

# Creating Benefit for All

Young people, engagement and public policy

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# Executive Summary

Young people's participation in the economic, political and cultural life of all Australians is fundamental both now and in the future. Their participation contributes to healthier, happier individuals and communities, and a stronger, more resilient democracy capable of responding effectively to complex challenges such as mental health, environmental and economic change. New forms of participation and collaboration - especially via digital media technologies - offer real opportunity to embed diversity in young people's participation in government and community decision making.

However, at the federal level, young people are more marginalised from formal policy processes than ever before. In 2016 there is no Ministerial responsibility for youth, limited cross- government consideration of youth perspectives and initiatives to promote young people's contributions and advocate for their interests, such as National Youth Week and the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, have been de-funded. Dominant policy approaches to youth engagement focus on their participation 'in' education, employment and training. These policies are often aimed at remedying perceived deficits or deterring them from 'anti-social' alternatives. Youth enterprise and leadership are also celebrated and occasionally supported by government, not all young people have equitable access to such opportunities. Others wish to act and be recognised in other ways. Moreover, there is a lack of data on young people's and policy makers' views regarding involvement in policy processes which could inform a national framework that puts young people at the centre of public policy.

The Youth Engaged Policy (YEP) project brought together 100 young people and policy practitioners ('policy makers') from across Australia to investigate: how 'youth engagement' is understood; barriers and enablers of engagement; and, to develop a framework to underpin cultures and practices of engagement in federal policy processes. The project was supported by the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre and the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, in partnership with the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, Youth Action NSW, the University of Sydney and [Urbego](#).

The YEP project utilised a participatory design approach (Hagen et al. 2012) and adapted the [Urbego](#) Youth Engagement Index (YEI) via: a thematic literature review and international scan for diverse models of youth engagement; four discussion forums with policy makers in four Australian states; two workshops with young people and other stakeholders on critical issues for youth participation in policy making; creation and online assessment of the *Youth Engagement Profile* for Australia (YEP.au); and, a co-design workshop with 40 young people and practitioners using the YEP.au profile to vision what strategies would promote youth-engaged policy processes. These activities engaged stakeholders of all ages and from a diverse range of communities and organisations in a discussion about youth engagement in the Australian context, and in the identification and design of strategies to improve youth engagement. In this work we have identified the following key findings.

## ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

Policy makers identified that the *quantity and quality of youth engagement in policy making was currently inadequate*. This view is underpinned by conflicting notions of what *engagement* means and how to conceptualise and respond to young people's participation. In general, policy makers viewed *engagement as directly connected to decision-making* and the shaping of future policy, and as a *process to provide voice* to the disadvantaged or disenfranchised that would result in more effective and efficient policy outcomes. While

young people also expressed these views, they also describe engagement as an *expression of respect* and intent to *address unequal power relations*.

### CONFLICTING VIEWS ON ENGAGEMENT ARE BARRIERS TO INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND BETTER POLICY

Different views on engagement impede practice. Policy makers and young people variously highlighted the need to develop cultures of collaboration, mechanisms to embed engagement in formal policy processes as well as *youth-led participation* that encouraged *self-advocacy* by young people. A need to *encourage engagement across a diversity of groups and individuals* was highlighted. Many felt this needed to be driven from the ‘bottom up’ but supported from ‘the top down’ via *consultation, partnerships and collaborations*. They identified key elements to operationalize those processes, including *co-creation and co-design, training* (for both young people and adult stakeholders) and *evaluation* of outcomes.

### UNTAPPED RESOURCES: DIVERSITY, DIFFERENCE AND DIGITAL

There are persistent barriers to participation faced by particular groups and a lack of understanding and appreciation for the role of organisations working with diverse groups. Similarly, the ‘differences’ between young people and ‘adults’ tended to be discussed as a challenge and something to be overcome – often via adult intermediaries and reports ‘about young people’s issues’. There are outstanding examples of organisations and initiatives that utilise intergenerational dialogue to generate insights and innovation in policy and service design. These could be adapted or replicated in other contexts if political commitment and funding was forthcoming. Of all features of contemporary participation, digital media remains the least well understood and utilised by policy makers. An instrumental view of digital media and concerns about the political risk attached to engaging online with young people remain are significant barriers to leveraging digital media practices to enhance engagement.

### TOOLS TO GUIDE AND MONITOR PROGRESS IN ENGAGEMENT ARE NEEDED

Policy makers identified deficiencies in the tools to guide organisational and cross-sector strategy and practice in engagement. While examples of innovative approaches to engagement were identified, a concern for the lack of coordinated process, planning and evaluation of efforts to enhance engagement were identified.

### YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IDEAS ON HOW TO MEET THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Young people and other stakeholders in this project use the YEP.au to generate specific ideas that could be applied to change up youth engagement in policy processes. Working in six small groups, they each developed one ‘Big Idea’ to improve indicators and practices for youth engagement. Two examples are presented in boxes A and B.

#### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AGENCY

Similar to the Office for Digital Transformation, this would be funded and overseen by a Federal Minister for Youth in consultation with a youth-led committee. It would be committed to engaging with Elders, community role models and intergenerational organisations and agencies. The Youth Involvement Agency would act as a central point of contact accessible to all young people, connecting them to relevant stakeholders. Participants saw the key roles of a Youth Involvement Agency as training, mentoring and consulting with young people, and using youth knowledges to produce policies and respond to issues affecting young people.

#### POLICY (UN)CONSULTATION GROUPS

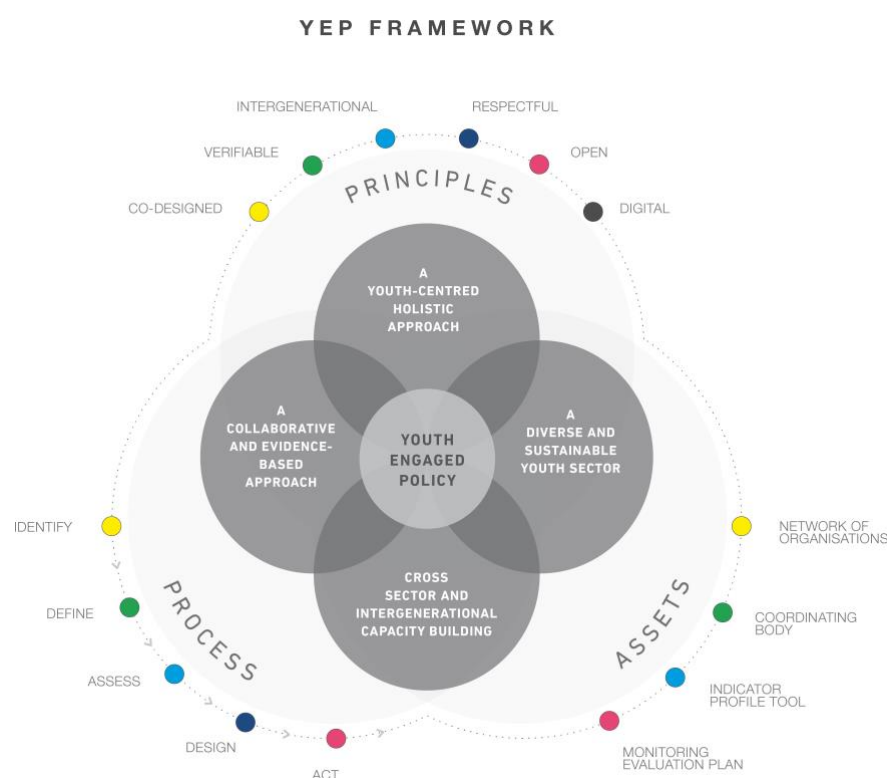
Policy (Un)consultation groups bring together politicians and young people (paid) to discuss and formulate policies. Groups are resourced by Government and organised via a network of peak organisations. These groups include outreach workers to assist and train young people to communicate their lived experiences, to generate and utilise digital data to explore, advice and scrutinise issues and policies. Participants argued that these groups would guard against tokenistic consultations, and ensure young people are permanently represented and involved in policy development from start to end.

These ideas highlight the need for:

- Institutional commitment to participation of young people and their advocates in agenda-setting, policy consultation, advice, scrutiny and evaluation;
- Co-investment in a youth-led and intergenerational network of organisations;
- A coordinating entity to resource and broker engagement through providing training, mentoring and consulting with and by young people, and using youth-led knowledge to produce policies and respond to issues affecting young people;
- Resourcing local collaborative community spaces that mediate relations between Government, NGO and community agencies with particular focus on creating avenues for feedback on the effects of state' policies on specific groups, promoting opportunities for new ways of thinking about and enabling diversity and inclusion;
- Resource the capacities of young people to work with policy makers at all levels through bottom up advocacy and increase the relevance and influence of young people's perspectives across all areas and levels of Government.

### ACHIEVING A YOUTH ENGAGED POLICY APPROACH

The findings have informed a framework for Youth Engaged Policy. The framework is comprised of four Strategic Focus Areas and three Components for Actualising Engagement (Figure 1). The YEP Framework. The YEP Framework is designed to guide thinking, research, investment, activities and advocacy.



**Figure 1 Youth Engaged Policy (YEP) Framework**

Using a collaborative process this project has developed some of the assets that can support operationalisation of the Framework, specifically indicators of youth engagement and an assessment tool: the *Youth Engagement Profile* (YEP). Unlike standard indexes or monitoring and evaluation tools, the YEP supports a holistic identification and assessment of

critical issues. It produces an accessible profile (YEP.au) for the identification, assessment and design of responses to policy, practice and service issues. It is flexible, context-sensitive and participants in the assessment and design phase of this project found it easy to use.

The YEP.au process and profile tool provides a framework for engagement for governments and organisations at all levels, as well as individual policy initiatives. It combines the best of a range of approaches from consultation to co-design and methods including focus groups, audits, surveys, ideation and planning exercises. The YEP.au process and tool can produce a holistic set of policy-specific recommendations to action and evaluate.

All participants, young and adult, in this project asserted the value of including young people in policy making processes. For that to occur, organisations that make policy must develop iterative and agile responses grounded in young people's views and experiences. The YEP framework offers a way for policy makers to work towards that goal and to make fairer, better, and more effective policy, with young people, that will benefit the broader community.

## CONCLUSIONS

The YEP project found that positive views of the role young people should play in policy making are not always evidence in practice. While there are some stand-out mechanisms for consultation and collaboration there is no comprehensive understanding or approach to youth engagement. From the perspective of policy practitioners and young people, the tools and mechanisms of engagement, the infrastructures supporting engagement, and organisational and community cultures of participation are uneven, sometimes weak and ineffective or inaccessible. For young people, there is a potent lack of respect for young people and the role they play in Australia society in the present and future. Issues associated with resourcing and structural inequalities alongside challenges in cultivating cultures and processes for inclusive forms of policy making and evaluation in community and government organisations were identified across the project. Encouragingly, policy makers expressed readiness to explore initiatives to address those deficiencies, and both young and adult participants enthusiastically developed new ideas to facilitate engagement.

In line with a desire for a fresh approach, we developed a holistic, accessible and adaptable mechanism for identifying and assessing the conditions underpinning youth engagement in Australian governance and policy making – the YEP. This tool is supported by a flexible framework that enables policy processes to meaningfully engage with diverse young people and achieve a transformation in policy making that encourages and includes young people and their communities as active participants.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research support the following key policy recommendations:

- Reinstate representation across government through a Minister for Youth.
- A properly resourced, national youth peak body to provide an independent voice and links between policy makers and young people.
- Novel approaches to working with young people across government to advise, scrutinise and propose policy.
- Increase the commitment to independent representation by a well-resourced National Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- Innovation funding for youth-led and youth-serving organisations to address the drivers and barriers to participation including poverty, inequality and exclusion.

# Introduction

Outcomes for Australian young people are precarious despite the highest levels of economic growth, educational attainment and digital connectivity ever seen. In 2016 they experience high unemployment and underemployment, debt, insecure housing, anxiety and depression and the forecast is for more uncertainty. And more change. Efforts to respond to evolving international and local economic, social, ecological and political conditions have insufficiently considered the views and visions of young people themselves.

Current policy making processes view young people as a marginal population - whose needs and interests are secondary to that of the general, adult, population. Additionally, young people experience compounding forms of disadvantage and exclusion, in employment, housing affordability, high cost of education and transport. For example, around one in three young Australians are unemployed or underemployed (FYA, 2015) and debt associated with higher education costs is estimated to be greater than \$7.2 billion (Universities Australia, 2015). The current costs of home ownership - at around 9 times average yearly earnings - are widely recognised to be out of reach for young people (Demographia, 2016). When combined with adult-centred, elite and instrumental forms of engagement often favoured by public institutions, the views, visions and direct actions of many young people are not seen, heard or acted upon. While new forms of participation - especially via digital media - offer real opportunity to embed diversity in young people's participation in government and community decision making, young people are more marginalised from policy processes than ever before.

