

# YOUTH SPEAK PROJECT ABRIDGED REPORT

JULY 2024





## Nambucca Valley youth

This report allows young people in the Nambucca Valley to voice the challenges they face and present their ideas for improving youth outcomes.

It builds on the efforts of passionate youth workers, organizations, school staff, and community members who have long supported and empowered the Valley's youth.

The Nambucca Valley YOUth Speak© project unites local services, organizations, schools, and the Nambucca Valley Council to maximize positive outcomes for youth by prioritizing their voices. This report, based on data from a youth survey and forum, marks the beginning of youth-led initiatives aimed at addressing their concerns. The insights will guide future strategies, and the ongoing project will continue to build a brighter future for the community, driven by the voices of its young people.

## YOUth Speak Project Flowchart:



## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the eternal connection and custodianship of the Gumbaynggirr people to the land, culture, and waterways in the region where we live, work, and play. We honor the rich cultural heritage and traditions that have been passed down through generations and recognize the importance of preserving and sharing this knowledge with younger generations.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to emerging leaders who continue to inspire and guide the community, ensuring the strength and resilience of their culture and youth for the future.





# THE SURVEY

## Aims

The survey was developed in collaboration with the Nambucca Valley Youth Interagency to strengthen our capacity to support and advocate for young people across the Valley. The survey has captured crucial socio-demographic data and the outlooks of youth on a diverse range of topics including perceived obstacles to education and employment, general wellbeing, community perceptions of youth, and attitudes towards the future.

## Involvement

A total of 594 young people aged 12-24 engaged in the Survey, representing 23% of the youth population in the Nambucca Valley. Responses from young people 12-17 represent 39% of youth in this age bracket. Young people were extensively engaged through varied channels and networks during March 2024 to achieve such a high response rate.

## Survey Report

This report covers an executive summary and findings for each question. Beneath the stats and expressions in the report lie young individuals, each with their own backgrounds, experiences, cultures and values. What is displayed here is a mere scratch of the surface of the lives of these young people.



## SNAPSHOT

# 39%

Of Nambucca Valley Youth aged 12-17 responded to the survey

# 72%

Identify alcohol and drugs as a main concern for young people

# 38%

Identify mental health as a significant barrier to achieving their education and employment goals within the Nambucca Valley

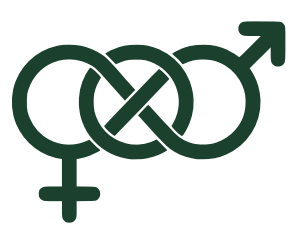


# DEMOGRAPHIC DATA



594

Respondents aged 12-24



50% Male  
49% Female  
1% Self-Describe



29%  
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



11%

Identify as a person with a disability



51% 12-14 years  
46% 15-17 years  
3% 18-24 years



20% Bowraville  
40% Macksville  
37% Nambucca  
3% Other\*\*

\*\* Young people who attend a school or work in a business within the Nambucca Valley but live in either Bellingen Shire or Kempsey Shire local government areas.



# TOP ISSUES



## ISSUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**74%** ALCOHOL & DRUGS

**65%** MENTAL HEALTH

**50%** RACISM

**47%** BULLYING

**43%** SAFETY, CRIME & VIOLENCE



## BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING GOALS WITHIN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY

