

# 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:

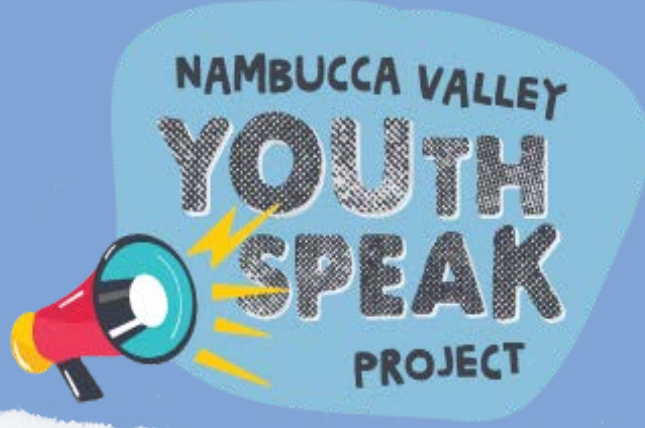


## Acknowledgement of Country

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.





# 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

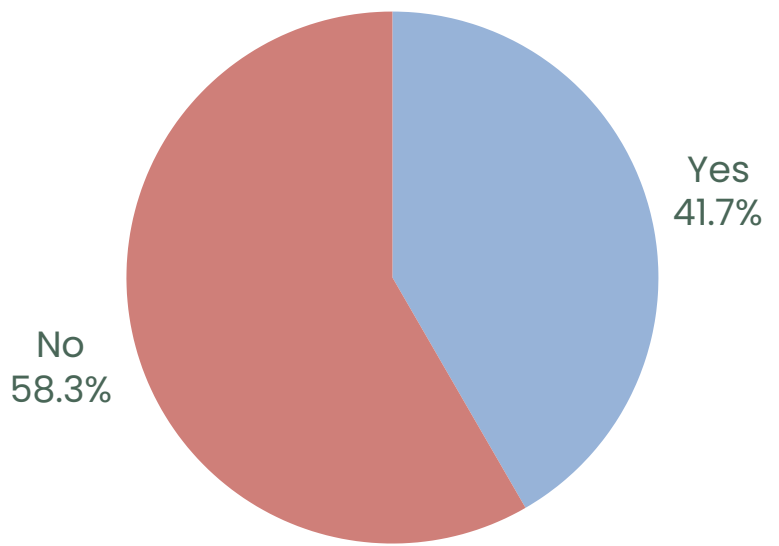
MENTAL HEALTH **38%**

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%