'Engagement' in policy terms often refers to getting young people involved in prosocial ways in education, training and community life. However, this project reinterprets engagement normatively – as a commitment to listening to, understanding and collaborating with young people in policy processes. Engagement must therefore include strategies for communication and decision-making that are responsive to young people's expectations and capacities.

However, in recent years, federal support for mechanisms to research, design and monitor policy issues from youth perspectives has been scaled back. Consequently, the capacity of public policy to be responsive to young people's perspectives is diminished. This presents a need - and opportunity - to develop a fresh approach and innovative practices of engagement to deliver better policy outcomes for all. We need a radically different model of *Youth Engaged Policy Making* that will deliver *Benefit to All*.

The Youth Engaged Policy (YEP) project has taken up this provocation to look at how 'engagement' is understood and what can support processes that consider young people's interests as central to the development and success of policy. YEP brought together young people, researchers, youth sector agencies and other experts in community engagement, urban planning, policy and design to investigate and explain the current core issues around youth engagement in Australia and to develop a set of recommendations that would enable and enhance the role of young Australians in policy making.

The research was supported and led by the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre and the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University in partnership with URBEGO, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Youth Action NSW, the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia and Professor Ariadne Vromen.

# Young people, policy making and engagement

There is longstanding national and international interest in children and young people's rights and capacities in relation to their social, civic, and political participation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the right for young people to participate in decisions that affect them. Some Australian jurisdictions have legislated for engagement with young people (e.g., in New South Wales through the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1998) or an Advocate or Commissioner for children and young people (e.g., NSW Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014). These entities champion participation rights and have significantly advanced institutional mechanisms identifying and developing policy that benefits children and young people. Over the past four decades, community groups and non-government organisations (NGOs) have also promoted young people's participation in political, social and community decision making (Willow, 2002, Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010, Collin, 2015). However, while these efforts aim to enable and encourage young people's participation in government and community decision making, engagement in policy processes is haphazard and uneven across settings and portfolios. The reasons for this are varied and include the persistent view that young people are apathetic or lack the knowledge and capacity to usefully inform policy, tokenism, adult-centred models favouring participation by select 'expert citizens', lack of resourcing across relevant sectors and the effects of the dominance of market and instrumental approaches to governance (Bessant, 2004, Bell et al., 2008, Vromen and Collin, 2010). Research tends to focus on young people and what they are – or are not – doing and policies emphasise the role of civic education, formal political participation and a new and novel form of market-oriented action, such as social enterprise.

Broadly speaking engagement can be understood as active participation, a commitment to a social context and shaping the kind of society that people want to live in. Policy making is a process encompassing the way issues of concern become public and collective, how decisions are made that lead to their codification in rules and regulations, and how these are applied or resisted and to what effect.

## AN INTERNATIONAL VIEW

There has been much recent interest in the diversification of contemporary forms of participation - prevalent, but not always particular to young people (Bennett, 1998, Norris, 2003, Vromen, 2012). This includes new repertoires of individualised and networked action – or 'connective action' (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012) – as well as local and everyday practices around issues of personal and collective concern (Harris and Wyn, 2009). Young people are also engaging across multiple sites, and in both formal and informal decision making processes with NGOs, government and online communities (Collin, 2015). These movements all indicate diversity and richness in the ways young people engage with and express their view on matters of concern.

The widespread use of the Internet and social media has increased the visibility of social unrest and uprising across the globe, and improved significantly the ability for people to organize and come together around common concerns. Mass demonstrations such as the "Arab Spring" in the Middle East and Northern Africa, the Spanish "Indignados", and many others in Chile, Turkey, Brazil, Romania, Venezuela, Hong Kong, Ukraine and Greece, challenge the present institutional, political and economic establishments of governments and their associations with corporations and other vested interests. The proliferation of such events, and their concentration in time, demonstrates critique and action by many young people of political, social and economic systems operating at multiple geographical scales.

It is too simplistic to interpret social unrest as a manifestation of youth discontent and mobilisation alone, but such movements do signal a need to acknowledge the central role young people can play in critically engaging with issues, systems and structures of governance – as well as visioning alternative futures. These movements engage a diverse range of people indicating the many reasons behind discontent and the complexity of the relations that form around them. Some participants are politically driven, others are mobilised by social or economic concerns. These reveal a series of challenges for contemporary societies across a wide range of concerns held by - and affecting - young people.

Despite the increasing calls from young people and those who work with them, as well as institutional recognition of the need for a participation model that is more inclusive and supportive of youth organizations (European Commission 2013), many efforts at the intra-state, national and local level remain focused on standard institutional arrangements rather than transforming institutions, enhancing agency of young people or more open or creative approaches to governance. The failure of governments at all levels to engage effectively with young people is contributing to declining levels of trust, along with a turn away from government towards other targets of civic and political action (Norris, 2002, Bang, 2005, Collin, 2015). While an increase in diverse forms of political action may be a positive thing for democracy, there is not as yet a commensurate shift in policy processes to leverage diverse knowledge across all levels or areas of government.

What this means, in simple terms, is that the chasm between institutions of government and their policy processes and the ‘issues-based politics’ of young people is widening. We are missing opportunities to harness the knowledge, creativity and enthusiasm of young people and to better understand issues and problems from their perspectives. What’s more, the potential to generate better responses to policy issues – and enhance the chances that these will lead to positive outcomes for young people and the wider community.

## LOCAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While the discourse of youth participation has achieved almost mainstream status in Australia, the extent to which young people’s participation is considered, facilitated or encouraged varies across jurisdictions according to the type of public body and the community of children and young people concerned. There are few legal obligations to involve young people and changes in government are often accompanied by significant shifts in political commitment, policy and funding. To create effective policy that can enable children and young people to thrive, Australian Governments at all levels must hear and work with young people’s views and ideas. However, in 2014 the Federal Government discontinued funding for a number of mechanisms – government-led and community-led - for engaging widely with young people and those who work with them. These include the Australian Youth Forum (AYF), the Youth Advisory Group to the Minister for Communications, National Youth Week, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition and the Youth Studies Clearinghouse. Support has been forthcoming for elite, leadership initiatives (such as the Y20 Summit held in association with Australia hosting the G20), however, there is no current framework to support children and young people’s participation and representation in government policy and decision-making. The creation of a federal Children’s Commissioner is a major advance, but is one strategy where many are needed.

While institutional support and representation has been varied, there is a strong history in Australia of community organisations, government agencies, NGOS, and state and national peak bodies advocating for children and young people’s participation in community and

government decision-making, and indeed there are children's commissioners appointed in most States and Territories and at a national level. However, there are inconsistent and generally weak processes for young people's ongoing involvement in many aspects of policy development and implementation (Collin, 2015). This is the case particularly across policy areas not deemed specific to child or youth affairs. Community and government engagement with children and young people in policy decisions is often tokenistic. This undermines potential innovation and benefits for the whole community.

In Australia today despite the highest levels of economic growth, educational attainment and digital connectivity ever seen, young people have not necessarily shared the benefits. Young people today may have a lower standard of living than their parents at a similar age (Daley and Wood, 2014). In 2016 they experience high unemployment and underemployment, debt, insecure housing, anxiety and depression (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015).

And yet against this backdrop, government policy development has not considered the views and interests of young people as particularly important. Whilst it could be argued that the global economic and social forces that have driven some of these changes are not always capable of being altered by the decisions of individual governments, there has still been no particular effort to include young people in a conversation about how those changes may be addressed.

Even in areas of policy where young people are directly involved, their views are not often sought. In education in recent years we have seen the development of a National Curriculum. It has been developed without the benefit of the views of the students that would be taught the curriculum or those being taught the existing curriculum for their insights or suggestions for improvement. In 2009 the Federal Government announced the Youth Compact, a significant policy initiative designed to increase young people's engagement with education and training. Its implementation included the use of restrictions on eligibility of welfare benefits and legislative changes to obligations to attend schooling. Once again this impactful initiative was developed without the benefit of consultations with young people.

When combined with adult-centred, elite and instrumental forms of engagement often favoured by public institutions, the views, visions and direct actions of many young people are not seen, heard or acted upon. While new forms of participation - especially via digital media - offer real opportunity to embed diversity in young people's participation in government and community decision making, young people are more marginalised from formal policy processes than ever before. In recent years youth-led organisations, movements, campaigns and social enterprises have emerged (Walsh and Black, 2011). New collaborations between young people and adults (e.g., the Youth Partnership Project), initiatives driven by young people with specific interests or lived experience (such as Indigenous young people, migrant or young people living with a disability) have developed in partnership with youth peak bodies (e.g., the Koori Youth Council associated with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria). Young people are also joining and contributing to local, online and loose networks for action around issues that matter to them (Harris and Wyn, 2009, Vromen, 2011, Vromen et al., 2014, Collin, 2015). This diversification in the ways in which young people participate has had some effect on policy processes of one kind or another. However, the inconsistency with which formal processes engage with young people and the precariousness of funding and limited access to forms of institutional power suggest we are not maximising the potential for young people and policy makers – in and outside government – to collaborate to address policy problems.

Finally, while recognising young people's agency, a simple commitment to young people's participation places undue pressure on young people to overcome the substantial structural barriers that delimit the ways in which they can make their voices heard, and marginalise their concerns within broader processes of public policy making. There is opportunity and need for a new model that will engage young people – particularly those most often marginalised or excluded by existing mechanisms or structures – in the creation and scrutiny of national Australian policy that affects them.

## STUDYING PARTICIPATION AND POLICY PROCESSES

Studies of youth participation in policy making often focus on conceptual or practical frameworks to guide practice (Arnstein, 1969, Hart, 1992, Westthorp, 1987, Tisdall and Davis, 2004, Shier, 2001), analyse policy frameworks (Bessant, 2004; Collin, 2009; Farthing, 2012) or young people's views (Tisdall and Davis, 2004, Wood, 2010, Singer and Chandra-Shekeran, 2006, Matthews, 2001, Collin, 2015). However, the views of policy makers or people in NGOs and community organisations who research, advocate and interpret policy through the services and work their organisations do are often absent. As such, there is limited evidence of the differences or similarities between the views of young people and policy makers. Even less common are research projects that utilise participatory approaches, bringing together diverse stakeholders – young and old – to collaboratively explore key issues and design responses. Much research looks at case studies in various contexts or organisational settings but rarely do in a comprehensive national way. This project therefore sought to elucidate, contrast and explain views on what engagement in policy process is and what it should be – in different settings and across sectors and generations.

While recognising the limitations of principles and frameworks, many have advanced theory and practice in the area of youth participation, providing ways for thinking about power, processes and resources. Therefore, the current project aimed to explore principles and practice models, methodologies and tools that could help advance a new approach to young people's involvement in policy processes at the federal level. The international literature and best practice approaches indicate that models should have the following characteristics:

- ☐ Be inclusive and encourage diversity;
- ☐ Be inter-generational and value the expertise of children and young people, parents, youth and social workers, policy-makers, educators and service-providers;
- ☐ Utilise standards and indicators and undertake regular monitoring and assessment.
- ☐ Be sustainable and lead to policies that enable children, young people and their communities to thrive.

This project has investigated how these might be applied to a national approach.

## PROJECT AIMS

The project aimed to answer the following research questions:

- How are youth participation and engagement understood by diverse stakeholders?
- What are critical issues for youth engagement in policy making at the national level?
- What is the current health of youth engagement in policy making?
- What principles, strategies and resources could enable better engagement?
- What frameworks for engaging with young people in policy making at a national level, including creative and technology based models could promote better policy processes and outcomes?

The objectives of this project were to explain current views on young people's participation in policy making, provide insights and tools relevant to the national level and that can be used to benchmark and inform responses to enhance engagement. This included a holistic set of proxy indicators for youth participation at the national level, a series of policy priorities, and ideas for promoting youth engagement in policy processes. The project sought to develop, pilot and assess a methodology for bringing together a range of constituents to assess, analyse and prioritise, design and advocate for a model for engaged policy-making and youth participation in Australia and trial a model of engagement that mobilises existing expertise, data and dialogue on youth engagement at the national and city/town level.

# Methodology

Based on a participatory design approach (Hagen et al. 2012), the YEP project has adapted the URBEGO Youth Engagement Index (YEI): a process tool for the identification, assessment and co-design of responses to the underlying conditions for civic, social, economic and political engagement. Developed from the Circles of Social Life framework (James, 2015) the YEI provides a detailed, flexible and scalable five-step process: engagement, exploration, definition, co-creation and evaluation. Within this approach, a variety of methods were used as described below.

