

# Brighter Dorset

## Recommendations from the Dorset Youth Needs Analysis



Dorset  
Community House

2022



# Contents

Acknowledgments/Purpose	3
Communities Represented	4
Summary	5
Method	6
Recommendations	7
Determinants of Health	8
Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Domains	9
Dorset Youth & Families Profile	11
Youth Needs Analysis Findings	13
Voices from Dorset	15
Discussion	16
Conclusion	21



# Acknowledgments

Dorset Community House acknowledges and pays respects to the Leenererter, Pinterrairer, Pyemmairenerpairrener and Trawlwoolay Aboriginal people, the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of the land now called Dorset. We acknowledge their ongoing connection to country and culture and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

Dorset Community House would like to thank the young people, families, workers and community members who took part in surveys and interviews and who shared their knowledge, ideas and experience to inform the Youth Needs Analysis. Special thanks goes to the young people who trialed the surveys and to the principals and staff of Scottsdale High School and Winnaleah District High School.

The Dorset Youth Needs Analysis was made possible by a grant to the Dorset Community House through the Department of Communities, Tasmania.

## Purpose

Brighter Dorset amplifies the voice of young people and families who live, study, work and play in Dorset. It provides organisations, service providers and community groups with direction on how to make a positive difference when working in Dorset. Please use these findings to develop initiatives, respond to needs, apply for funding and advocate on issues of concern to the community.

Brighter Dorset provides recommendations for Dorset Council local government investment. This document also connects broader Tasmanian state government strategies with how these can be implemented in a specific area with a unique community. Brighter Dorset encourages nationally respected youth participation practice and elevates the perspectives of Tasmanian young people.

Together we can create a brighter future in the Dorset area, as we collaborate to affirm the strengths of young people and find new ways forward. Join us in listening to young people, supporting them to make decisions and celebrating what they have to offer. Together we can bring down barriers, address inequality, increase wellbeing and generate local opportunities.

*The Dorset Community Association Board*

# Communities Represented



Dorset  
Municipality



# Summary

The Dorset Youth Needs Analysis involved young people (12-25 years), families and stakeholders from June 2021 – June 2022. The consultation asked young people what their primary concerns were, what they see as the positives of their community and how they wanted to be involved. The analysis used the Determinants of Health framework that underpins the Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026 and the six domains of the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy to understand young people's wellbeing needs.

The Dorset Youth Needs Analysis was commissioned by Dorset Community House, a member of Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, and funded through a grant from the Tasmanian State Government Department of Communities. The research was conducted by Community Mojo Consulting and involved local young people in the planning stages and survey trials. Dorset Community House conducted further consultation with local young people.

The goal of the Dorset Youth Needs Analysis was to find out from young people what would give them better health and wellbeing and a more hopeful, brighter future living in Dorset. This future can be achieved by valuing and working towards the recommendations of the Youth Needs Analysis contained in Brighter Dorset. It can be achieved by working collaboratively across the community, service sector and all levels of government to act upon these recommendations.