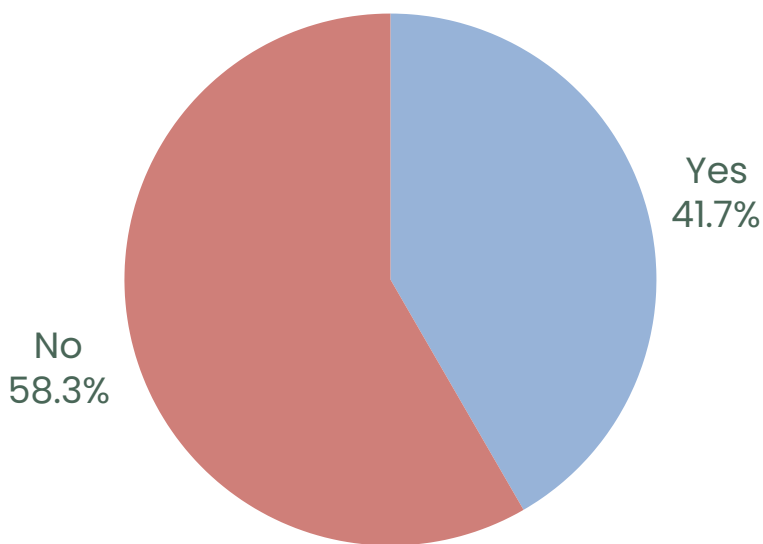
MENTAL HEALTH **38%**

LACK OF JOBS **36%**

LACK OF EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES **28%**



## DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO SEEK HELP OR SUPPORT?



## IF YES, TELL US WHERE!



## HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO COMMUNICATE YOUTH ISSUES AND SHARE IDEAS?

54%



Through my place of  
education

23%



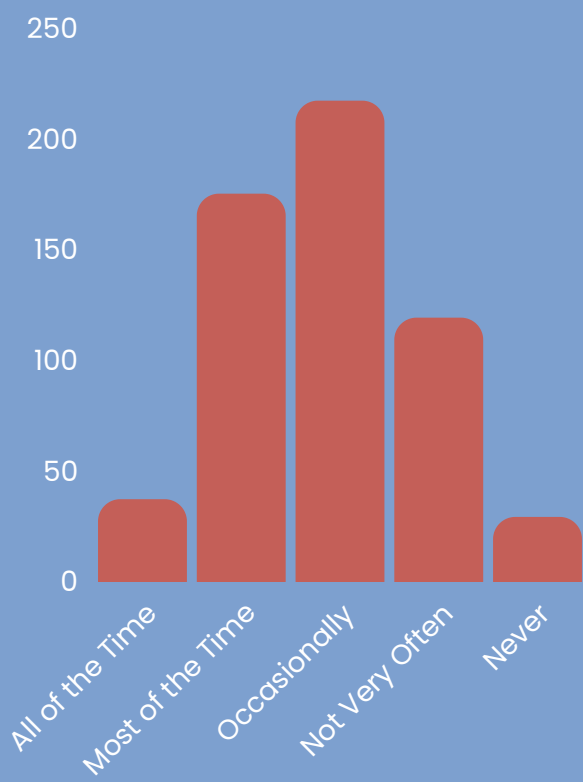
Call/text a youth  
worker

51%

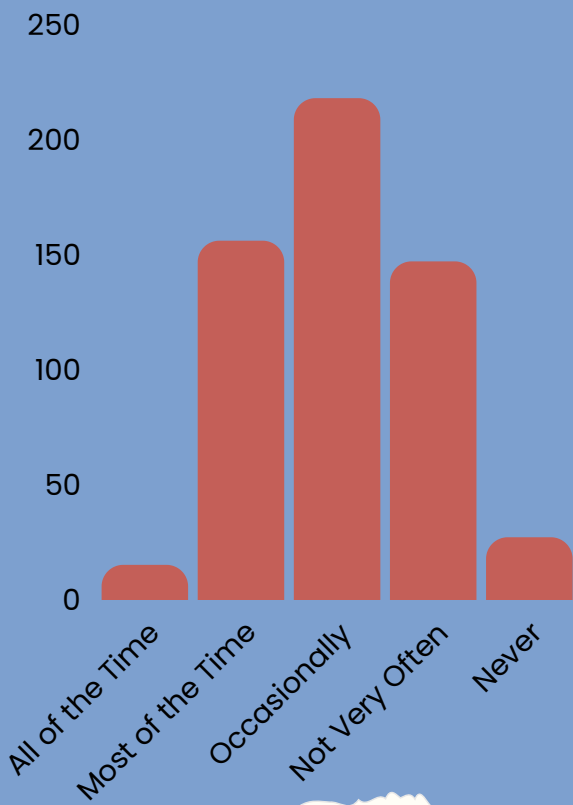


Through an annual  
YOUTH Forum

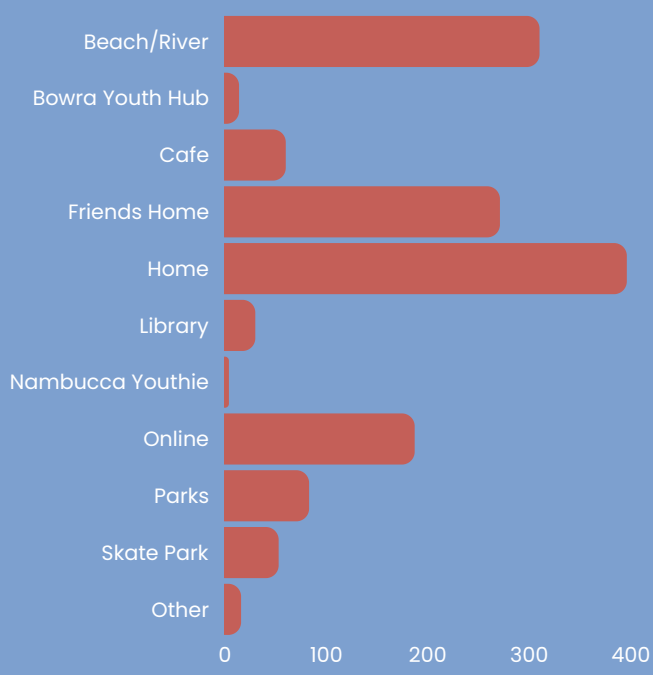
**DOES OUR COMMUNITY OFFER POSITIVE THINGS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DO OTHER THAN SPORT AND SCHOOL EVENTS/ ACTIVITIES?**