Participants came from 68 community and non-government organisations, businesses, advocacy organisations, local, state and federal government departments and agencies across areas of education, health, justice, social services, tax and law, security, communications, Indigenous and multicultural affairs, disability and environment. Participants were aged 13 to 55 years and were mainly from New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. In this report anyone who was not a young person is called a 'policy maker'.

## PROCESS

### 1. ENGAGEMENT

In this phase a broad consultation was undertaken and the project team was established. Steps included:

- ☐ Establishing the project team and steering committee seeking a diverse range of partners across the youth sector. While a broad partnership across different levels of government, civil society and business was sought, the final team was comprised of youth peak organisations, researchers and an SME.
- ☐ Engaging diverse stakeholders and user communities throughout the process.

### 2. EXPLORATION

In this phase the framework for the project was defined and existing and new data was generated to guide the focus of action. The following work was undertaken:

- ☐ Process design and development of methods.
- ☐ A thematic literature review and identification of relevant available data.
- ☐ Analysis of the current state of youth participation at national level looking at existing public data and existing policy documents.
- ☐ Collection of case studies demonstrating diverse examples of formal and informal, government, NGO, community and youth-led and digital examples of participation.
- ☐ Discussion forums with policy makers to explore key concepts and experiences.

### 3. DEFINITION

Based on the exploration phase a set of critical issues and indicators for youth engagement are developed and then assessed by constituents. This stage includes:

- ☐ A workshop with young people and policy makers to identify critical issues and proxy indicators for youth engagement at the national level.
- ☐ Refine the index of youth engagement (YEI) and related survey instrument.
- ☐ Assessment of youth engagement via an online survey administered to all participants in the project. Survey results are analysed and a 'profile' is generated.

### 4. CO-CREATION

A process where young people work with policy makers to generate ideas including:

- ☐ A co-creation workshop involving young people and sector representatives.

- Prioritisation of scenarios based on their desirability, feasibility and change potential.

## 5. EVALUATION

This phase concerns the validation of process and co-creation results though:

- Collecting feedback about the engagement process by stakeholders, project team and steering committee and refining the methodology.
- Assessing ideas and innovative concepts and formulate policy recommendations.

## METHODS

**Literature review and collation of Australian and international case studies (December 2015-April 2016)** A thematic literature review on youth participation and engagement was conducted. A set of 12 national and international case studies were also developed to assess current the range of different approaches and practices internationally (Appendix 1).

**Stakeholder Forums (February-March 2016)** Two-hour, facilitated forums were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Perth, with policy makers (n=61). Forums canvassed how they perceived and/or operationalised youth engagement, explored enablers and barriers to engagement, and discussed ideas about effective strategies or practices.

**Critical issues workshops (March 2016)** Two workshop were conducted in Perth (involving sixteen young people aged 16 – 20) and Sydney (involving 18 young people, researchers, youth agency representatives and policy makers). In small groups, participants reviewed case studies, mapped perceptions of youth engagement, refined enablers and barriers, and identified critical issues. From the findings, a set of twenty eight indicators were developed in four domains according to preconditions, cultural, political and economic (Figure 2).

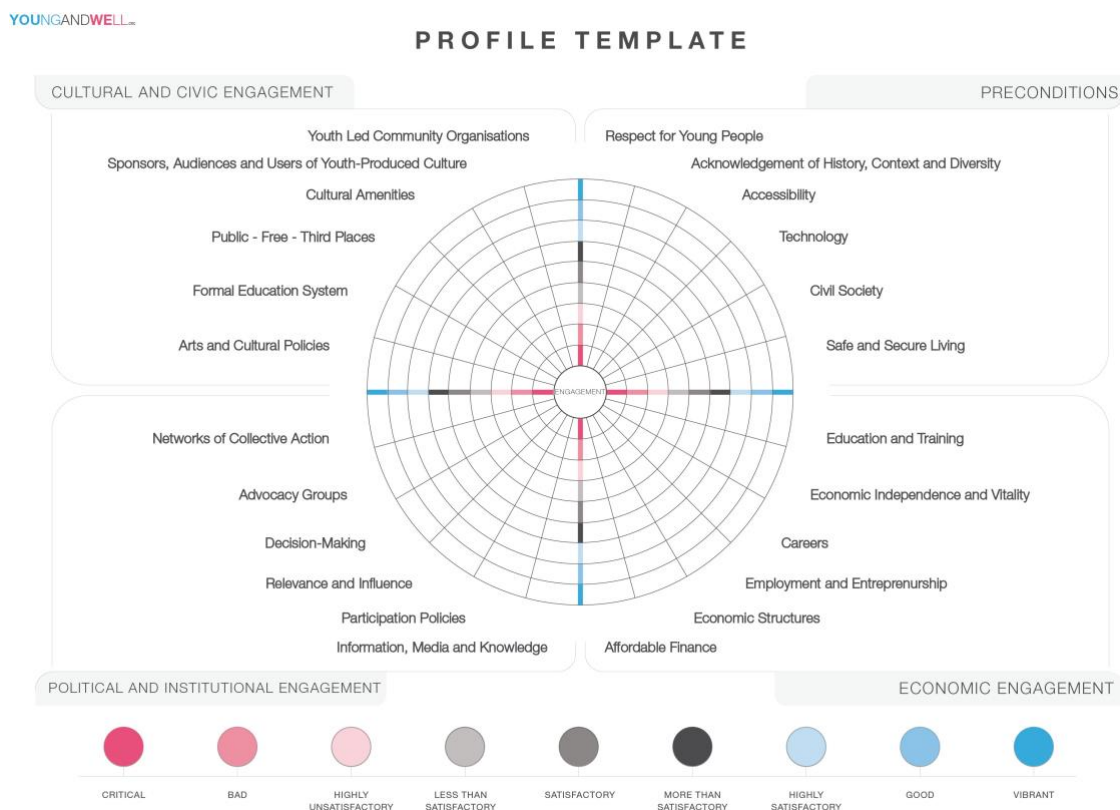


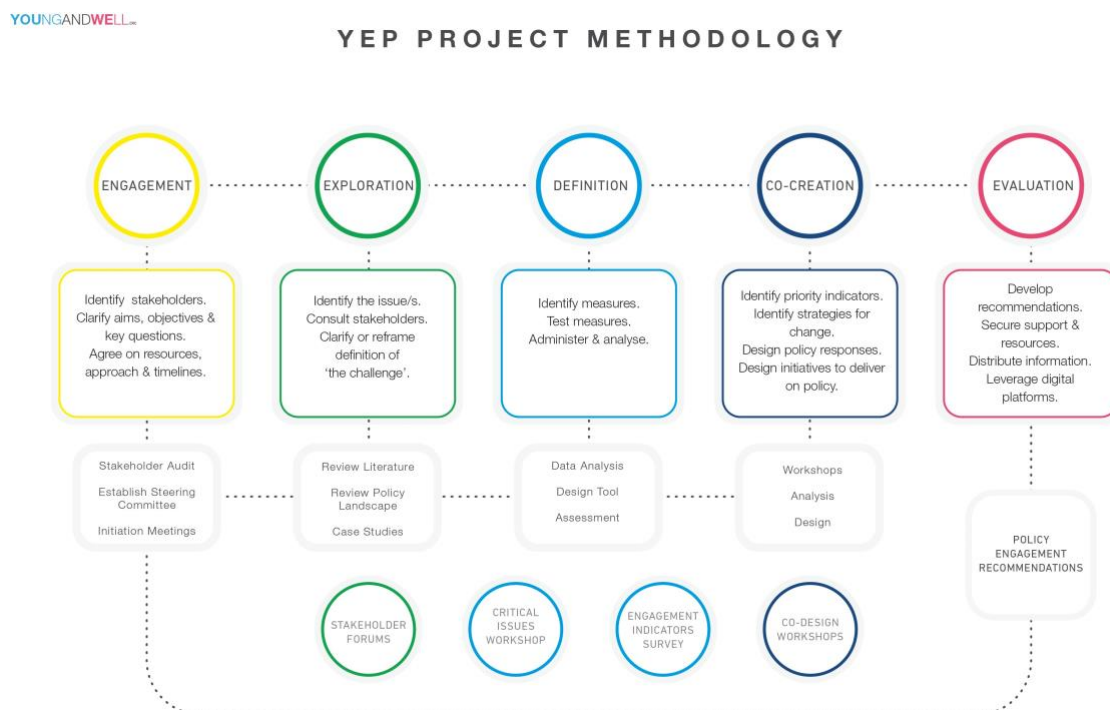
Figure 2 YEP Workshop Critical Indicators

**Online survey (March 2016)** Twenty eight questions to measure each of the indicators were administered via an anonymous online survey distributed to all participants in the YEP project (n=110). Fifty eight responses were used to visualise the YEP.au profile.

**Co-design workshop (March 2016)** A facilitated full-day participatory workshop was held in Sydney. Forty three young people, researchers, youth agency representatives and policy makers from across Australia participated in small group brainstorming and whole group evaluation and discussions to co-design specific strategies to enable policy makers to engage with young people in the policy process.

All forum and workshop activities followed established small/focus group facilitation methods, and adapted procedures used by Bell et al. 2008. Audio recordings of all forum and workshop interactions were transcribed and additional data consisted of notes and diagrams made by individuals and small group work with additional researchers taking notes.

The literature review, case study and forum discussion analysis informed the activities and collaborative analysis of the critical issues workshops. At these, participants examined and discussed key elements of the YEI as developed by URBEGO for assessing civic engagement at the level of local government (and tested and validated across a number of European and South American cities). Work undertaken by young and adult participants in the critical issues workshops drove the adaptation of the YEI in line with the aim to produce the YEP assessment tool (Appendix 4). In the co-design workshop participants discussed the YEP.au profile generated, developed archetypes of key stakeholders and proposals for strategies to promote a youth engaged approach to policy making in Australia. The YEP research process is captured in Figure 3.



**Figure 3 YEP Research Process**

# Key Findings

## VIEWS ON ENGAGEMENT

Engagement means very different things to different stakeholders. Across the forums – and between government and non-government, adult and youth stakeholders, there were some shared, diverse and sometimes conflicting views. Overall, participants - young and older - viewed *engagement as directly connected to establishing agendas and processes of decision-making*. There was a strong sense that engagement should be meaningful and that that policy makers should engage with young people when researching or designing policies or programs on issues of direct concern, such as housing, transport, education, health and mental health, justice and policing. Forums in Canberra revealed that participants generally saw less value, and identified fewer mechanisms by which young people are, could or should be involved in relation to what were seen as ‘big P policy matters’ – for example, regarding science and innovation, taxation and security. Policy makers tended to see engagement as a means by which to improve policy outcomes; young people described engagement in terms of improving perceptions of young people and intergenerational relations.

Previous research on youth participation in government and community decision making identified policy makers approached the concept of how young people should be involved in policy processes in broadly two ways. Firstly, from a ‘top-down perspective’, reflecting a concern for how organisations – government and non-government – manage initiatives to engage young people in policy processes. Secondly, the authors identified a ‘bottom-up perspective’ which advocated for participants to determine how they are involved and highlighted a concern for diversity and representativeness (Bell et al., 2008). While these distinctions were broadly reflected in the YEP stakeholder forums, three particular perspectives on *engagement* were discernible:

- *Inclusion* of young people, their views or data about young people into the policy process – especially young people who are marginalised or disadvantaged
- *Leadership* by young people in organisations or initiatives
- *Collaboration* with young people in policy processes

These were expressed in all the forums, there were some differences depending on the jurisdiction and between young people and policy maker views as will be indicated below.

## INCLUSION

Direct engagement with young people was highlighted as important by policy makers, because “it creates a voice for young people and influence” and “results in real outcomes” (Perth forum). Some were concerned with the ways “systems and institutions are not willingly to engage with young people without broker” (Melbourne Forum) and saw policies and initiatives to present or include young people and their perspectives as addressing persistent barriers to engagement with young people. Engagement in this sense was specifically seen as a way to enable marginalised, disadvantaged or disenfranchised young people *to have a voice*, leading to more effective and efficient policy outcomes. Youth-serving and youth-led organisations were seen as significant in brokering participation, though there was less clarity and agreement on how young people can be best engaged with, despite the many resources and culturally-appropriate models for participation that have been developed.

