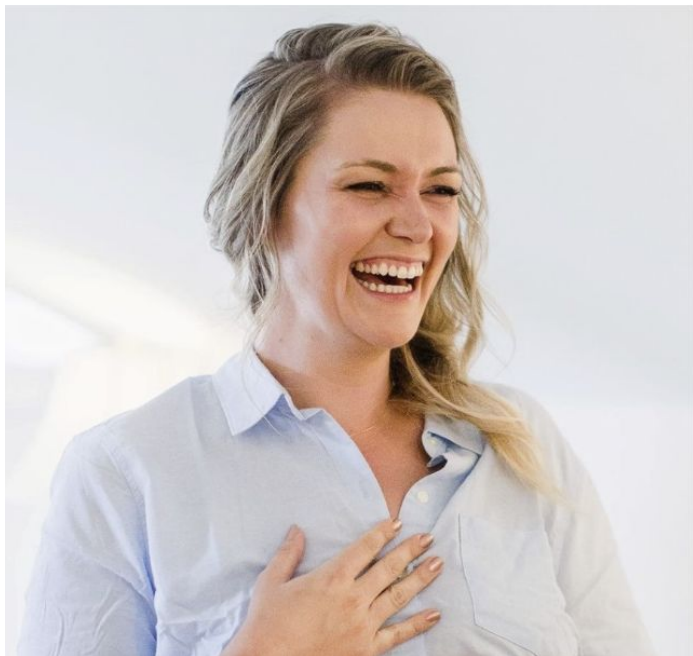
Advice from the Panel



Jess Sanders, Author, advocate and social worker

- Try to realise the **power of community based change**, what we can do in **smaller communities**, and that we can do **change from within**.
- A lot of us have lost the art of just **listening and holding space...** when it comes to **toxic positivity**, rather than try to fix the problem, try to just sit there and let people come with it...
- Your future on **the other side is exciting**, and the freedom you crave will be there and you will have access to it.
- You have time, you have time to **heal** and you are on this journey
- Invest in **prevention and emotional intelligence** from an **early** age.

Advice from the Panel



Lauren Van Krimpen, discovery college Learning Consultant

- **Fluctuating health is okay**, but societal expectations/patriarchal culture is pushing us constantly to the breaking point...this has become a major contributing factor to the downward spiral in ill-mental health
- It is okay to **trust** people, to learn as many stories as you can from those around you that you trust
- You **deserve** to be happy and it's okay to **experience** joy
- Bring more **diverse voices together** so that we can work in partnership together. This is important to **equalise decision-making** so that what we are creating actually **reflects** the different voices.
- **Stay joyful**, don't lose that through the darkness

Advice from the Panel



Opemipo Olubodun, YLab
Associate

- It is not enough to externalise everything, in doing so, we are leading to burn-out. First, **go internally, then externally**. For systems change, we need to **understand a system before we can deconstruct it**. We need to take it apart, and then put it together again.
- All those things you thought you weren't going to get through, **you survived, you made it**.
- **You are so much stronger than you think actually are.** It is okay to crumble down and cry in the corner for a few days - that is a good thing. Sit with your emotions. It is fine to be sad.

Overarching Recommendations

Principles for Success

Based on the recurring themes and insights raised by young people as part of this project, YLab have created a suite of guiding principles for Victorian Government's future work with young people.

Co-design a young people led COVID-19 recovery	More meaningful consultation, with more co-delivery	A seat at a less formal table	Intersectionality and human centred always
Young people are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 – especially in mental health and employment outcomes and reduced economic opportunity. Despite this, many young people are actively leading COVID-19 response initiatives in their own communities.* The Victorian Government's COVID-19 response must not only prioritise young people in the recovery, but also put them (their innovation and value) at the heart of solving the issues that directly affect them.	During our workshops young people said that they are regularly asked for their opinion from Government but don't hear how their perspectives have resulted in program or policy change. Young people shared that they would like Government to see them as co-delivery partners in solutions, and understand how their insights were being used. They emphasised that after they participate in consultation or co-design, Government needs to have a proper feedback loop about what has occurred.	Young people emphasised the importance of having easy and regular communication channels to Government so they can share their experiences and ideas. This is even more critical during a crisis like COVID-19 where their realities are changing rapidly. Young people emphasised the importance of public officials and politicians making effort to communicate with them at their level, using honest, personable and casual dialogue, rather than Ministerial style engagements.	Young people emphasised the nature of their aspirations and experiences being intersectional. For example, their experiences of mental health are uniquely connected to their cultural identities or employment experiences. For this reason it is vital that Government approaches to better supporting and enabling young people are holistic, not siloed and services easily connect to each other.