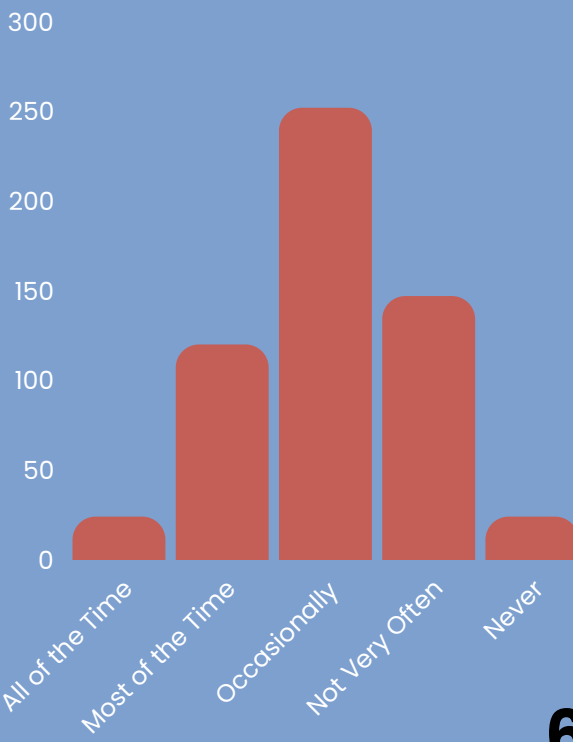
**DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE COMMUNITY HAS A POSITIVE IMAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?**



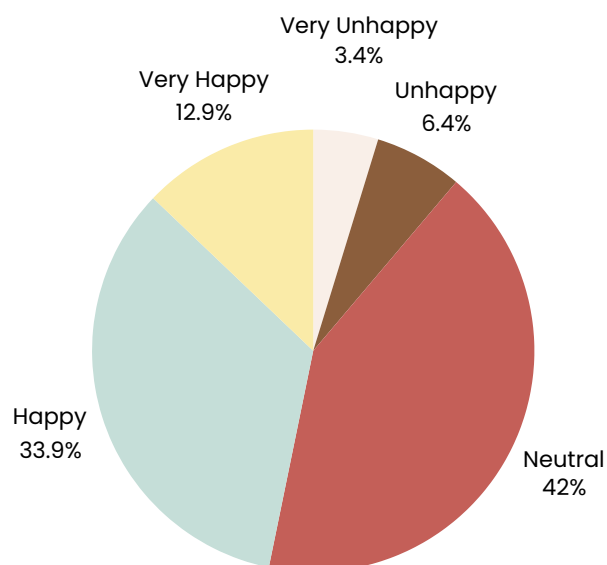
**WHERE DO YOU PREFER TO HANG OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS?**



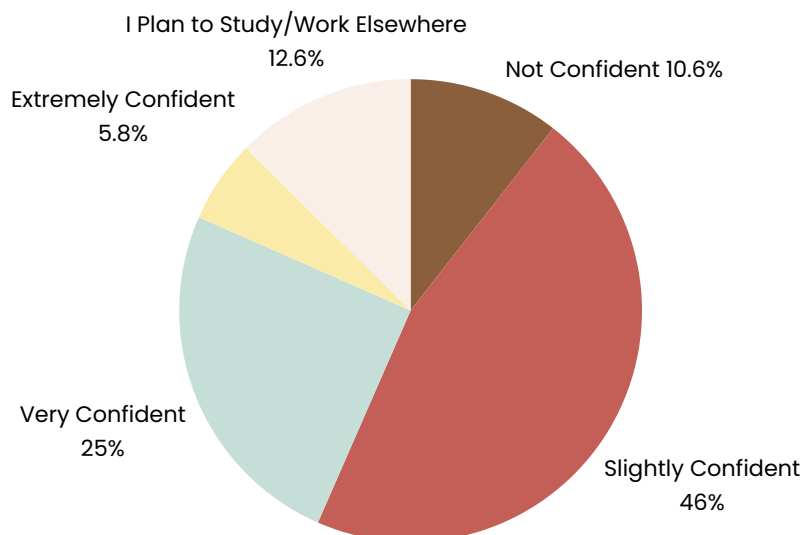
**DO YOU SEE OUR COMMUNITY INVESTING IN YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS?**