## Participants

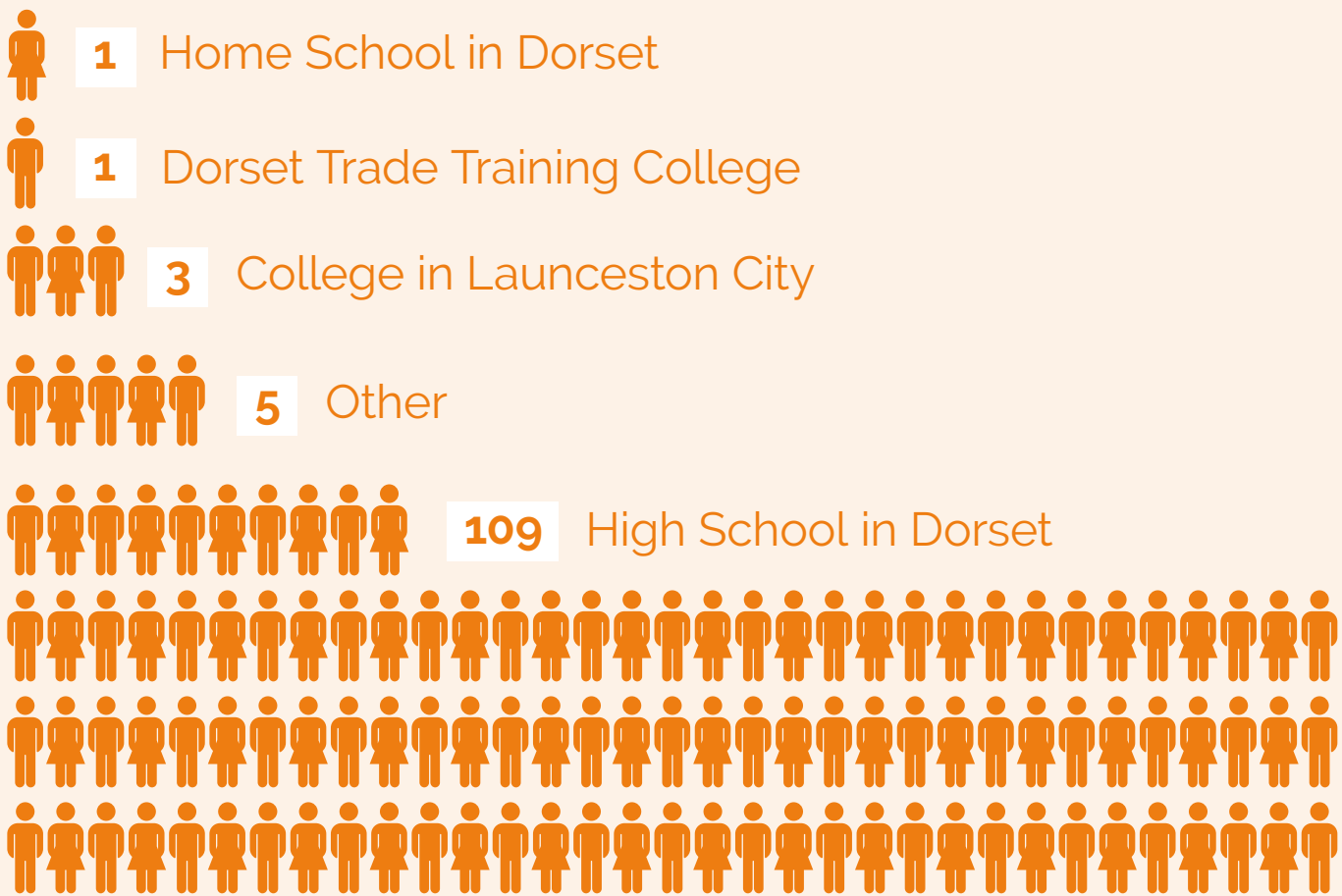
*Young people, parents, high schools, Dorset Suicide Prevention Network, pastoral care workers, youth workers, Tasmania Police, the North Eastern Memorial Hospital, doctors, housing and homelessness services, alcohol and other drug services, youth mental health services and local business owners.*



# Method



# Youth Occupations



# Recommendations

## Invest in Young People

### **Prioritise a focus on young people in Dorset.**

Include a priority focus on young people in Dorset in all aspects of community life as informed by the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and the Healthy Tasmania Strategy. Use strengths based, community informed and evidence informed youth work practice.

## Health and Mental Health

### **Invest in locally accessible, youth friendly health and mental health services.**

Address the barriers to current health and mental health service models for young people and reduce wait times. Prioritise locally based, youth friendly health services, early intervention and prevention.

## Activities and Things to Do

### **Invest in community activities, events, and safe youth spaces.**

Ensure that a range of youth activities are available in Dorset and accessible to young people in remote areas of the Northeast. Affirm and invest in creativity and the arts as well as sporting opportunities. Support community-wide events that include young people as active organisers.

## Safe and Equitable Community

### **Work towards a safe, supportive and equitable community environment.**

Address community safety and equity of access to health and recreation resources. Invest in community responses to family and gender-based violence, bullying in all forms and gender equity. Increase health promotion, health literacy and parent support to build community resilience.

## Transport and Financial Barriers

### **Invest in sustainable transport solutions for young people in Dorset, especially those living in the remote Northeast of Dorset.**

Develop and fund innovative and sustainable transport options for young people to increase their participation in community life. Increase transport access that enables young people to participate in activities, events and community life.