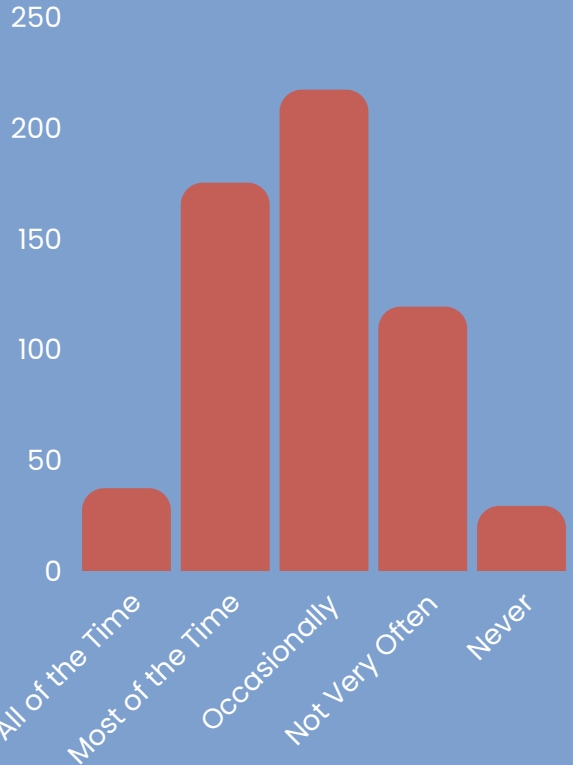
Call/text a youth worker

51%

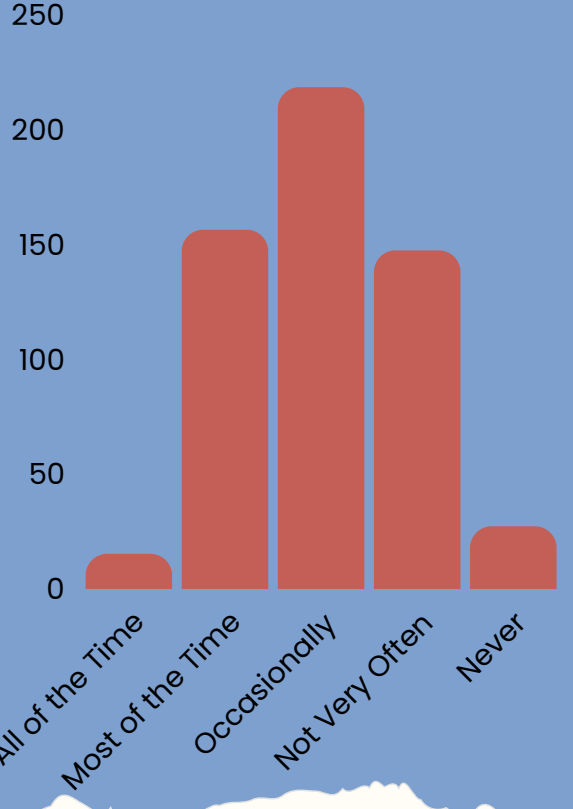


Through an annual YOUTH Forum

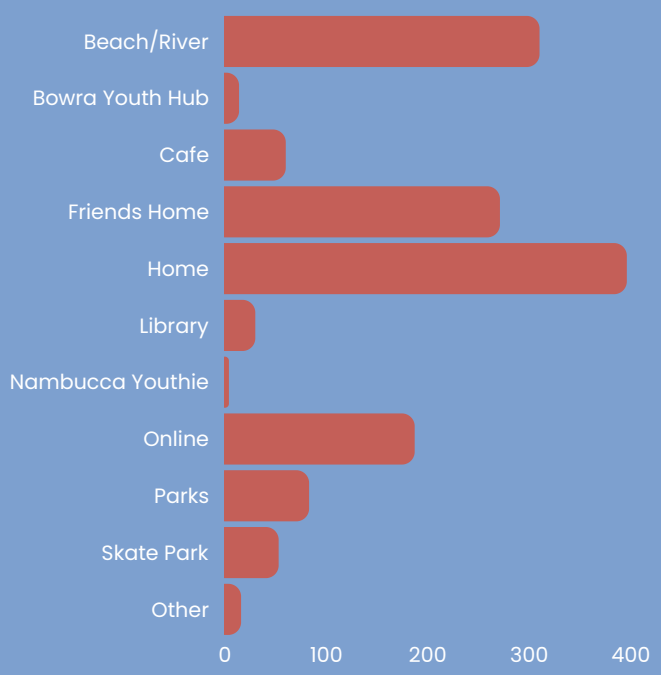
**DOES OUR COMMUNITY OFFER POSITIVE THINGS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DO OTHER THAN SPORT AND SCHOOL EVENTS/ ACTIVITIES?**