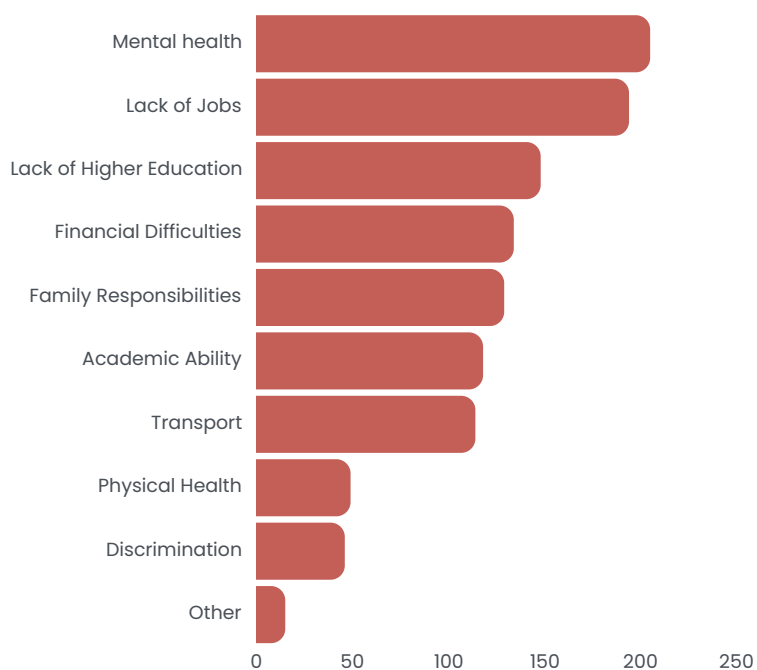
## HOW HAPPY ARE YOU LIVING IN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?



## HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN ACHIEVING YOUR STUDY/WORK GOALS WITHIN THE VALLEY?

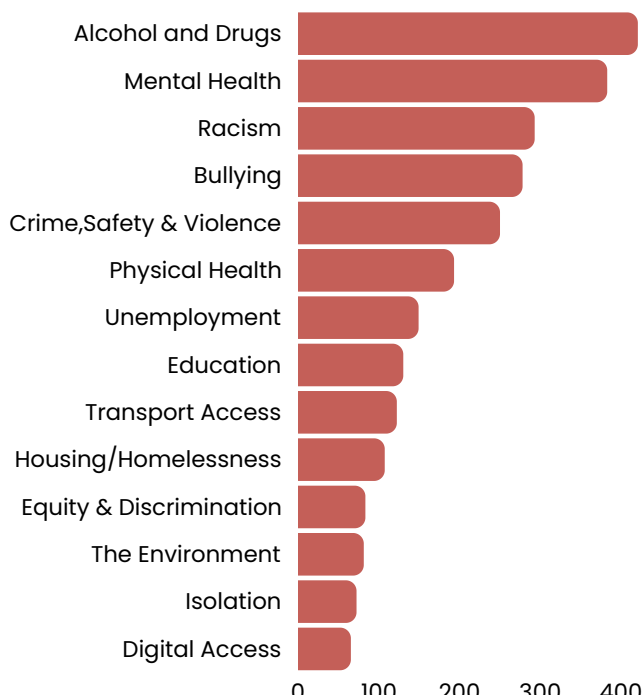


## WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS THAT MAY AFFECT YOU ACHIEVING STUDY/WORK GOALS WITHIN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?



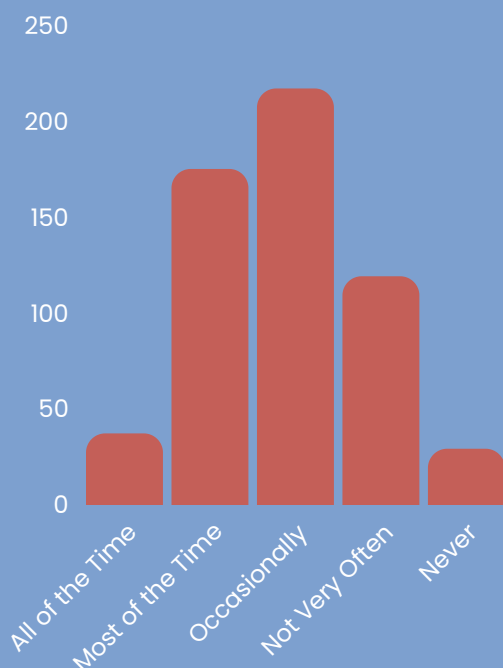
\*Other - Lacking motivation, bullying, lack of individualised services for education of disabilities

## WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST STRUGGLES FOR YOUTH LIVING IN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?

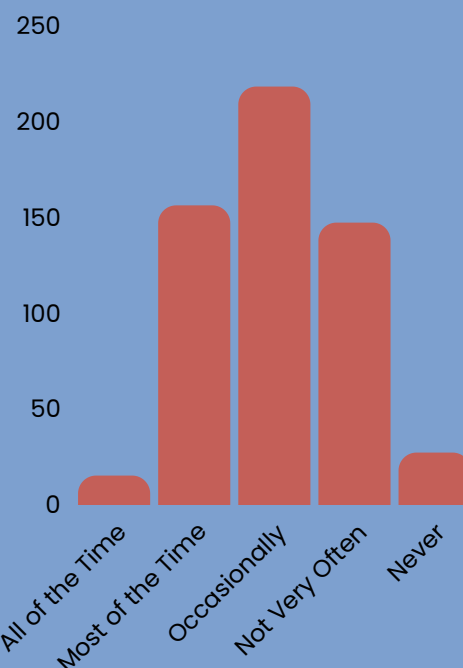




**DOES OUR COMMUNITY OFFER POSITIVE THINGS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DO OTHER THAN SPORT AND SCHOOL EVENTS/ ACTIVITIES?**



**DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE COMMUNITY HAS A POSITIVE IMAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?**



## YOUTH LED PROJECT IDEAS

Young people were asked to nominate projects that they would like to be involved in bringing to life in the Nambucca Valley in the future. 238 individual responses were provided. The responses fit into the following three categories:

**1**

73% of responses mentioned more events (including music festivals, art events, fairs, fetes, carnivals, shows, and more youth involvement in the planning of future events).