## Youth Participation and Leadership

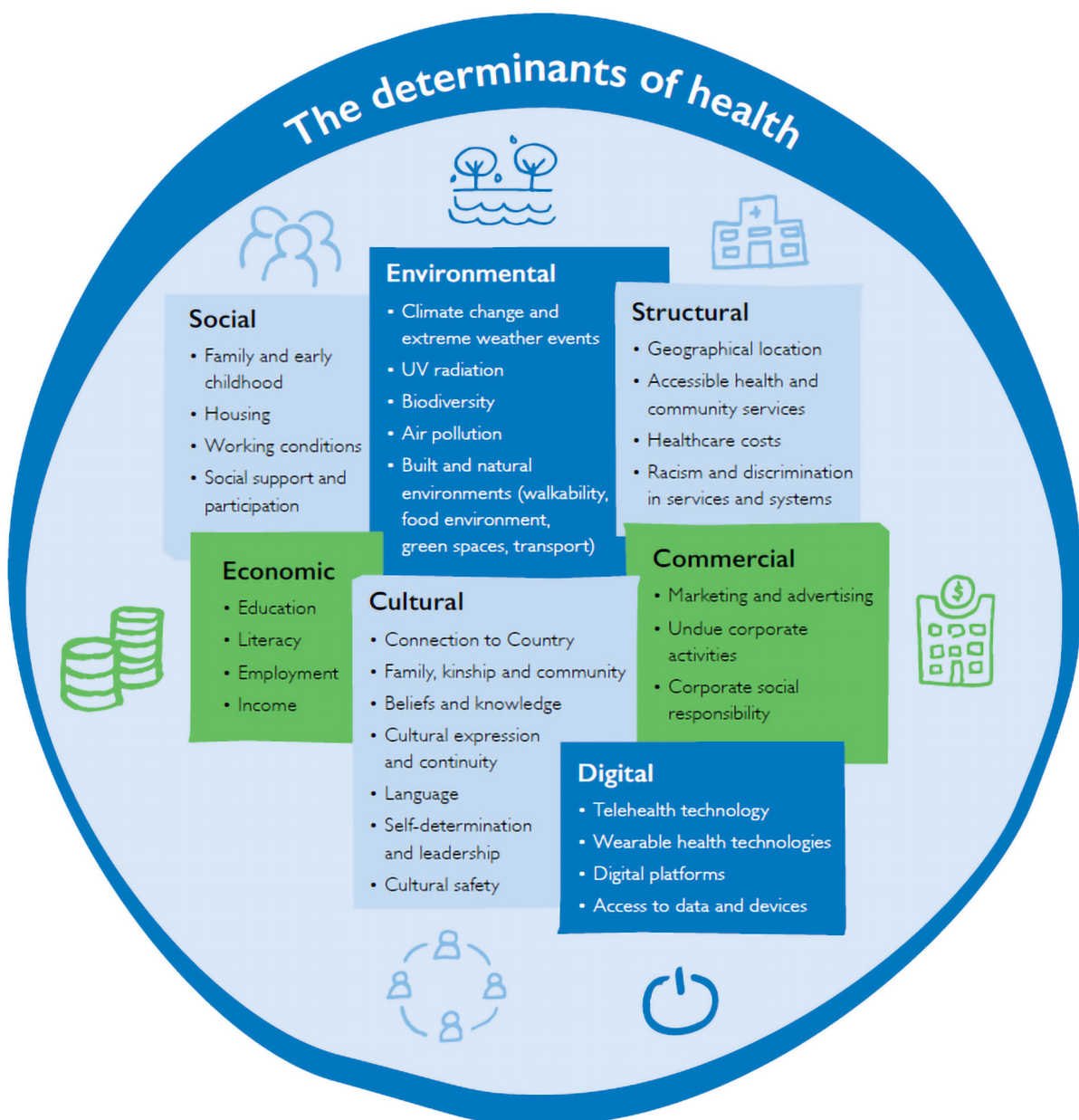
### **Incorporate youth voice and participation in community decision making at all levels.**

Include young people aged 12-25 in community consultation and local decision making. Equip adults in leadership to relate to young people in safe and supportive ways and develop formal channels for youth participation. Provide local leadership opportunities, experiences and mentoring that help build young people's skills and confidence.