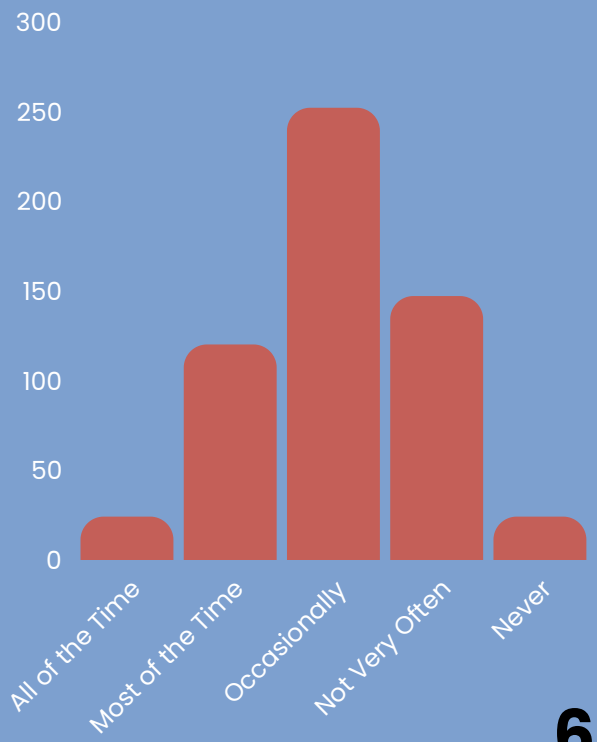
**DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE COMMUNITY HAS A POSITIVE IMAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?**



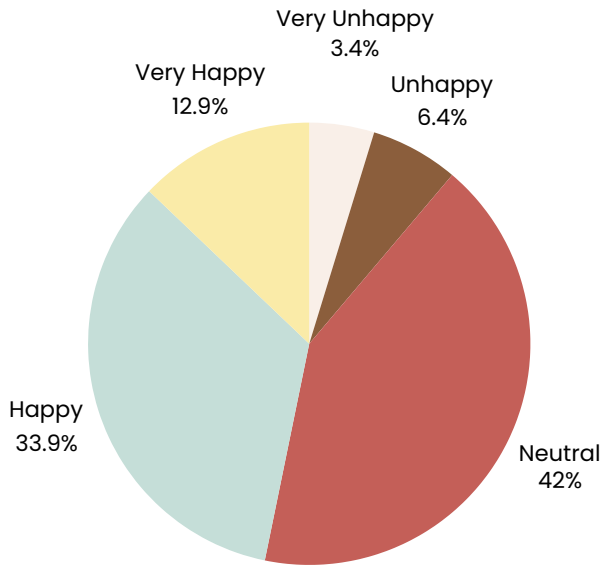
**WHERE DO YOU PREFER TO HANG OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS?**



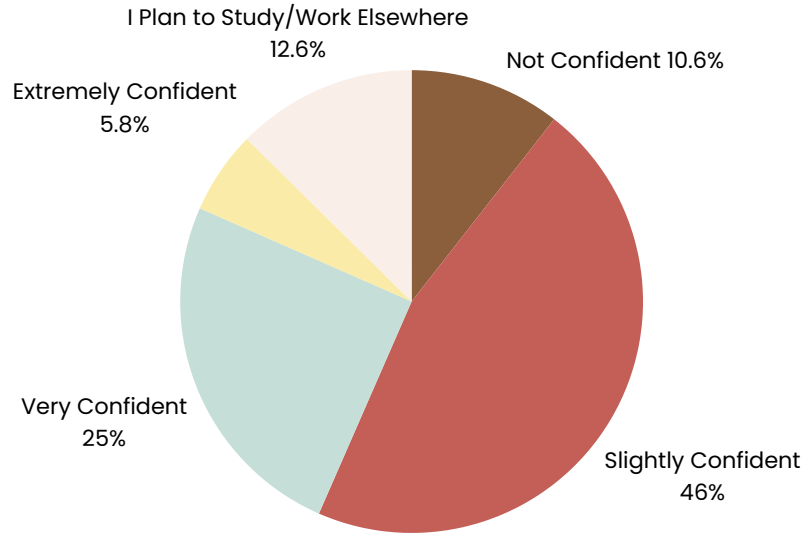
**DO YOU SEE OUR COMMUNITY INVESTING IN YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS?**