66 *Examples include young people translating government COVID-19 directives into local language, starting online engagements to help older and isolated members of their communities and delivering food during the public housing lockdowns. For a more comprehensive list see the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Emerging Leaders Program 2020.

Priority Initiatives

While this report provides detailed recommendations addressing each insight, here are a suite of overarching priority initiatives through which many recommendations may be channeled. They can be implemented as part of the upcoming Youth Strategy, or integrated into future whole-of-Victorian Government strategies.

1. A Youth Mental Health Strategy

- Mission Australia identifies that 1 in 4 young people are at risk of serious mental illness (2018), and this is only exacerbating due to the impacts of COVID-19 and extended lockdowns in Victoria
- We know from the [Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System](#) that young people are suffering the brunt of poor mental health and insufficient services.
- We need a state-wide, youth specific response to mental health that considers young people and the many intersecting experiences they have
- Responses need to be understood not in isolation but in deep connection to education, employment, housing, justice and health
- This strategy needs to be co-designed and delivered in partnership with young people with diverse lived experiences

2. Statewide Youth Jobs Strategy

- On 28th September Minister Pulford announced the [Working for Victoria](#) package to have a focus on young people, offering 400 jobs in government to young people
- In addition, Government should develop a statewide Youth Jobs Strategy that seeks to tie together a range of initiatives to support young people's employment over the coming decade
- This strategy should be refined and co-designed with young people
- This strategy should not just focus on skills for young people, but also stimulate the employment side of the economy to ensure good work is available
- Initiatives might include employer facing incentives that encourage employers to create great recruitment, training and retainment programs for young people and to hire a % of young people in their workforce

Priority Initiatives

While this report provides detailed recommendations addressing each insight, here are a suite of overarching priority initiatives through which many recommendations may be channeled. They can be implemented as part of the upcoming Youth Strategy, or integrated into future whole-of-Victorian Government strategies.

3. An increased focus on International Students

- Through the events we heard how catastrophic the impact of COVID-19 has been on Melbourne's some 250,000 international students, many of whom are young people
- International students have been excluded from many Federal Government supports like JobSeeker and JobKeeper and are experiencing major disruptions to their education, employment, mental health and housing
- The Victorian State Government is uniquely placed to partner with local governments to explore what additional support might be provided to international students in Melbourne, this may be activated through [Global Victoria](#)

4. Connected up service models based on regional needs

- Throughout the events young people emphasised the intersecting nature of their experiences, particularly between mental health and employment challenges and aspirations
- The Department of Human Services ['Community services quality Framework'](#) reflects the importance of connected, human centred services
- Using the upcoming [Lilydale Youth Health Hub](#) as a model, the Victorian Government is uniquely placed to demonstrate more examples of connected services for young people
- These Hubs should incorporate an emphasis on agency for young people in being able to modulate their own services journey based on their needs

Priority Initiatives

While this report provides detailed recommendations addressing each insight, here are a suite of overarching priority initiatives through which many recommendations may be channeled. They can be implemented as part of the upcoming Youth Strategy, or integrated into future whole-of-Victorian Government strategies.