# Determinants of Health

Health and wellbeing are linked to the environment in which we live. Our ability to enjoy life, feel well and have a sense of connection, belonging and safety is influenced by our surroundings and experiences. Young people's wellbeing is influenced by the relationships they have with family, their communities and wider society. Wellbeing is also influenced by broader systems, structures and culture in which young people live. The Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan provides the following illustration of the Determinants of Health.



We acknowledge the Tasmanian Government for the use of the determinants of health descriptors from the Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026 available at [health.tas.gov.au](https://health.tas.gov.au)

# Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Domains

## Being loved, safe and valued



Having a safe, stable and supportive home environment



Feeling safe, secure and protected in the home and in the community and online



Feeling valued and respected by teachers and other adults in their life and knowing that they are important to others



Having positive, trusted relationships with other people



Having a voice with the ability to raise concerns and have those concerns addressed



Feeling safe about their future, the environment and climate

## Having material basics



Have access to suitable, secure stable housing with adequate heating and cooling



Have access to appropriate clothing and footwear



Have access to nutritious food and clean water



Have access to transport, required local services and materials to support participation in activities



Have access to education and training materials



Have access to the outdoors and green space

## Being healthy



Are mentally and physically healthy



Are health literate and have access to appropriate health and care service



Are emotionally well, happy and supported



Are immunised



Are as physically active as they can be



Are supported to engage in regular outdoor activities and nature-based play

# Learning



Are attending and engaging in education, training or employment



Are supported to learn by their caregiver and education providers



Are participating in early childhood education



Have their individual learning needs addressed to allow them to realise their learning potential



Are developing literacy and numeracy skills appropriate to age



Are supported to learn about their world through connection to nature and the outdoors

# Participating



Are engaging with peers and community groups



Are an active participant in their own life; including being able to have a say and have their opinion heard and valued



Are taking part in organised activities, including sport



Have access to and use technology and social media



Can share experiences in nature and express their environmental views

# Having a positive sense of culture and identity



Can find out about family and personal history and are supported to connect positively with their culture



Have a positive sense of self-identity and self-esteem



Feel like they belong



Are in touch with cultural or spiritual practices and have these practices valued and respected