**2**

27% of responses mentioned active opportunities (including basketball comps, sport comps, gym access, gym programs, BMX excursion, fishing excursions/comps, and camps).

**3**

The rest of the responses included drive-in movies, library services provided to remote areas in the Shire, a water park, more transport options and more support services for youth in the Nambucca Valley.



# THE FORUM

11 APRIL 2024

## Aims

The Nambucca Valley Youth Speak Forum was held on April 11th 2024 at the Macksville High School Stadium. Over the course of the day, young people from across the Nambucca Valley were guided through a process to tease apart the results from the Youth Speak Survey, to dig deeper into the issues they identified as concerns for youth in the valley. They were then supported to consider how they would like to have a voice in the future, how they would like to receive information, and what projects they would like to create and lead, to improve outcomes for youth across the Valley. At the end of the day, the young people presented their projects, as a taster for what's to come in the future with the Youth Speak Project.

## Involvement

The forum was well attended by over 200 young people aged 12-18, from Bowraville Central School, Macksville High School, Nambucca Heads High School and Shore Track. The young people sat at tables of 10-12 people, each table with facilitators and scribes, who were community members and service providers including individuals from Anglican Church Nambucca Heads, Becoming U, Bellingen & Nambucca Youth Service, Blue Sky Community Services, Carers NSW, Health NSW, Jaanyimili Bawrrungga, Lifetime Connect, Mission Australia, Nambucca Valley Rotary Club, Nambucca Youthie, NSW Office of Regional Youth, Smart Arts, The Valley Hub & Wesley Mission.





# THE ISSUES UNPACKED

We discussed the top five issues that young people identified from the YOUTH speak survey. During the forum, young people then unpacked the issues a little further...





# WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE MEAN WHEN THEY SAY THIS IS AN ISSUE FOR THEM?

1

## ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

AOD abuse in the family home

Bottle shops are open too early

Curiosity without education

Easy access for young people to alcohol, weed and vapes in particular

Feeling unsafe in public because of others under the influence

It's normalised

Peer pressure

People using it as a coping mechanism

Starting at a young age

Vaping

Young people already displaying addictive behaviours

2

## MENTAL HEALTH

Anxiety

Alcohol and drug use to cope

Bad relationships

Body image concerns

Bullying

Depression

Emotional

Family mental health issues

Feeling alone in experiences

Its stigmatised

Lack of support for youth

Self harm

Stress

Suicide

Worried about friends

3

## RACISM

Copying and mocking Indigenous dances

Discrimination

Lack of awareness/education

Lowers self esteem

Racial profiling

Racial slurs

Segregation

Silent Racism

Social Media

Stereotyping

# WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE MEAN WHEN THEY SAY THIS IS AN ISSUE FOR THEM?

4

## BULLYING

Being excluded  
Body shaming  
Cyber bullying  
Lowers self esteem  
Name calling  
Not wanting to go to school  
People getting teased for how they look  
Physical bullying  
Picked on for my disability

5

## CRIME, SAFETY & VIOLENCE

Abuse in my neighbourhood  
Can't walk safely in town  
Family violence/abuse  
Gangs  
People in town under the influence  
Night time crime  
Peer pressure to commit crimes  
People breaking and entering  
People smashing cars/windows  
Sexual assault  
Stealing  
Threats of violence  
Underage drinking  
Vandalism