Policy makers in Canberra valued data *about* young people – for instance, online data or reports written about young people’s views and policy positions presented by youth advocates – were seen as the best means by which to include youth perspectives in policy

making. In contrast, participants from state and local government tended to express the view that young people – especially disadvantaged - should be directly involved in policy processes. They described engagement as a multifaceted, dynamic, issue and time-specific activity – usually in relation to a particular policy area. This occurs in a number of platforms, around planning and consultation and “is about getting young people’s voices into decision-making” and “having someone advocating for young engagement” (Perth Forum). Not only “the bright things” (Melbourne Forum) – young people who put themselves forward as leaders or representatives in adult or organisationally-led initiatives.

## LEADERSHIP

Young people and policy-makers alike defined engagement as youth-led. This referred to organisations established and run by young people, as well as roles created for young people in policy processes. While it was acknowledged that “sometimes young people say no to consultation and find other ways to do their own advocacy” (Melbourne Forum), most felt that this kind of engagement required skilled young people to advocate on behalf of their peers. Many policy makers highlighted that advocacy is increasingly “overwhelming for Ministers and public servants” and that briefings are not always pre-planned, there is increasingly less time to undertake consultations and specialised or expert knowledge is more valued in many areas of policy (Canberra Forum).

While young people and many forum participants from advocacy and NGOs favoured more participatory and distributed forms of engagement – involving more and diverse young people – those working in departments, particularly at a federal level felt that representation of young people’s needs and views was best undertaken by leaders and youth advocates. One participant said: “Policy making utilises a clinical, brief argument, there are restrictions, boundaries... it’s not effective to have young people there, ‘in the room’” (Canberra forum).

In addition to a conception of engagement as ‘leadership, in some contexts policy makers prefer existing outputs of research, demographics, strategic alliances with individuals and sector representatives and advocates: “Do you need to have direct youth engagement with government? Or do you [source insights from] other groups? The message is going to be diluted but it is going to be diluted anyway.” (Canberra Forum)

## CO-CREATION

The language of ‘co-creation’ and to a lesser extent, collaboration, is present in the minds of policy makers. Some well-recognised organisations, programs and initiatives in co-creation and partnerships with young people appear to have resonated with policy makers, although few examples of the practice of co-creation within government processes were provided.

The idea of co-creating policy agendas and responses with young people was described in all forums conducted as ‘building respect’: “Involving young people in policies that affect them is Respect”. It is the valuing of their view-points and differences. Some participants felt that engaging with young people enabled new ways of understanding and responding to policy problems: “Intergenerational learning is a key issue” (Melbourne Forum). Intergenerational collaboration was seen as requiring mutual respect and a willingness to engage on young people’s terms – presenting a radically different view of young people as knowledgeable and valued in community and government decision making.

Overall, participants supported the aims of the YEP.au project. There was a strong consensus within forums and across participants that both the *quantity and quality of youth engagement in policy making was currently inadequate*. The main reasons were attributed to deficiencies in the tools, structures and future plans for youth engagement in their own and

other organisations. Those participants working within local and state government, community and non-government organisations expressed interest in initiatives that would address those issues. Participants working in national or federal-level departments, agencies and organisations were less concerned about or supportive of young people's role in policy processes.

## BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

There are many case studies, formal policy mechanisms (such as the creation of the national Children's Commissioner and equivalents in many states), and collaborative governance and everyday engagement practices of many youth-serving and advocacy organisations which create opportunities for policy makers to engage with young people's perspectives in their work. However, participants in this project point to five key barriers to engagement with young people in policy processes.

### LACK OF RESPECT AND APPRECIATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Among young people and some adult stakeholders, there was a strong view that there was no respect for young people engaging in policy-making. Participants recounted that policy-makers demand respect from young people but “forget that respect needed to be earned” (Sydney Forum). Many felt young people's achievements as advocates were not acknowledged or celebrated. There was a perception that in formal participation processes, young people were not informed of the outcome of their engagement. This meant some people felt their involvement was tokenistic and worthless and that they had to justify their involvement: “Important people think that young people cannot help, do not believe that they can help. Why are you here? You need to prove why you are there.” (Perth Forum - young people; also Melbourne and Perth policy maker forum).

There was a strong view that policy makers are not aware of “how to respectfully engage with diverse [young people] and groups”. This is due to a lack of training on how to facilitate the engagement of diverse young people: “There is a marginalisation of Aboriginal young people and CALD young people”.

### INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Despite the general appreciation of the value and importance of engaging with young people, those within government, particularly in federal departments, highlighted the difficulty of changing the cultures and processes of politicians and departmental officials who view engagement with young people as unnecessary at best, highly risky at worst. Many policy processes were described as either inflexible, related to issues that young people could not advise on (such as tax or security) and unpredictable, past-paced and time-sensitive.

An increasing reliance on ‘outsourcing’ research and policy advice related to young people (to consultants, scholars and other agencies) means that government departments, offices and agencies do not always have internal resources and expertise to apply to engaging with young people. And while most participants felt that governments at all levels are key stakeholders and beneficiaries of research and policy proposals developed with young people, they were less confident that this was matched by a commitment to co-invest in organisations, networks and initiatives to generate data, insights and creative ideas to address policy issues.

### INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES

Across settings, sectors and generations, participants highlighted the constraints associated with limited investment in engagement – particularly for young people who experience

marginalisation or disadvantage. Young people and advocacy organisations, in particular, stressed that there was often a celebration and expectation that young people and youth-led initiatives would play a key role in research, design and other policy processes, but they are rarely appropriately resourced or remunerated to undertake this work. While it was appreciated that some organisations and initiatives (for example the Youth Partnerships Project, Western Australia) provide a model for collaborative funding arrangements that can support innovative approaches to engagement, these are often location-specific, short term or focused on one specific approach to capacity-building (e.g., youth enterprise).

One of the effects of this is that young people feel responsible for managing and financing their contributions to policy processes, despite the fact that many are still at school, unemployed or in low-paying jobs, have caring and other responsibilities. In addition, many cited lack of intergenerational guidance, resources and training meant that they “often do not feel prepared or resourced enough” for meetings with policy makers. New models of youth action and enterprise do not appear to be addressing the structural factors (particularly class) that can constrain some young people’s abilities to act, be seen and heard by policy makers. A more holistic approach that better enables government investment to be leveraged by new sources of funding is needed.

#### LIMITED UNDERSTANDING AND UTILISATION OF DIGITAL MEDIA

The social and collaborative affordances of new digital media technologies are viewed as risky and onerous by policy makers. While NGOs have been effective in using digital media to enhance engagement with young people in a wide variety of ways, governments at all levels have not. While recognising that young people are enthusiastic and creative in their technology use, policy makers tended to value digital media for enhancing communication to young people, adult-led consultations and access to data about young people.

Young people favour digital media for accessing and exploring information and organising. In safe online spaces they will express their views, but many will not share a view on an issue online if they feel it may lead to conflict (Vromen et al, 2015). Policy makers are yet to fully understand, appreciate and adopt effective ways to strengthen communication, trust and respect with young people. This means that digital media may potentially become a barrier – amplifying the lack of engagement – rather than an enabler of improved incorporation of young people’s perspectives in policy. As one participant noted: “Young People are skilled in social media. They are active in existing networks and share information and there has been a failure [by policy makers] to see this” (Melbourne Forum).

#### INSUFFICIENT NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE BROKERING ACROSS SECTORS

Despite significant resources and strong networks of youth-led and youth-serving organisations, these are not always coordinated, or well-positioned within government departments and agencies. Some policy makers noted they were not aware of organisations or resources that could support them to engage with young people. In contrast, NGO and advocacy organisations felt there was a substantial evidence base and many initiatives specifically designed to enable young people to advise on and scrutinise policy that were not appreciated or sought after by policy makers.

But whilst policy-makers focused more on evaluating the methods that limit engagement, the young people at the Perth’s forum described in more detail the difficulties that they face when engaging with policy makers and decision-makers. Overall, it was indicated that their engagement and achievements were not recognised by decision-makers and that there was a need to shift the current restrictive culture and practices of policy-making and to establish suitable networking, collaboration and remuneration of participants.

## ENABLERS OF ENGAGEMENT

Young people and policy makers alike identified a mix of material and discursive conditions that enable engagement. Policy makers identified cultures that value young people and participation, resources and more intergenerational ways of approaching policy problems as enablers of engagement. Young people highlighted resources, recognition and transparency as factors that establish environments that support and encourage their engagement.

### POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS THEY MAKE TO DAILY PUBLIC LIFE

Policy makers felt that youth-led government, non-government and community organisations all play a significant role in setting the tone for public discourse on young people. A broad commitment to enabling and respectful communication about young people encourages adults to recognise and value the role that young people can play in shaping society. It also encourages young people to seek opportunities to express their views, influence policy makers and adopt roles where they themselves can directly shape agendas and decisions.

Media representations of young people can work powerfully in both directions: to recognise and promote engagement, or to erase young people as legitimate citizens, to sensationalise or pathologise them and marginalise their interests. As the media diversifies, there are more opportunities for youth-led counter narratives, but mainstream media also has an important part to play.

### A VIBRANT AND DIVERSE YOUTH SECTOR

There is broad agreement that a vibrant and diverse youth sector is required for meaningful youth engagement to occur. This encompasses youth-led and youth serving organisations and enterprises, initiatives led and supported by government agencies, business as well as social movement and civic platforms, such as OurSay and GetUp. It also includes small local organisations, organisations that represent and advocate on behalf of young people who experience disadvantage or exclusion (for example, including those living with a disability, homeless and unemployed young people or recently arrived and refugee young people). While these organisations often provide services, they also play a critical role in working with young people to undertake research, develop policy positions and advocate.

A vibrant sector should also include funding to enable the development of cultures of *youth-led participation* that encourages *self-advocacy* by young people. Government and other actors can enable this by *engaging with a diverse range of groups and individuals*.

### CROSS SECTOR COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDING GOVERNMENT

Engagement can be enabled by structural and adult involvement (for example, to negotiate the material and political resources to have influence, as in the case of the offices of the Children and Young People's Advocates and Commissioners). Long and short term approaches that can respond to immediate and prospective policy matters are needed. These can include replicating large scale consultations for multi-year policy plans (such as the NSW Plan for Children and Young People, 2016-2019), or brief, issue-specific summaries of evidence and policy options.

In line with the emphasis of many policy makers on the distinct roles of a) institutional mechanisms and b) youth voice there was a strong preference for *consultation*, *partnerships* and *collaborations* across sectors and policy areas. In forums with local and state-level participants, key elements to operationalize those processes, included *co-creation* and *co-*

*design* (of programs and policies), *training* (for both young people and adult stakeholders) and *evaluation* of outcomes.

## SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODELS

Stakeholders have told us that young people's engagement in policy making needs time, resources and money. Backbone and distributed infrastructure to enable coordination and representation of the sector, research and train policy makers as well as young people in engagement: "People are enthusiastic about young people going to meeting but they are not resourced or skilled up to do that" (Perth Forum). Victoria was frequently put forward as a state with a successful model of public, private, community and philanthropic funding to enable a diverse youth sector to thrive. Across the project, stakeholders highlighted that a similar model at a federal level was crucial to policy processes that could be inclusive of young people's views.

Funding should also enable youth-led initiatives, including access to interest-free finance to 'execute' their ideas. Government should also consider how to incentivise new streams of funding from non-profits, for-profit companies (including the creation of B-corporation category) and philanthropy. As a key beneficiary of positive engagement, government funding can play a symbolic and practical role in signalling support and providing leverage for additional funding streams.

## ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Participants acknowledged the variety of *mediums and platforms* through which engagement can and should occur, including face-to-face meetings, 'traditional' media (e.g., print, audio, visual), and via new communications technologies (e.g., social media, mobile devices).

Design and adaptive technologies, including video links and infographics, to establish better access and easy to read information can all be used to enhance communication and build knowledge and capacity of policy makers and young people alike. The more diverse the range of communication modes and content, the greater the potential reach and engagement with diverse communities. This also extends to making technical and formal language more accessible, enhancing the capacity of a wide range of stakeholders to engage. As one Perth Forum member put it: "meetings need to use language and terminology that is age appropriate without dumbing it down".

Social media can be a space of engagement for decision makers and young people, but requires positive, trusting and respectful relationships to be established. Research finds that young people may be more likely to share political views if they can be anonymous online or outside of peer networks, but that in many cases they prefer face to face engagement on issues of concern. A combination of media and physical mechanisms for engagement are most effective.