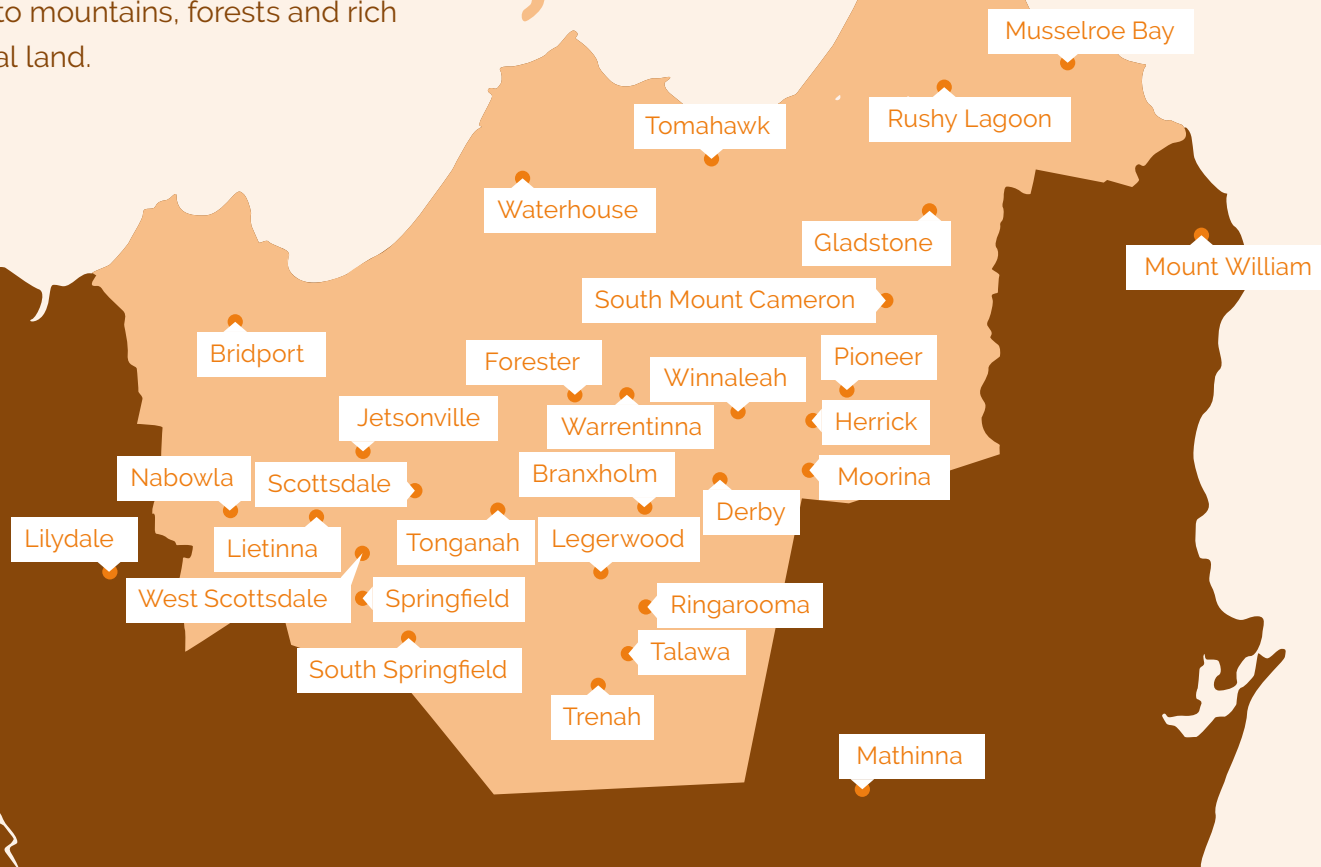


Can connect to nature and are supported to identify their core values about the environment as part of their culture and identity

We acknowledge the Tasmanian Government for the use of the wellbeing domain descriptors from Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, *It Takes a Tasmanian Village*. The domain descriptors were originally developed for the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework, which is based on *The Nest*, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People's (ARACY) national initiative on child and youth wellbeing. The domain descriptors were developed further for Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, through consultation with over 3,500 Tasmanian children, young people, carers and service providers. Further information about the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is available at [wellbeing.tas.gov.au](https://wellbeing.tas.gov.au)

# Dorset Youth and Families Profile

Dorset is located in the far Northeast of Tasmania and is renowned for its spectacular scenery; from beaches and coastline to mountains, forests and rich agricultural land.



96%

of Dorset's population lives  
in Outer Regional Australia

4%

lives in Remote  
Australia

Primary industries are agriculture and food, tourism, aged care, community services and mining. Traditionally, the Northeast has prospered from the timber industry and vegetable processing, however these have been in decline over the past two decades.

population of  
**6,829**

with

**1,105**  
young people

**460** people are aged **10-14** years

**344** people are aged **15-19** years

**301** people are aged **20-24** years

**28.9%**  
over the age of 15  
have completed  
Year 12 or equivalent  
compared with  
**45.5%**  
for Tasmania  
**56.8%**  
for Australia

The average  
weekly income per  
household is

**\$1,039**

compared to

**\$1,358**

for Tasmania

**\$1,746**

for Australia

There are **587** households with couples and children and **260** households with one parent and children

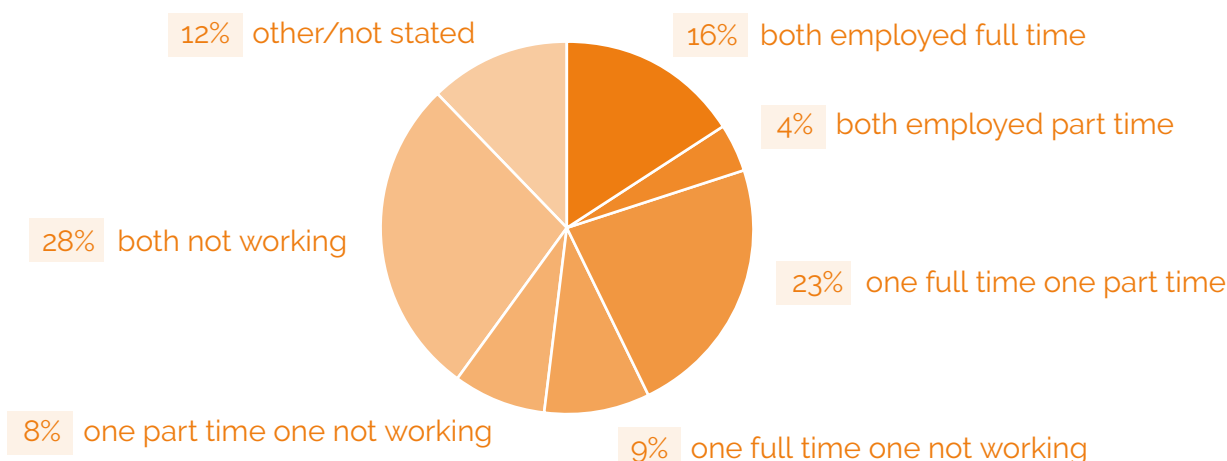
Dorset is in the most disadvantaged fifth of Australia