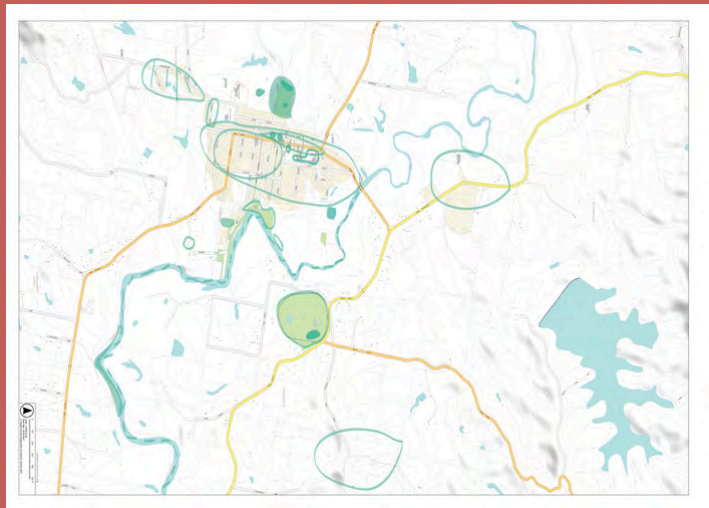


# MAPPING ACTIVITY

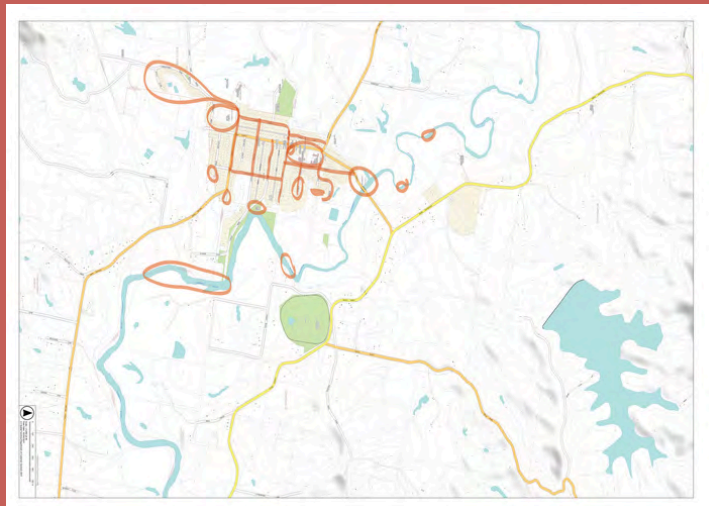
Young people were given maps of key community centers in the Nambucca Valley and asked to mark locations where they felt a positive connection in green and unsafe areas in red. The collated maps revealed varied perceptions of safety, highlighting both individual experiences and broader trends across the Valley. While some stories were captured, many others remain to be explored further.