5. A regular learning and events program led by young people

- In Australia, the \$36 billion events industry, was the first to be shut down when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and is predicted to be last to restart. The [WeMakeEvents](#) campaign is highlighting the loss of work 185,000+ workers are facing during this time.
- Event workers have independently adapted to delivering online during the pandemic, with minimal government support
- The Victorian Government should position itself as the events state, and encourage the event growth online – the Patternmaker's COVID-19 [Audience Outlook Monitor](#) show us that 77% of Victorians are engaging with online events, and 2 in 5 paying for the experience.
- The Victorian Government should hire young people to co-design and deliver regular online learning and events programs in each region
- The online events delivered should be informal, and welcoming for participants, and provide space for peer connection, and entertainment, and a focus on accessibility, and inclusiveness, as per YACVic's [accessibility guidelines](#)

6. New democracy initiative

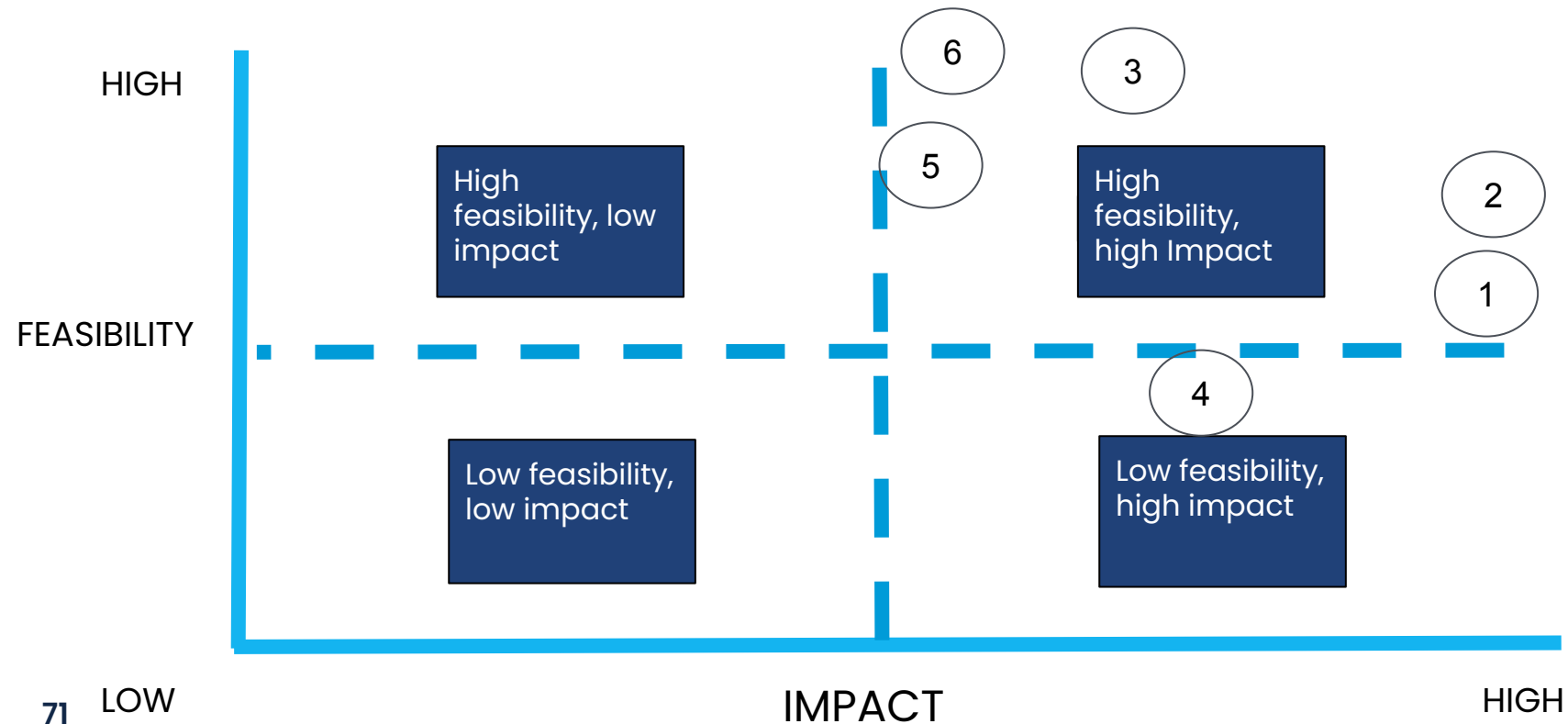
- Throughout the events we heard that young people are seeking regular ways to engage with decision makers and have informal dialogue about their interests and experiences
- This initiative may include hiring and training young people to provide regular advice to Government on behalf of their lived experience cohort or their geographic region
- By increasing young people's interface with Government, particularly during COVID-19 recovery, services and responses will be designed to be fit for purpose for young people and young people will be active in creating future democracy