**One in 23**

people in Dorset identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

## Employment of Households with Couples and Children



# Youth Needs Analysis Findings

## Themes:

### Invest in Young People

- Youth strengths
- Resilience
- Opportunities
- Development

### Health and Mental Health Support

- Access to health and mental health services
- Social and emotional health
- Education, prevention, and early intervention
- The need for health promotion
- Nutrition

### Activities and Things to Do

- Sporting activities
- Social activities
- Creativity and the arts
- Youth community events
- Youth spaces

### Safe and Equitable Community

- Safety
- Community cohesion
- Relationship challenges
- Life transitions
- Gender equity

### Transport and Financial Barriers

- Financial inequality
- Access to resources
- Isolation
- Lack of housing
- Lack of employment

### Youth Participation and Leadership

- Youth voice
- Community contributions
- Connection and belonging
- Skill development



## What is best about Living in Dorset

Natural environment 56%, being close to family and friends, 18%, outdoor recreation and farming opportunities 9%, other 17%

## What is hard about living in Dorset

Nothing 24%, feeling isolated and lack of local activities 35%, lack of opportunities 9% and challenging relationships 8% other 33%

## How many young people participate in activities outside school

Participants	Sports	The Arts	Youth Activities
Remote areas 48	52%	22%	9%
Central Areas 268	59%	22%	31%
All areas 316	55%	22%	20%

## Reasons for non-participation

Activities not available 24%, not enough time 29%, cost 21%, lack of transport 13%, lack of confidence 10%

## Desire to contribute to the community

30% of young people would like to help in the community, 25% would like to have a say in their community, 26% of young people would like to help organize activities for others to do, and 8% would like to join a leadership program.

## How often are young people asked for opinions to contribute to the community

All the time 4%, Not asked very often or Occasionally 62% and Never 31% and don't know 3%





# Voices from Dorset

People think the Health System has forgotten about Rural

A priority need is for mental health services to be based in the region

Our community wants healthy, good quality food

There needs to be more opportunity to socialise with different people and broaden social skills

Young people consider it normal to travel several hours on the bus every day to get to school and have no opportunities to participate in after school activities

We need to build relationships with employers and training providers

There is a divide between rich and poor, and between time rich and time poor

We need more opportunities to explore creativity

Lots of young people work after school and weekends and are drained and tired at school

We need to have a channel for young people to have a say

My Dad is caring full time and can't transport me

Working hours are different for people on the land, we need transport for children to get home from activities – or they can't go at all





# Discussion

Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing domains and the Determinants of Health point to areas where young people need support to meet their health, wellbeing and development needs. Through this lens, the Dorset Youth Needs analysis identified the priority areas for young people and families by identifying the six significant themes. A collaborative and multi-faceted response is needed to implement the recommendations from the Youth Needs Analysis.

Access to health services, especially mental health support is the highest priority for young people in Dorset and requires a coordinated approach to increase services and tackle barriers. As most mental health challenges emerge in adolescence and severity can be greatly reduced through early intervention, this should be a top priority for the area. Ideally, Dorset needs a locally based youth mental health service that can respond to emerging needs without long wait times, prohibitive costs or complex referral processes. Investment is needed in prevention and health education programs that can reduce the need for later tertiary support.