## Bowraville

### POSITIVE CONNECTION



### FEEL UNSAFE

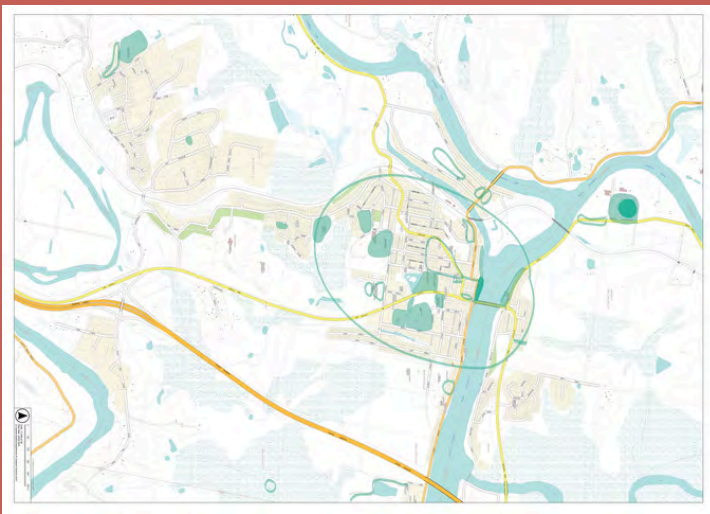




# MAPPING ACTIVITY

## Macksville

**POSITIVE CONNECTION**

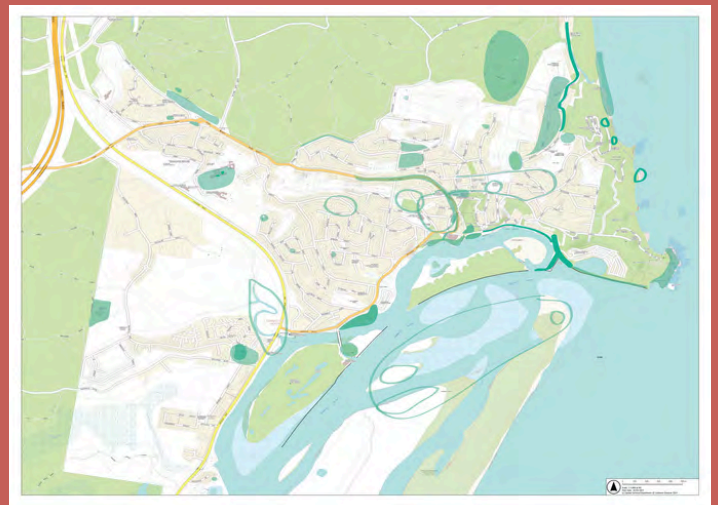


**FEEL UNSAFE**



## Nambucca Heads

**POSITIVE CONNECTION**



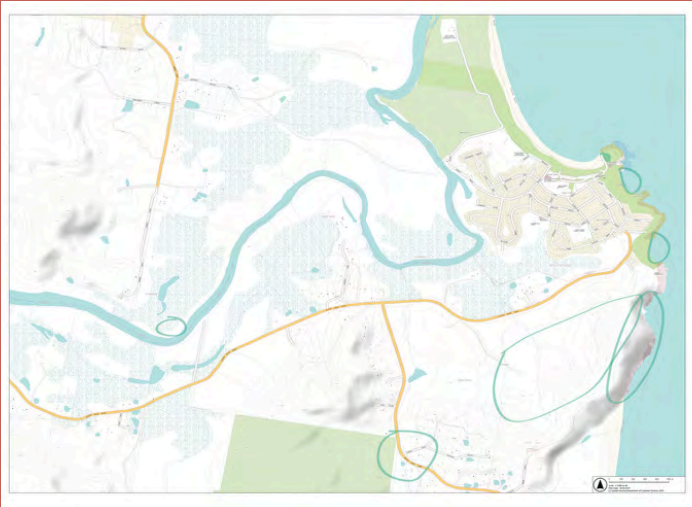
**FEEL UNSAFE**



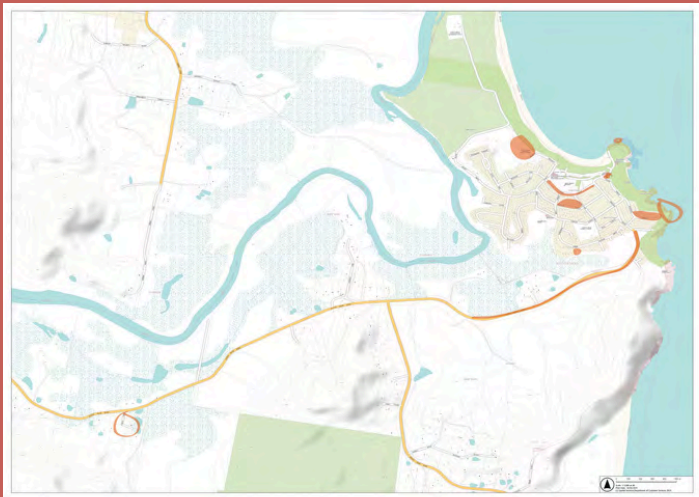
# MAPPING ACTIVITY

## Scotts Head

**POSITIVE CONNECTION**

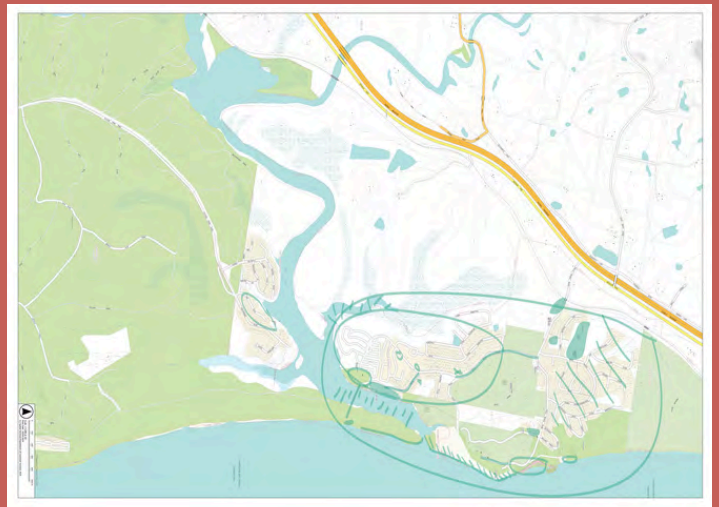


**FEEL UNSAFE**



## Valla/Hyland Park

**POSITIVE CONNECTION**



**FEEL UNSAFE**





# IN YOUR COMMUNITY, WHO WOULD YOU TURN TO FOR SUPPORT?

**In the survey, most young people said they would call the Kids Helpline for support. However, data from the helpline showed low usage. We reframed this question to ask who within the community young people would actually reach out to for help, and these were the responses.**

- ✓ Boss
- ✓ Bus Driver
- ✓ Counsellor
- ✓ Footy Coach
- ✓ Friends
- ✓ Friends' Parents
- ✓ Headspace
- ✓ Neighbour
- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Pastor
- ✓ Siblings
- ✓ Teacher
- ✓ Youth Workers
- ✓ Student Support Officer



**In response to this, as an interagency we are focusing on how we can make sure that the people, we call natural helpers, can have access to the information they need about what support is available for young people in the Nambucca Valley.**

**This is because we can't expect young people to seek the help and support they need, when they need it. The community services sector is a complex sector and funding, contracts, workers and target groups change frequently and often without notice. As an interagency, if we can ensure that the natural helpers who young people turn to for help or support in the community know how to access the information to support young people, we can reduce the number of youth who don't know where else to turn for help.**



**IN TERMS OF EDUCATION AND  
EMPLOYMENT, WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO  
YOU WANT THAT YOU AREN'T SEEING?**

- ✗ Bring TAFE into school
- ✗ Help getting ID and all documents needed to get a job
- ✗ Help getting license
- ✗ More variety for further education opportunities
- ✗ Retail Jobs
- ✗ Trade Skills

**WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS  
TO ACHIEVING YOUR EMPLOYMENT OR  
EDUCATIONAL GOALS?**

- ✗ Buses don't come often enough
- ✗ Businesses not open outside of school hours
- ✗ Cost of living
- ✗ I'm too young
- ✗ Lack of information on career paths
- ✗ Lack of scholarships
- ✗ Not enough hands on learning
- ✗ Too much noise and disturbance in the classroom



## A hand-drawn illustration of a bus with a woman standing next to it. The bus has a large screen on its side displaying a green field with a fence and a person. The woman is holding a phone to her ear. The bus has a sign that says "NICE OR Nothing" and a small sign that says "NICE OR Nothing". The bus is white with blue and red stripes. The woman is wearing a grey sweater and blue jeans. The background is a solid red color.