## IMPROVED INFORMATION AND TRANSPERENCY IN POLICY PROCESSES ACROSS GOVERNMENT

When quality and timely information, training and appropriate methods are used, young people can participate fully in all aspects of policy and decision making. Young people's engagement should be mirrored "throughout the work that organizations conduct" (Sydney Forum) not treated as a marginal or separate area of activity. The outcomes of young people's engagement must be made public and shared with young people. All stakeholders and decision makers must report to young people the outcome of their involvement.

“Confidence building for young people needs to be built into the interactions with policy makers” (Perth Young People’s Forum). Meetings need to become welcoming environments that “believe that young people have something to offer” and “are accessible to young people with unique needs and are accessible for the unique needs of young people” (Perth Young People’s Forum).

## CRITICAL ISSUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

From the literature, forums and workshops it is evident that a range of concerns underlie the role young people play in policy processes. These can be summarised as individual, collective, institutional and social factors. Taking an ecological view (McLeroy, et al 1988) the relationships between these domains are as important as the critical issues pertaining to each one on their own.

### INDIVIDUAL

A range of issues influence how individual young people participate in informal and formal policy processes. Some young people felt they lack skills and knowledge of policy processes – from knowledge about policy issues through to how meetings are run and cultural protocols when engaging with different communities, levels of government and authorities – to effectively participate and be taken seriously. Similarly, policy makers at different levels indicated they felt ill-equipped to engage with young people, highlighting tools and strategies for effective practice and knowledge of appropriate use of digital media as two key areas.

While it is often taken for granted that young people have good access to technology, not all young people have an equal level of access – or capacity to fund their technology use and highlighted a burden placed on individuals to manage and resource their digital media for the purpose of engaging in networks, organisations and events.

### COLLECTIVE

Although there are a multitude of mechanisms, resources, programs and initiatives to promote young people’s participation in a range of ways, including in service design and delivery, in major policy consultations (e.g., around child abuse or state government youth plans) and increasingly in enterprise, these were mainly seen as directed towards and benefiting individuals. By contrast, a lack of resources that encourage groups and networks to form, public space and initiatives to encourage young people (plural) to collaborate, organise and express themselves were identified. Moreover, laws and policies that prevent groups of young people to congregate were viewed as a compounding factor creating both negative perceptions of young people by adults and authorities, as well as increasing a sense of alienation from formal processes of politics and policy.

A perceived decline in the capacity of advocacy organisations to work with young people to advance their needs and concerns was seen as a particular challenge in this space. While many young people identified service-provision and youth-led organisations (for example in multicultural affairs, disability and mental health services, climate change) as important to the ways young people’s issues are represented and addressed, they raised concerns about the way this also creates a silo effect, limiting the capacity of ‘the sector as a whole’ to organise and advocate for intersectional interests. It was also noted that, despite the rise of youth-led organisations, access to resources, finance, skills and networks was critical and that many young people face material and legal barriers to establishing organisations and enterprises.

## INSTITUTIONAL

Institutional barriers included lack of participation policies and limited influence via existing mechanisms. These were attributed to lack of respect for young people, poor cultures of collaboration, lack of commitment to public amenities and funding for youth activities, changing dynamics in policy processes (short time frames, political pressure and over-reliance on technical knowledge). While the creation of quasi-government or independent mechanisms for youth participation (e.g., Advocates and Commissioners) were seen as very important the hollowing out of departmental capacity, knowledge and interest in research and collaboration was seen affecting engagement in policy making. Increasing reliance on data and research by consultancies relying on secondary sources was seen as problematic.

## SOCIAL

There was a significant concern for the social and structural factors shaping youth participation. These included material concerns associated with insecure and unsafe housing, poor access to affordable, relevant employment and limited availability of equitable finance and employment for young people at the beginning of their careers. 'Post-material' concerns included lack of respect for young people, poor understanding or acknowledgement of history and marginalisation and discrimination in social, cultural and political debates.

## INDICATORS AND ASSESSMENT OF CRITICAL ISSUES FOR A HOLISTIC VIEW OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

These insights were used to modify the YEI and have produced a tool for assessing youth engagement in the Australian context: the Youth Engagement Profile (YEP). The YEP is an indicator tool for assessment of youth engagement in Australian policy making, built on the theory- and evidenced-based YEI, and co-developed by young and adult Australian stakeholders. A set of definitions and questions were developed (Appendix 3) so that the indicator tool could be piloted – in this case via an online anonymous survey to around 110 people involved in this project. The survey received 56 responses from people aged 14 – 64 years and the average age was 28. Of those who responded 84% were female, 14 spoke a language other than English with 10 different languages listed in total.

As Appendix 3 and Figure 4 indicate, the survey asked participants to consider and assess their level of satisfaction with youth engagement in four key domains. These included assessing the *Preconditions* that enable or prevent youth participation, the *Institutional and Political* level of support available for various forms of youth engagement, the access to meaningful *Economic participation* and the availability of resources to support engagement in *Civic and cultural life*. From these domains, a set of twenty-eight indicators were developed:

**1-The Pre-conditions** were rated by considering the level of participation of young people in *Civil Society*; the level of *Respect* that they receive; the *Acknowledgment of Historical Contexts and Needs* that shape diverse young people; how *Safe and Secure* are the *living conditions* of young people; and, their *Accessibility* to essential resources such as money or transport and open access to digital *Technologies*.

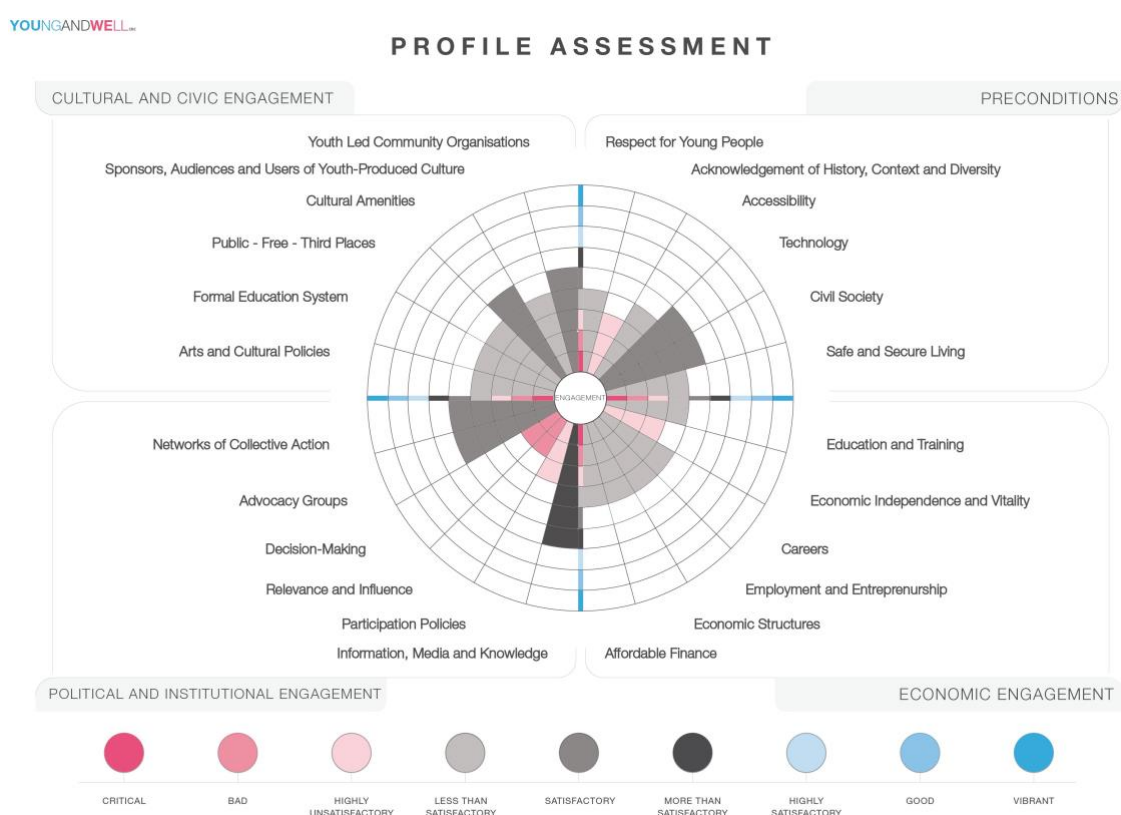
**2-Institutional and Political Participation** was rated by considering the level of satisfaction with opportunities to participate in *Networks and Collective Actions*; the effectiveness of *Advocacy Groups*; direct involvement of young people in *Decision Making*; their *Relevance and Influence* on policies; access and usage of *Information, Media and Knowledge*.

**3-Economic Participation** was rated by considering the level of satisfaction with young people's access to quality and affordable *Education and Training*; *Economic Independence and Vitality* through secure jobs and career paths; *Career Opportunities* through meaningful

employment and opportunities; the promotion of *Employment and Entrepreneurship Policies* based on sustainable and accessible operational standards and positive use of technology; openness of *Economic structures* that promote intergenerational exchanges and diversity; structural and financial support for *Entrepreneurship*.

**4-Civic and Cultural Participation** was rated by considering the level of satisfaction with young people's participation in community and cultural life via *Youth led Community Organisations*; the availability of *Cultural Amenities* such as museums, skate parks and libraries; the support of *Sponsors, Audiences and Users* to finance and celebrate cultural productions by young people; the open usage of *Public - Free - Third Places* (e.g. malls, parks, town squares); opportunities to learn arts and music within *the Formal Education System*; and, support within *Arts and Cultural policies* for youth culture.

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction for each indicator on a 9 point scale from critical to vibrant (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4 YEP.au**

The aggregated results demonstrates that, overall, this group felt that the conditions for youth engagement in *Policy Making* within the domain of Institutional and *Political Participation* is Unsatisfactory. The *Relevance and Influence* of young people and their participation in *Decision Making* are also seen as Bad. All the indicators set within the domain of *Economic Participation* are rated as either Highly Unsatisfactory or Bad. While the indicators of *Civil Society*, *Access to Technology*, *Cultural Amenities* and *Youth-led organisations* within the respective domains of *Pre-Conditions* and *Civic and Cultural Participation*, are all seen as areas where there is a satisfactory level of activity. The only area with a positive rating of

Good was access to *Information, Media and Knowledge* within the domain of Institutional and Political Participation. A summary of responses can be found in Appendix 4.

The assessment by the participants in the YEP project (Figure 4) demonstrates that, overall, this group felt that the conditions for youth engagement in Australian policy making are unsatisfactory, with the conditions for economic engagement in particular viewed as highly unsatisfactory to bad. While civil society, access to technology, cultural amenities and youth-led organisations were seen of areas where there is satisfactory activity, the relevance and influence and opportunities to participate in formal decision making were seen as bad. The only area with a positive rating was access to information, media and knowledge.

## REDEFINING AND CO-DESIGNING ENGAGEMENT

Earlier, we noted that engagement meant different things to different people, and the diversity of views across our young and adult participants, and between (and sometimes within) different groups. Despite those differing views, all participants agreed that engagement is valuable, and that it is directly implicated in agenda setting on policy as well as the actual process of decision making about policy. When we began this project one of our first questions was to ask what engagement is. Participants' convergence of opinion about the value and purpose of engagement combined with the experience and data we have gathered across our various research activities now allows us to answer a potentially more interesting question: What could engagement be? One key output of our work is a holistic, adaptable framework through which engagement can actually be operationalised (see Figure 5). Within that framework Principles, Process, and Assets represent the key components that need to be considered to facilitate engagement.

Principles underpin meaningful and effective engagement (see Appendix 3). They define the “rules of engagement” for both young people and policy makers, guide the approaches and actions of both young and adult stakeholders, and in so doing reflect the idea of engagement as an active and relational phenomenon. While policy is currently designed from the perspective of services and institutions, this approach centres people and the relationships they form with issues, institutions and structures. The process involves five key stages: Engage; Define; Assess; Design; and Act.

Engagement involves participants and so the first step, to *Engage*, involves working with diverse stakeholders to identify the broad aims and objectives and approach. Step two, *Define*, asks stakeholders to examine and discuss their own current perceptions and experiences of engagement. Definition begins to focus aims and objectives from step one, and to refine the current state of engagement. The next step, *Assess*, identifies critical issues and indicators of engagement, stakeholders' reactions to those issues, and adapts and formalises methods to capture comparable measures of engagement. During the *Design* step, stakeholders reflect on information gathered to date about critical issues, barriers and enablers of engagement and then co-develops specific responses that address and incorporate those factors and co-creates potential responses. The final step, *Act*, involves identifying the courses of action and resources necessary for the responses to be out in place, implementing responses, evaluation and monitoring. Steps in the framework are interconnected in that each is informed by earlier steps and informs later steps. As a whole the framework offers an applied method that could guide effective engagement between policy makers and the communities they serve. Overall, engagement should:

**Be guided by a set of principles** to encourage an evidence-based and agile approach that can flex and adapt to changing circumstances.