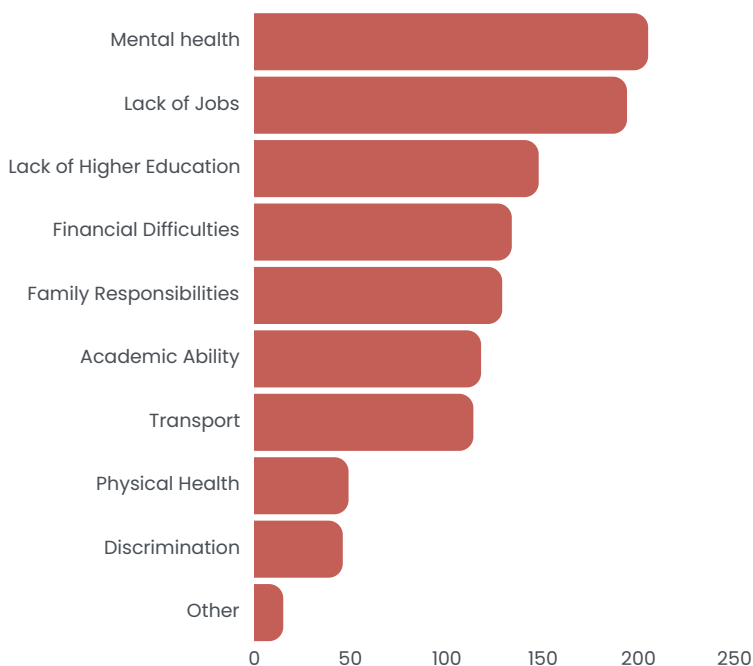
## HOW HAPPY ARE YOU LIVING IN THE NAMBUCCA VALLEY?



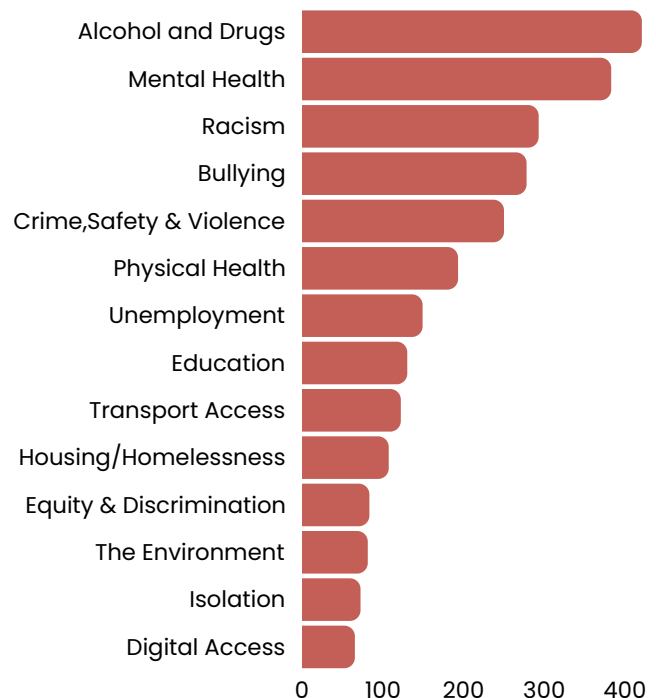
## HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN ACHIEVING YOUR STUDY/WORK GOALS WITHIN THE VALLEY?



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



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



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



# 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 insights from the YOUTH Speak Report are already driving tangible results. Nambucca Valley Council has successfully leveraged the full report in a grant application, securing \$145,000 for the Laneway Festival, which will bring vibrant activities and youth-focused experiences to the community. This festival aims to foster greater connection and celebration within the Nambucca Valley.

Additionally, Jaanyмили Bawrrungga in Bowraville is organising a youth festival in direct collaboration with local youth, guided by the findings in this report. This initiative emphasises the importance of youth voices in shaping community events. More exciting projects are on the horizon as we continue to harness the valuable input from this report to foster youth engagement and community development.