## Invest in Young People

Adolescence is a time of physical, social, emotional and mental change as young people find their way in the world, figure out who they are, what they want to do and how they will get there. The experience of life transitions such as changes in education or from education to employment can shape life choices. Being involved in meaningful activity, trying new skills; feeling validated; having a say in what happens, and enjoying social connection and positive experiences provide the basis for a successful and happy transition to adulthood.

Youth participation can enrich communities in many ways, including providing new ideas and perspectives, skills and energy. Young people are emerging members of the community and are the next generation of future workers and leaders. Young people in Dorset would like to be more involved in their community and further progress is needed to in develop this desire into action. It is important to maintain a 'youth focus' in Dorset as it is easy to overlook young people's health and wellbeing needs and their ability to contribute if they are not actively included, and if their voices and needs are not firmly on the community agenda.



# Health and Mental Health

The most important priority for young people in Dorset is friendly, timely, accessible, mental health services. Some of the barriers to this are: difficulty accessing general practitioners, cost, not knowing what is available, lack of parental capacity to support, and limited hours of service. Some people noted the connection between mental health and factors such as isolation, financial hardship, employment and level of social support. Others emphasised the need for health promotion, prevention and early intervention. There was agreement that when allied health roles are vacant it has an impact on the health of the community.

It is important to work in prevention before crisis occurs

Health promotion is needed for parents and young people to eat healthily

## Medical Services

There are significant barriers for young people and their families to access timely and appropriate medical services in Dorset. Challenges to accessing general practitioner doctors (GPs) include long wait times, cost, eligibility restrictions, confusion about processes, and irregular medical staff. Access to GPs is needed also for mental health plans and referrals for mental health services, especially for low-income families.

When there is no regular doctor – you don't feel listened to

## Mental Health Services

Mental health is a significant concern for young people in Dorset and this reflects Tasmanian State and national Australian data. In Dorset there are long delays and young people have difficulty finding appropriate mental health support. Barriers to online support include low e-literacy, lack of access to internet connections and/or devices and concerns about lack of privacy when using technology in spaces such as schools. Investment is needed in prevention and early intervention to reduce long term impacts of mental health needs.

It takes 6 months to get into mental health services

Parents often can't afford travel to Launceston for services – can be a costly 2 hour+ trip that is much more difficult coming from beyond Scottsdale

## Social and Emotional Health

Many young people struggle to build self-esteem and confidence and report that they find it hard to feel satisfied and optimistic about their lives. This seems to be a bigger challenge for young women than for young men. Over 30% of young people in Dorset say that they often feel worried, sad or distressed. LGBTIQ+ young people who participated in the Youth Needs Analysis say that they need more support in the community.

Loneliness feeds into poor mental health. (Young Person)

## Food and Nutrition

Young people and families need access to affordable, fresh, nutritious and varied food in the local community.

It's very expensive to buy healthy food at the canteen (young person)

# Activities and Things to Do

Access to 'things to do' in Dorset is a major priority for young people and their families. Young people enjoy spending time with friends (60%), playing sport and engaging in outdoor activities (57%) and gaming/being online (43%). However, 85% of young people do not participate in any youth specific activities outside school and in remote areas this increases to 91%. The major barriers to young people participating in activities are lack of transport, cost, lack of confidence, lack of time due to high work commitments, and a lack of opportunities outside sport.

It is important to young people and their community that they have access to activities where they can build social connections, learn new skills and access broader opportunities. This is a particular challenge for remote areas of Dorset. There is also a need for more non-sporting 'things to do' in Dorset, especially those involving the arts, craft, cultural activities and events. Young people and their families would like to see more facilitated activities and safe places for young people.

It is difficult to participate in certain sports and activities if you don't have the right gear and can't get there

There's nothing to do (in remote areas) most things are in Scottsdale. We need activities for teenagers

## Sporting Activities

While sports are the primary activity available to young people, only 59% of young people in central areas and 52% of people in remote areas participate in sport outside school hours.

Surf lifesaving in Bridport and bikes in Derby are great but are unaffordable for many local people

## Social Activities

There is a need for safe places for young people to 'hangout' and mix with others. Some young people feel isolated and would like more opportunities to socialise, especially with other young people outside their school and village network. People would like to see community events for all ages to build social connections.