Promote **collaborative and youth-led initiatives**, rather than adult-led or consultative models. Intergenerational models that focus on exchange of knowledge and ideas were widely supported, as well as mechanisms and cultures that encourage young people to advocate and organise on a wide range of issues and evaluate policy outcomes.

Utilise **multiple and diverse strategies** to encourage mass and diverse forms of engagement over elite mechanisms (e.g., advisory boards) that favour ‘youth representatives’ over broad participation.

**Adopt networked and technology based approaches** that can generate better data by young people about their lived experiences, enable the use and visualisation of data *by young people*, technology-based strategies to build relationships, trust and respect between young people and authorities and decision makers.

Support and profile **culturally appropriate** approaches. Look for opportunities to profile and scale strategies that are based on cultural protocols (such as the Koorie Youth Council).

**Be resourced with investment from all stakeholders** including government, business, youth-serving organisations and young people. Innovative models for funding and sustainability need to be identified and pursued. Young people and those who work with them should not be expected to do this work for no or low fee.

Working in six small groups, workshop participants developed six initiatives that they argued would generate and facilitate youth engagement across relevant domains:

- **Shadow Youth Ministers.** Associated with every Federal Cabinet Member, Shadow Ministers are advisors to Federal Ministers and other MPs and support them to understand issues concerning young people and operate to produce informed policies. Participants argued that Shadow Youth Ministers would create a platform to connect young people with members of parliament and so facilitate the engagement of young people in policy-making.
- **Youth-led Federal Youth Ministry.** Government departments partnering with youth-led and intergenerational youth peaks to establish a Youth Ministry that is mandated to report to parliament and that oversees youth engagement. Participants suggested that a youth-led Ministry would enable multiple and diverse youth-led support networks to enhance opportunities for young people to connect and engage with relevant stakeholders.
- **Safe Collaborative Community Spaces.** Collaborative, multi-lingual and diversity-safe spaces where designated arbitrators bring together and mediate relations between Government, NGO and community agencies and minority and disadvantaged communities. Participants thought that such spaces could foster co-operative practices where people traditionally excluded from civic and political discourse could safely influence and engage in policy and decision making and change existing hostile and pre-conceived assumptions about their groups.
- **Youth Involvement Agency.** Similar to the Office for Digital Transformation, this would be funded and overseen by a Federal Minister for Youth in consultation with a youth-led committee. It would be committed to engaging with Elders, community role models and intergenerational organisations and agencies. The Youth Involvement Agency would act as a central point of contact accessible to all young people, connecting them to relevant stakeholders. Participants saw key roles of a Youth Involvement Agency as training, mentoring and consulting with young people, and using youth knowledges to produce policies and respond to issues affecting young people.
- **Policy (Un)consultation Groups.** (Un)consultation groups bring together politicians and young people (paid) to discuss and formulate policies. Groups are resourced by Government and organised via a network of peak organisations. These groups include outreach workers to assist and train young people to communicate their lived

experiences, to generate and utilise digital data to explore, advice and scrutinise issues and policies. Participants argued that these groups would guard against tokenistic consultations, and ensure young people are permanently represented and involved in policy development from start to end.

- **Federal Youth Department.** A youth-led department that connects diverse young people with stakeholders, and committed to diverse support and multilingual and multicultural services. Benefitting from intergenerational knowledge and collaborations and accountable to young people, a Federal Youth Department would encourage young people's engagement by offering training and mentoring, and enable connection through multilingual information via Councils, schools, social media and on-line platforms. Participants thought such a department would increase the relevance and Influence of the youth voice in Government.

The engagement initiative concepts generated in the co-design workshop fell under two broad umbrellas – Government centred and Community centred. Four of the initiatives described strategies that involved direct interventions or developments at Federal government level in the form of new or modified Positions or Departments. The remaining two initiatives called for interventions at the community level that emphasised cooperation, consultation and collaboration between community and government actors.

However, despite these differences, and in line with ideas that arose in earlier project activities, common themes occurred through the proposals. For example, youth-led activities were seen as crucial, as was the value of legitimate, non-tokenistic engagement surrounding ideas identified as relevant by young people themselves. Intergenerational collaborations were also identified as important, and participants across groups recognised the necessity to provide training and mentoring opportunities to young people to enable engagement to occur across diverse, isolated and underrepresented groups.

Unlike the stories of self-made success, many young people described significant material and post-material barriers to participation. These included challenges accessing resources and support for daily living – such as affordable housing, transport and employment. They also highlighted experiences of discrimination on the basis of age, gender, cultural background and mental health which they perceive to significantly constrain their opportunities to voice their opinions and be heard.

In contrast with the 'self-made' leader or entrepreneurial archetype increasingly celebrated in official narratives of youth engagement (e.g., Australian of the Year) most of the proposed strategies were aimed at enhancing group – or collective – voice. In developing strategies for improving engagement in policy making they identified addressing unequal power relations as the most significant concern.

# A Framework for Youth-Engaged Policy Making

The findings have informed a framework for Youth Engaged Policy (YEP). The framework is comprised of four Strategic Aims and three Components for Operationalising Engagement. These are briefly described below and are depicted visually in Figure 5. The YEP Framework.

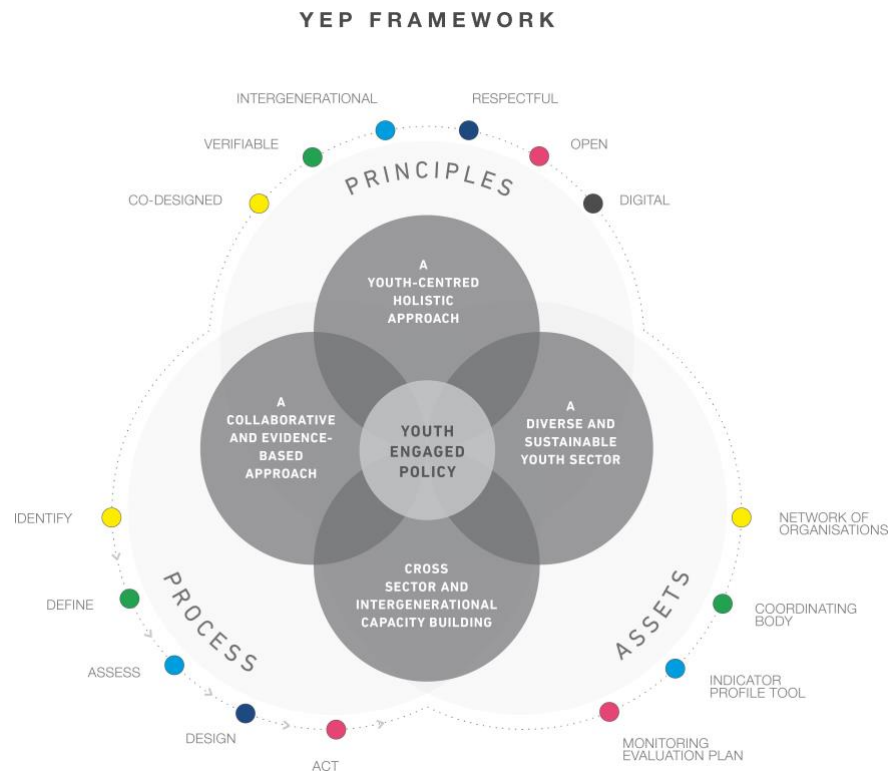


Figure 5 YEP Framework

## STRATEGIC AIMS

### A YOUTH-CENTRED HOLISTIC APPROACH

We need a system that designs policy around the needs and views of young people – not services or institutions. This requires individuals, communities, organisations and institutions to define their objectives in terms of the interests of and outcomes for young people. Organisations should, measure and report achievements and identify what doesn't work.

### A DIVERSE AND SUSTAINABLE YOUTH SECTOR

A holistic policy approach requires a vibrant public sector and civil society, digital networks and social enterprises that work with young people in all their contexts and diversity – including those who are disadvantaged. As all sectors (government, industry, and business) benefit from the participation of young people and the sectors that support them, investment in diversity and mass participation makes good sense.

## CROSS SECTOR AND INTERGENERATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

The contribution of a diverse youth sector will be best leveraged by improving the capacity of the whole system to collaborate, generate and broker knowledge. To do this better skills and knowledge of policy issues, formal political and policy processes, local, youth and institutional cultures are required by all stakeholders. Increased capacity to understand and work together is essential if we are to achieve better policy that leads to positive outcomes.

## COLLABORATIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED

To drive capacity building, innovative policy and impact, a coordinated, participatory and knowledge-driven approach is needed. Directly informed by young people and those who work with them this will ensure best practice and continuous learning in policy processes.

## COMPONENTS FOR OPERATIONALISING ENGAGEMENT

### PRINCIPLES

The principles reflect core commitments for engagement in policy processes. They have reflect the normative aspirations of young people and those who work with them, as well as the views of many working within government who wish to see changes and improvements in their departments and agencies.

TABLE OF PRINCIPLES	CO-DESIGNED	DESCRIPTION	EFFECT	STRATEGIES
	VERIFIABLE	Policy must be designed collaboratively between young people, policy makers and other stakeholders.	Gives voice and agency to those affected by policy decisions. Improves outcomes by incorporating real world experiences of those affected by policy. Makes use of institutional knowledge and experience. Incorporate expert skills and understanding.	Facilitated forums and workshops. Regular and ongoing feedback loops. Fund and use research. Opportunities for review and refinement of interim outcomes.
	INTERGENERATIONAL	Policy processes must collect and present quantitative and qualitative evidence about engagement.	Allows assessment and comparison of the quality and quantity of change across time and contexts.	Create new or modified indexes, scales and discrete indicators. Use and develop flexible, context specific tools and measures. Test, refine and administer tools and measures. Monitor change.
	RESPECTFUL	Policy processes must emphasise dialogue between young and adult stakeholders	Promotes a culture of participation emphasising 'voice' and 'listening' between young people and policy makers.	Multiple, regular and diverse strategies to engage with young and adult stakeholders in the contexts in which they live and work. Information and activities designed to be understandable to diverse audiences (e.g., clear jargon-free, youth- and adult-friendly version). Resources to facilitate attendance (e.g., travel expenses, reimbursements for unpaid participants).
	OPEN	Initiatives must involve genuine and respectful participation from all stakeholders.	Encourages and assures all stakeholders that their participation is meaningful and valued.	Information and facilitation emphasises mutual respect candid and realistic presentation of parameters and goals. inclusive and respectful language genuine and honest commitments from stakeholders.
	DIGITAL	Policy processes must be transparent and accessible.	Enables participation of diverse stakeholders. Promotes trust among participants, stakeholders, and observers. Improves policy and implementation.	Open-sourc of collaboration in policy design. Open access of anonymised information and data. Commitment to distribution of outputs in a timely manner.
		Initiatives build relationships and trust among diverse stakeholders via digital media.	Improve understanding of young people's views on issues. Capitalises on accessible, distributed platforms to improve communication between young people and other stakeholders. Provides opportunities for rich, dynamic and timely interaction.	Resource the presentation and distribution of information and outputs via digital mediums used by young people and their networks. Fund analysis and reporting of online youth civic and political discussion by and with young people. Utilise online spaces used by young people to engage in dialogue and debate on issues they care about.