# 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, Jaanymil 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

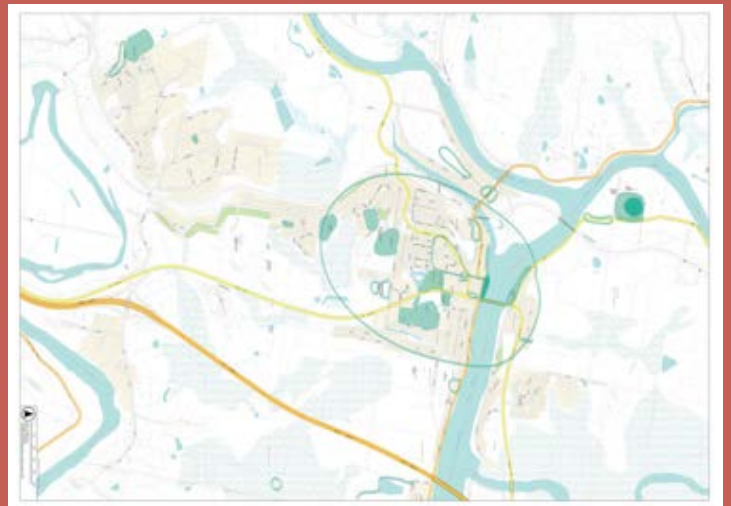
Young people were given maps of key community centers in the Nambucca Valley and asked to mark locations where they felt a positive connection in green and unsafe areas in red. The collated maps revealed varied perceptions of safety, highlighting both individual experiences and broader trends across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

## Bowraville

## Macksville

### POSITIVE CONNECTION

### POSITIVE CONNECTION



### FEEL UNSAFE

### FEEL UNSAFE



# MAPPING ACTIVITY

## Nambucca Heads    Scotts Head

**POSITIVE CONNECTION**



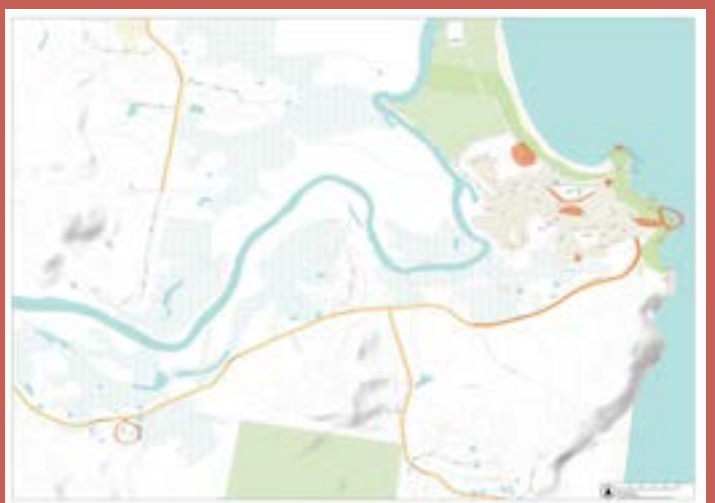
**POSITIVE CONNECTION**



**FEEL UNSAFE**



**FEEL UNSAFE**



# MAPPING ACTIVITY

## Valla/Hyland Park

### POSITIVE CONNECTION



### FEEL UNSAFE



We took this mapping activity along to the Nambucca Valley Community Crime Forum and asked the adults in the room to mark on fresh maps where they feel safe and unsafe in their communities too. We were able to show them that young people in their communities also feel unsafe in the same areas.



# 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



# THE BUS



Local artist Jack Hodges created a 6-meter-long bus from recycled cardboard to capture youth voices at the forum. The bus symbolizes the community's journey, with young people decorating the back to represent what they want to see less of and move away from and the front for what they want to see more of and their vision of a better future. The YOUth Speak project encouraged them to see themselves as the drivers, considering their desired destination and the allies needed to reach it. There are plans to use the bus in future stages to gather and share more youth perspectives.

## 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 DYEING

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)

83 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:**

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