There needs to be more opportunity to socialise with different people and broaden social skills

## Arts

Many young people in Dorset are interested in the creative arts and would like to have local music, dance and artistic opportunities. At the time of analysis there were no inclusive, freely available youth arts programs in Dorset outside schools that young people knew of.

Arts and culture took a hit when industries closed, and people left – you could feel the change

# Safe and Equitable Community

Young people in Dorset appreciate the natural beauty of the land and the benefits of rural Australian life. They enjoy being close to family and friends and the opportunity to participate in activities such as riding dirt bikes, camping and farming. The things that young people find challenging are the distances from activities, shops and education, feelings of isolation and when relationships are difficult. Young people are seeking a healthier and more inclusive community environment in Dorset to support them to feel connected and succeed in life. Some of the changes young people would like to see in their community are:

Increase a sense of community connection for young people

Increase a sense of unity across Dorset

Greater gender equality

Greater acceptance of diversity

Support for emergency relief and housing needs

Stronger employment pathways for young people

A community response to family and gender-based violence

Support for positive intergenerational family relationships

Support to reduce the use of alcohol and other drugs amongst families

Support for life transitions such as primary to high school and high school to college

Support for community recovery from impacts of COVID-19

There needs to be help transitioning from primary schools to high school

More help is needed to support young people when they move to college

There are traditional values regarding the roles of men and women which makes it difficult for those who don't fit these (such as LGBTIQ+ young people) to speak up

Young people usually have single friendship groups due to the small number of young people at school and in the area. If there is conflicts within their group, this can be very challenging (youth worker)

Family violence is a taboo subject and not being addressed. People don't have safe avenues to seek help. When children and young people are exposed to family violence it has long term impacts on them

A lot of kids want to talk – we need to create the atmosphere to do this. Young people don't always need formal services and talking through issues with a trusted person can avoid needing crisis services

# Transport and Financial Barriers

Financial and transport barriers are the underlying factors in many of the challenges for young people in Dorset. Young people reported 'money', 'transport' and 'travel times' as reasons for not being able to do the things they wanted to. These barriers impact on many families' ability to access basic necessities, healthcare, educational opportunities and to feel included in their community. When people have no transport, they say they are more likely to feel lonely and have poor mental health, while having transport can improve their wellbeing.

Access to transport is at the heart of many issues, including poor mental health

Transport is an issue. I already travel 45 minutes from Gladstone to school – so it is too difficult to attend activities in Scottsdale after school

Homelessness was more visible during COVID. Sole parents with school aged children were included among those homeless

Many families live from pay cheque to pay cheque

There is a feeling of needing to get out and earn money and this impacts on schooling

## Youth Participation and Leadership

Young people would like to have greater inclusion in decision making in their communities, especially on the things that impact them directly. Only 4% of young people say they are regularly asked for their views and opinions to contribute to their community, however many say they would like to be more involved. Young people would like to organize activities for others, help in the community, have a say in decisions that are made and join a leadership program. Communicating ideas and being listened to is important in developing confidence, self-worth and belonging. Young people often have skills, energy and new ideas that mean the whole community can benefit from their involvement.



We need to have a channel for young people to have a say

# Conclusion

Young people in Dorset are the future of our community and have the potential to lead us into a brighter future. That future is one where people are healthier and more resilient, there are more opportunities and things to do, and our communities are safer and more equal. In the brighter future we are working towards, Dorset's beautiful landscapes and rich heritage are enhanced even more by healthy lifestyles, strong support systems and opportunities for all.

There are challenges to the equitable delivery of health services to rural and remote areas, however solutions to these challenges need to remain a priority. The way forward must include a collaborative approach with the community, service sector and all levels of government working together.

Opportunities may be found through partnerships between local council, community groups, service providers and other stakeholders to think innovatively, deliver initiatives and advocate for community needs. Young people must be genuinely included in solutions if they are to succeed.

Involving young people in decision making and building ways for them to participate in their communities will make our communities stronger and more innovative places. Together we can listen to young people's challenges and work together with them to develop initiatives, address community needs and build unity and collaboration across Dorset. To do this the community, service sector, local government and state government must work together and focus on the priority areas outlined by young people through Brighter Dorset.







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**Dorset  
Community House**

Research by