**Table 1 Principles for Youth Engaged Policy making**

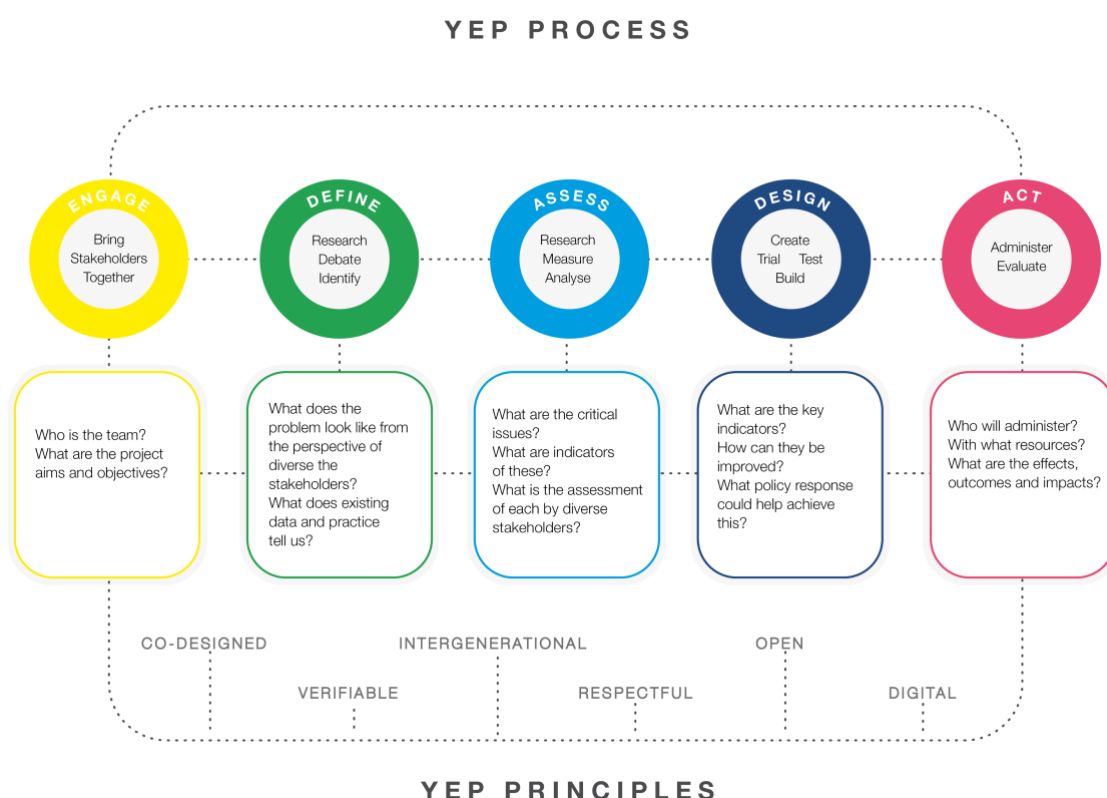
Adopting approaches that reflect each principle does not require a set formula or mode of policy development. Rather, each principle can be expressed by using one or more of the strategies or methods listed (and this is not an exhaustive list). The effect of applying these principles to different policy processes should be to enhance the opportunities to speak with,

listen and respond to the views of young people and co-generate ideas for responses to issues and policy probably

These principles are applied through a Process Design (Figure 6) which has clear steps but can be non-linear - that is, strategy, policy and project development may cycle back through different stages depending on what data and new understandings are produced.

## PROCESS

Process models provide guidance and can be adapted to meet the requirements of different organisations, settings and communities. The YEP process outlines how stages relate to the principles, the aims and key questions in a policy process. Methods identified in Table 1 can be applied at different stages and with different stakeholders.



**Figure 6 YEP process design**

## ASSETS

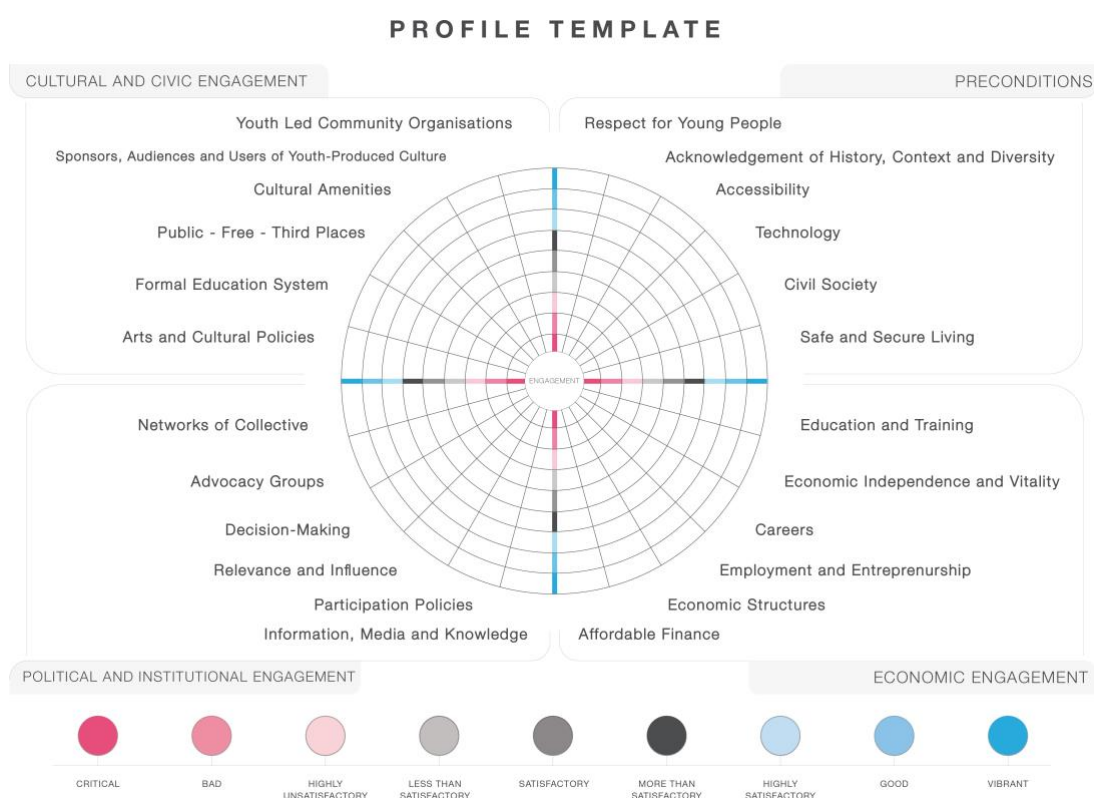
Effective engagement requires a range of resources. However, this project has identified the following as important for addressing inequalities that delimit the opportunities and influence of many young people and those who work with them.

**Network of organisations:** A diverse and thriving civil society is essential to democracy. To enable diversity in the forms of participation, representation, concerns and ideas of young people across Australia, a range of organisations, initiatives and strategies are required.

**Coordinating body:** A diverse and de-centralised approach can be best leveraged for collective impact by centralising some infrastructure in a 'backbone' organisation. Many organisations valued by young people are small and have a local, issue or group focus.

These organisations are key to ensuring that forms of inequality can be effectively explained and addressed. They can identify the capacities and resources mobilised by vulnerable young people and groups to drive innovation in policy. Without providing the only solution, a coordinating body can also resource and broker engagement through providing training, mentoring and consulting with and by young people, and using youth-led knowledge to produce policies and respond to issues affecting young people.

**Indicators and policy design tool:** The YEP indicators of participation and engagement (Figure 7) are designed for the Australian context. These were developed with the input of policy makers, practitioners, researchers and young people. The set has been rigorously tested and is suitable for application at local, state and national levels. Similarly, the YEP methodology can support organisations, different government agencies and departments and communities themselves to redefine these indicators which then form the basis for prioritising and targeting points of intervention.



**Figure 7 YEP Indicators and Profile Tool**

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan:** The YEP process and indicators tool provide guidance on what problems policy response should address. This supports targeted evaluation and the generation of data and evidence to confidently report on outcomes. The holistic model prevents a ‘silver bullet’ approach, while helping to simplify our understanding of complex problems. This should better support organisations to report on both the success and failures of policy responses – and thus, drive improved knowledge and future responses that have a better chance of producing positive social impact. Notably, these components do not assume a particular lead ‘agent’ in a process. They can just as easily be adopted by youth-led, adult led or collaborative initiatives. They nevertheless, require resources and reciprocal commitments from participants, organisations and institutions such that youth engagement in policy making is meaningful.

# Conclusions

YEP informs new approaches to engagement with young people in policy making via two principal initiatives. The first is development of a **holistic, accessible and adaptable set of indicators to assess the drivers of youth engagement** in Australian policy making. The second is a **framework to achieve meaningful engagement with diverse young people** in policy processes. Together, these initiatives are available to project partners, and more widely to other interested agencies and organisations (e.g. government departments), as tools to understand and support development of policy making that encourages and includes young people and their communities as active participants in decision making processes.

The YEP project developed and operationalised a participatory design methodology to examine and explain perceptions of youth engagement in policy making from a wide range of Australian policy makers and young people. Building on these findings, the project further worked with young and adult stakeholders to co-develop a tool to measure and compare youth engagement in the Australian context, and co-generate ideas for initiatives that could foster young people's engagement in Australian policy making.

While participants were enthusiastic about the ideas generated in the co-design workshop, they also acknowledged the challenges involved in implementing and supporting those ideas. Key among those was the various and overlapping resources that implementation would require (e.g., funding, infrastructure, support services). Participants also identified significant shifts in organisational culture necessary for initiatives to occur. Participants pointed to the key role of advocacy organisations and services, in bringing about engagement initiatives, particularly for disadvantaged young people. Participants accepted that the possibility of their specific ideas eventuating in the short or medium term was small. However, their participation in the generation of the ideas themselves and the development of a shared community interested in advocating for better youth engagement among a diverse group represented an important step in the pathway to the cultural change required for wider scale adoption of novel solutions.

Our participants saw the value of meaningfully engaging young people in policy processes. Young and adult participants recognised meaningful engagement as essential to give voice to the marginalised and disenfranchised, as well as a mechanism through which to improve policy decisions that lead to better outcomes - not only for young people, but for Australian society in general. There was also agreement about the role of intergenerational and youth-led initiatives, and the need for encouragement and support for self-advocacy across diverse groups and communities.

We found strong consensus among our participants that current youth engagement in policy making is inadequate. The tools, mechanisms, infrastructures, cultures and funding for engagement are weak. Encouragingly, however, policy makers expressed readiness to explore ways to address those deficiencies, and both young and adult participants readily joined in developing fresh strategies and initiatives to facilitate engagement, including adapting and developing a set of key indicators of engagement.

While a rigorous process was undertaken to redefine and repurpose Urbego's youth engagement index for the Australian context further trialling (and if necessary) refinement of the index would be beneficial. Extended piloting of the index online, combined with additional review of its indicators (e.g., through further co-design activities) would allow more robust assessments of reliability and validity.

Nevertheless, the interest in and utility of the YEP indicators in this project demonstrates the value of a holistic tool for measuring the drivers of youth engagement. In particular, stakeholders highlighted the need to produce comparable assessments of engagement at a particular time and/or context and to monitor and evaluate efforts. However, these indicators and assessments alone will not be sufficient to achieve systemic change. This research indicates the following requirements for sustainable change:

- ❑ Long-term institutional commitment to youth participation in agenda-setting and decision making as well as policy consultation, advice and scrutiny by young people and their advocates;
- ❑ Co-investment in a youth-led and intergenerational network of organisations;
- ❑ Co-investment in a coordinating entity to resource and broker engagement through providing training, mentoring and consultancy with and by young people;
- ❑ Youth input and monitoring on responses to issues affecting young people;
- ❑ A commitment to diversity and overcoming inequality by resourcing local collaborative community spaces, services and advocacy organisations and digital media strategies to build relationships and trust between Government, NGO and community agencies and minority and disadvantaged young people;
- ❑ Resource young people to work with policy makers at all levels through bottom up advocacy *and* increase the relevance and influence of young people's perspectives across all areas and levels of Government.

We began this project with the belief that the best way to effectively engage participants in our research would be: to listen meaningfully to young people's ideas and opinions about engagement (facilitate voice); encourage youth and adult interaction (be intergenerational); make efforts to involve a range of young and adult stakeholders (work with diversity); and, have genuine regard for people's ideas (be meaningful and respectful of ideas). We designed a research approach to operationalise these ideas and the project has shown that the framework, principles, and suite of processes, tools, and ideas provide a comprehensive platform for facilitating and assessing engagement.

The YEP framework is suitable for application within organisation, local, state and federal government, communities and in experimental and virtual environments, for example as an assessment, agenda setting, planning and design and monitoring device within a Living Lab or other open innovation methodology. The framework offers a way for policy makers to work towards that goal and to make fairer, better, and more effective policy, with young people and that will benefit the broader community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research support the following key policy recommendations:

- Reinstate representation across government through a Minister for Youth.
- A properly resourced, national youth peak body to provide an independent voice and links to policy makers for young people.
- Novel approaches to working with young people across government to advise, scrutinise and propose policy.
- Increase the commitment to independent representation by a well-resourced National Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- Innovation funding for youth-led and youth-serving organisations to address the drivers and barriers to participation including poverty, inequality and exclusion.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES IN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

### INTERNATIONAL CASES:

#### 1- Title: Participatory Budgeting (GTZ, Argentina).

The Municipality of Rosario undertakes an annual participatory youth budgeting process. Young people from six districts identify priorities and elect delegate representatives to youth participatory councils who decide upon budget allocation for services.