Initiatives Mapped

Initiative	Co-design a young people led COVID-19 recovery	Less consultation, more co-delivery	A seat at a less formal table	Intersectional and human-centred, always
1. Youth Mental Health strategy	👍	👍	👍	👍
2. Statewide Youth Jobs Strategy	👍	👍	👍	👍
3. Increased focus on International Students		👍		👍
4. Connected up services	👍	👍	👍	👍
5. Young people led events program for 2021		👍	👍	👍
6. New democracy initiative		👍	👍	👍

Priority Initiatives Mapped

Against potential impact and feasibility



Conclusion

Conclusion

This project highlighted the complexities, and intersectionalities of the challenges young people face, especially in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Young people's mental health, and difficulty finding meaningful employment are intrinsically linked, and they require peer support, and community connections to feel less isolated, and encouraged to persist.

The complex, intricate issues young people are facing need nuanced responses, which are community led, and preventative in nature. Young people want to see the Victorian Government invest in initiatives which allow them to exercise their agency, and be community leaders.

Young people are uniquely placed and are ready to co-design the pathway out of the COVID-19 crisis, and start building their future. They want to be in the driver's seat, and entrusted with power to represent their communities, advocate, and enact change, in real and authentic ways.

Appendix A: About YLab

What is YLab?

Young people
co-designing
systems that
shape their
world.

YLab's vision is to equip young people with the **power**, **networks** and **skills** to shape systems across the globe. We are a nation-wide network of young people and institutions rethinking the systems that shape the world.



YLab.

Our Model



We **employ over 90** young people aged 18-29 years old with **diverse lived experience**



We provide tailored **learning and development** opportunities



We **connect them with clients** to solve complex problems



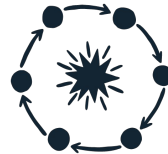
We do it all using **systems thinking** and **co-design**

YLab.

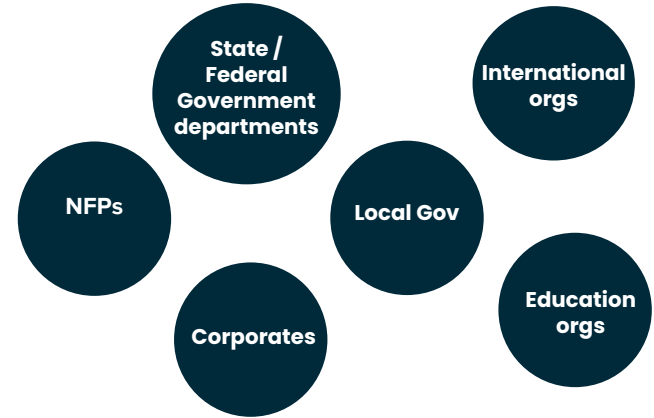
Our Business Model



YLab Associates are young people aged 18-30 recruited based on their diverse lived experiences and disciplines and trained in consulting, co-design and skills for the future of work.



YLab matches teams of diverse young people to client needs



Clients hire YLab when faced with a youth engagement challenge, or a challenge that requires youth-led innovation.

What's unique about us?



Our **models are co-designed by young people** with diverse lived experiences



Our work is **delivered by young people** with the coaching and oversight from consultants



We are young people, we understand the problems your organisation is facing and **have networks we can tap into** to help solve them

YLab co-design and co-delivery process

YLab's approach to youth engagement is founded upon this co-design framework. The foundational principle underpinning this framework is the understanding that co-designing with young people is only effective if young people lead (or "co-lead") the process.

Our framework is built from our deep experience in enabling young people to work in multidisciplinary and intergenerational teams to lead the design of programs, services, infrastructure, and content for young people. It leverages facilitation tools and techniques that address power dynamics within groups to ensure individual young people, including those previously unheard from, feel a sense of agency and have courage to contribute.