# LESS OF



## MORE OF



# WHICH PLATFORMS DO YOUNG PEOPLE USE?



**facebook**



**whatsapp**



**youtube**



**instagram**



**x (ie twitter)**



**reddit**



**tik tok**



**snapchat**



**discord**

**HOW DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM YOUTH SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS?**

- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ Google
- ✓ Instagram Broadcast Channel/Account
- ✓ Roll Call/Home Room/Assembly
- ✓ TikTok

**HOW DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR VOICE WITH YOUTH SERVICES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS?**

- ✓ Emails
- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ Instagram
- ✓ Community Expos
- ✓ Local Newspapers
- ✓ School Noticeboard
- ✓ Snapchat
- ✓ TikTok





# MINI PITCHES



The forum concluded with each table brainstorming a youth-led project or program to address issues or create opportunities in the Nambucca Valley.

Each group then presented their "mini-pitch" ideas to their peers and supporting adults.



Some of the pitch ideas are presented on the following page.

# MINI PITCHES

## More access to learn-to-drive programs like 120 Countdown

personal transport

help with costs of:  
getting licence, insurance,  
buying a car, driving lessons

mentors to help learn to drive

## Cultural Event

Arts & culture

Sports

Food hot chips  
kfc  
watermelon

Night time event

## Bowraville Youth Event

Live performances:

DJ Kapital J, Tasman Keith, The Kid Laroi

MC: Damo

Food trucks

Ages 12 -25

Drug and alcohol free

IN BOWRAVILLE!

## Youth Centre in Macksville

safe space, clinic,  
counselling service,  
study zone.

programs

activities, games room

social opportunities

free food

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

FREE ENTRY

FREE FOOD

POP-UP STALLS

TIE DYING

MINI GAMES

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT LESSONS

FACE PAINTING

## Music Event

local musicians plus a  
big headline act

free food including hot chips

free rides

daytime into evening event  
in summer

Where?

Macksville Showgrounds  
Nambucca Cricket Grounds  
V Wall

## Outdoor Cinema Event

held twice a year

early session for younger people

early session for older people

free food for all

## School Sports Event

At school for the afternoon  
(after school)

\$3 hot food and water

tackle footy

basketball

advertise on facebook

every Tuesday

## Night Markets at the V Wall

pop up music

food trucks

picnics

mocktails

chill out space

multiple stages

opportunities for hospitality

students to cater

alcohol free event





# THANK YOU

The Nambucca Valley YOUTH Speak project is a community-led project welcoming all who are passionate about supporting our local young people to unlock their potential and thrive. We look forward to you joining us on this journey!

**Huge thank you** to all of the project's community partners and supporters to date who have made this collaborative journey possible including: Becoming U, Bellingen & Nambucca Youth Service, Blue Sky Community Services, Bowraville Central School, Carers NSW, Dowatfeelsgood, Foundation for Regional & Rural Australians, Health NSW, Jaanyмили Bawrrungga, Lifetime Connect, Macksville High School, Mission Australia, Nambucca Community and Arts Centre, Nambucca Heads High School, Nambucca Valley Christian School, Anglican Church Nambucca Heads, Nambucca Valley Council, Nambucca Valley Phoenix, Nambucca Valley Rotary Club, Nambucca Youthie, News of the Area, NSW Office of Regional Youth, Shore Track, Smart Arts, The Valley Hub, Uniting, Wesley Mission



The YOUTH Speak Project was designed by Ellie Tree and made possible to roll out in the Nambucca Valley through funding allocated by Becoming U, and support from BecomingU staff to tailor the project to the needs of the community.

.. and of course, a **massive thank you** to all the local young people who have been involved to date - who have shared their voice, ideas, aspirations and inspiration - and have played a hands-on role by participating in the survey, attending the youth forum as well as already sharing their ideas for projects to transform their community and the lives of their peers. As the action and opportunities ramp up over the coming months, we are keen to continue to support you to create positive change.

**For more information on the project:**

**Youth Speak Project Manager**  
**Ellie Tree** [youthspeak@ncobs.org.au](mailto:youthspeak@ncobs.org.au) 0427 304 248

**Team Leader - BecomingU Project Nambucca Valley**  
**Andrew Davis** [adavis@uniting.org](mailto:adavis@uniting.org) 0468 58 77 58