Reference: [DFID CSO Youth Working Group. \(2010\) Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers](#), viewed 25 May 2016

#### 2- Title: Sri Lanka Youth Parliament

The Youth Parliament has 225 members elected by youth organizations and clubs across districts. They meet twice a month and debate key policies, shadowing the work of the national Parliament. Thirty youth ministers follow national ministries and have office space allocated. They have access to national committees and can consult national members.

Reference: [United Nations Development Programme \(2012\). Enhancing Youth Political Participation Throughout the Electoral Cycle: Good Practice Guide](#)

#### 3- Title: Youth Action Researchers

The Meriden Youth Action Researchers, in partnership with the Institute of Community Researchers, is an employment program that trains young people to conduct research and take actions on issues important to them. Young people present their findings in written, visual or oral forms and deliver a set of recommendations to stakeholders at public events.

Reference: [The institute for Community Research](#), Fall 2013, viewed 25 May 2016

#### 4- Title: The HUB, Singapore

Run by the National Youth Council in partnership with the Hub Singapore, this initiative is part of a global network of over 32 Hubs and 5,000 members. Young people working on start-ups and social enterprises have access to the online global network and can establish cross sector collaborations as well as funding, mentoring and fellowship programs.

Reference: [Youth Development Index](#) (2013), The Innovation and Good Practice Resource Book, 8th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, viewed 25 May 2016.

#### 5- Title: British Youth Council

This a youth led national body with 250 member organisations. BYC runs various national programs funded by government and has a Board of Trustees comprised of 13 young people. The focus of its activities is decided at an annual conference where members debate and vote on them. It co-ordinates the Youth Parliament and a National Scrutiny Group (NSG) that advise ministers and civil servants on policy related issues.

Reference: [British Youth Council](#), viewed 25 May 2016

#### 6- Title: Trayvon Martin Campaign

When teenager Trayvon Martin was shot, his killer George Zimmerman was not charged. An online petition to bring charges was started on Change.org with a record of 2.2 signatures. This was followed by a series of street rallies, social media events and campaigns and public

endorsements from known celebrities. In this case, Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram, Emails, Media, Photography and the Trayvon Martin Foundation connected young people to the tragedy and dispelled stereotypes against the criminalisation of black teenagers.

#### References and Links:

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- Groundbreaking Trayvon Martin Campaign is Our Most Popular Criminal Justice Campaign to date, June 22 2015, Mallory A. Russell, Change.Org, viewed 25 May 2016, Link: <http://blog.change.org/post/most-popular-criminal-justice-victories>

#### 7- Title: Using the Girl Roster Tool run by the Mercy Corps and the Women's Refugee Commission in urban refugee contexts, Gaziantep, Turkey, and Erbil in Iraq;

Overview: Mercy Corps and the Women's Refugee Commission field-tested the I'm Here approach and the Girl Roster tool in Gaziantep, Turkey and Erbil in Iraq. The project creates partnerships between refugee girls and young members of host communities and trains them to map out with Android phones existing resources and the needs of vulnerable young people missed in humanitarian efforts. It aims to increase access of vulnerable refugee girls to relevant services (create safe-scaping; safe spaces).

Reference: [Coalition for Adolescent Girls \(CAG\) \(2015\), Partners and Allies: Toolkit For Meaningful Adolescent Girl Engagement](#), viewed 25 May 2016

#### AUSTRALIAN CASES:

##### 1- Title: Left Right Think Thank

Left Right Think Tank was Australia's first independent and non-partisan youth think-tank. This involved young people (aged 15-25) in public policy and supported the embracing of young people's ideas. It run events, seminars, Q&A sessions and conferences, which aimed to empower, connect and foster a greater involvement of young people in public policy.

Reference: [Left Right Think Tank](#) November 2013, viewed 3 May 2016

##### 2- Title: Centre for Multicultural Youth – Knowledge Hub

CMY works with both researchers and decision makers to support migrants and refugees young people. It collaborates with universities to build research that can influence policy development and can be used to design relevant programs for young people. It hosts a knowledge Hub with Fact sheets, policy papers and research.

Reference: [Centre for Multicultural Youth](#), Knowledge Hub, Victoria, viewed 3 May 2016,

##### 3- Title: The Koorie Youth Council

The Koorie Youth Council (KYC) supports and encourages Indigenous young people in Victoria aged 12 to 25 years to voice their ideas, interests and passions and build their skills and capacity. It conducts research, disseminates resources and monitors policy development. Young members of the KYC elect Regional Councils and a State Council. It utilizes Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to connect with young people and organisations.

Reference and Link: Victoria Youth Advisory Council (2016), [Koorie Youth Council](#), Victoria, viewed 3 May 2016

## APPENDIX 2: REPORTS AND INTERNATIONAL GUIDES:

DFID CSO Youth Working Group, (2010) *Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers*, viewed 3 May 2016, <http://www.ygproject.org/guide>.

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Daniella Ben-Attar (2010), *Youth Participation in Development: Strategies & Best Practices*, viewed 3 May 2016, [http://www.weitzcenter.org/uploads/1/7/0/8/1708801/youth\\_participation\\_for\\_development\\_daniela\\_ben\\_attar.pdf](http://www.weitzcenter.org/uploads/1/7/0/8/1708801/youth_participation_for_development_daniela_ben_attar.pdf)

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### LIST OF WEBSITES USED FOR AUSTRALIAN GUIDES:

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## APPENDIX 3: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROFILE – INDICATORS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

### INDICATORS

Preconditions	Political and Institutional engagement	Cultural and Civic Engagement	Economic Engagement
Respect for young people	Networks of Collective Action	Youth-led community organisations	Education and training
Acknowledgement of history, context and diversity	Advocacy groups	Sponsors, audiences and users of youth-produced culture	Economic independence and vitality
Accessibility	Decision-making	Cultural amenities	Careers
Technology	Relevance and influence	Public-free-third places	Employment and entrepreneurship
Civil society	Participation policies	Formal education system	Economic structures
Safe and secure living	Information, media and knowledge	Arts and cultural policies	Affordable finance

### SURVEY TEXT

Hi, there. Thanks for your involvement in the Youth Engaged Policy project to date.

Before our co-design workshop we're asking anyone who has been involved so far to complete this short questionnaire. It asks you to rate various things that affect youth engagement – like participation policies, having places to create and share art or music, respect for young people and access to training that leads to a good job.

There are no right or wrong answers. If you're not sure about a question, just have a go – this is about your experience and your views. We value your honest views and opinions. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete and is completely anonymous. From all the responses we'll create a diagram that we'll discuss at our workshop on Friday and which will help us develop ideas for improving youth engagement in policy making.

These questions are about Australia as a whole. Even though it's a really diverse place and people in different parts of the country have different experiences we're asking you to think about your perception in general and young people, or policies across the country.

Any questions? Please contact: Philippa Collin, Western Sydney University

Thank you.

### Assessment of engagement

Please rate on 9 point scale

#### A. PRE-CONDITIONS

These are basic aspects of life that enable or prevent engagement with or by young people. Please rate each question on 9 point scale.

1. How would you rate the opportunities for young people in Australia to be a part of groups, organisations or networks that reflect the interests or activities that they're interested in?
2. How would you rate the level of respect in Australia for young people?
3. How would you rate the level of acknowledgement and appreciation for the diverse histories and differences among young people?
4. How would you rate the access young people have to affordable, well-located and safe housing?
5. How would you rate the access young people have to the resources they need to take part in society? ( Money, places, transport, supportive communities)
6. How would you rate young people's access to good and affordable digital technologies (like a mobile phone or the internet)?

Would you like to comment about your assessment of the pre-conditions for youth engagement? (FREE FORM ANSWER)

## B. INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

This refers to a broad range of activities from participating in an advisory group, political party or election, to a march or rally, boycotting a product, starting a hashtag campaign or telling your social media feed your views on a particular issue. Please rate each question on 9 point scale.

7. How would you rate the opportunities to get involved in informal networks aiming to influence a political issue? ( online communities about a specific community/social issue, protest groups, online petitions, face-to-face community meetings)
8. How would you rate the visibility and effectiveness of groups who represent and lobby government on issues that concern young people? (e.g. advocacy bodies, youth-led organisations)
9. How do you rate the level of direct involvement that young people have in government decision making at the federal level?
10. How would you rate the influence young people have on policy decisions that are relevant to them?
11. How would you rate programs that promote young people's participation in policy making?
12. How would you rate access to and usability of quality information online or in other media about people politics and social issues?

Would you like to comment about your assessment of institutional and political participation of young people? (FREE FORM ANSWER)

## C. CIVIC AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

This refers to participation in community and cultural life. Please rate each question on 9 point scale.

13. How would you rate the opportunities for young people to create and sustain community organisations?
14. How would you rate the availability of public and private cultural spaces to young people (e.g., museums, skate parks, graffiti walls)?
15. How would you rate the interest and support for diverse youth culture?
16. How would you rate the availability of public spaces that welcome and encourage young people to meaningfully use them (e.g., malls, parks, town squares)?
17. How would you rate the availability of quality and affordable education for all young people regardless of their location, culture or abilities?

18. How would you rate the policies to support participation in youth arts and cultural expression?

Would you like to comment about your assessment of civic and cultural participation of young people? (FREE FORM ANSWER)

#### D. ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

This refers to the active participation in the Australian economy of the young people as producers, entrepreneurs, innovators, etc. Please rate each question on 9 point scale.

19. How would you rate the quality, affordability and access to opportunities for relevant education and training for employment young people?

20. How would you rate opportunities for young people to be financially independent and improve their situation? (youth incomes, levels of debt)

21. How would you rate young people's prospects for meaningful, long term employment in Australia?

22. How would you rate the policies and programs in place to support young people to find a job and/or to start their own businesses? (including the technology, work rights and competition with foreign workers)

23. How would you rate the opportunities for young people to start their own businesses? (with good access to finance, sponsorship, crowdfunding)

24. How would you rate the rights and access of young people to the opportunities that previous generations have had?

Would you like to comment about your assessment of economic participation of young people? (FREE FORM ANSWER)

#### E. DEMOGRAPHICS

Thanks. We'd like to know a little bit about you.

What is your age in years?

Please specify your gender

- Female
- Male
- Refuse

What are the languages other than English do you mainly use at home?

- Arrernte
- Kala Lagaw Ya
- Tiwi
- Walmajarri
- Warlpiri
- Wati
- Chinese
- Italian
- Vietnamese
- Greek
- Arabic
- Macedonian
- French
- Spanish
- Other

What is the postcode where you currently live?

## APPENDIX 4: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROFILE SURVEY RESULTS

In response to the question 'How would you rate young people's influence and participation?' respondents were asked to rate 24 indicators on a 9 point scale, from 1 - critical- to 9 – vibrant.



**Figure 8 YEP Indicators scale**

### SAMPLE

N=56

Average age= 28,64

Gender: 83,9% Female, 16,1% male

### RESULTS

DIMENSION	INDICATOR	MEDIAN SCORE	QUALIFICATION	STANDARD DEVIATION
<b>PRE-CONDITIONS</b>	1. Civil Society.	5	satisfactory	1,70
	2. Respect For Young People	4	satisfactory -	1,40
	3. Acknowledgment Of History, Context And Diversity	3	highly unsatisfactory	1,40
	4. Safe And Secure Living Conditions	3	highly unsatisfactory	1,71
	5. Accessibility	5	satisfactory	1,53
	6. Technology	6	satisfactory +	1,54
<b>INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</b>	1. Networks Of Collective Action	5	satisfactory	1,74
	2. Advocacy Groups	5	satisfactory	1,63
	3. Decision-Making	2	bad	1,25
	4. Relevance And Influence.	3	highly unsatisfactory	1,24

	5. Participatory Policies	3	highly unsatisfactory	1,66
	6. Information, Media And Knowledge	6	satisfactory +	1,81
<b>CIVIC AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION</b>	1. Youth Led Community Organisations	5	satisfactory	1,60
	2. Cultural Amenities.	5	satisfactory	1,82
	3. Sponsors, Audiences And Users For Youth-Produced Culture.	4	satisfactory -	1,70
	4. Public And Free Spaces.	4	satisfactory -	1,80
	5. Formal Education System.	4	satisfactory -	2,08
	6. Arts And Cultural Policies.	4	satisfactory -	1,61
<b>ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION</b>	1. Education And Training.	4	satisfactory -	1,51
	2. Economic Independence And Vitality.	3	highly unsatisfactory	1,48
	3. Careers.	4	satisfactory -	1,64
	4. Employment And Entrepreneurship Policies.	4	satisfactory -	1,75
	5. Entrepreneurship.	4	satisfactory -	1,78
	6. Economic Structures.	4	satisfactory -	4