National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Report: Youth Survey 2017
About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian organisation that delivers evidence-based, client-centred community services.

We work with families and children, young people and people experiencing homelessness and also provide specialist services for mental health, disability and alcohol and drug issues.

In the 2016-17 financial year we supported more than 140,000 people through 470 programs and services.
Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of lands throughout Australia, and we pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the culture and dreams of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continual relationship with the land and we recognise the importance of the young people who are the future leaders.

Many people have contributed to the writing of this report. We would like to acknowledge and thank Mission Australia’s staff who gave us continuous feedback, case studies and advice in the writing of the report. A reference group met in the writing phase and helped analyse the data, and they have continued to stay engaged throughout the development of the report. We would like to thank the members of this group and other staff who have contributed feedback and examples: Brenda Underwood, Chenae Doust, Dale Philip, Dale Towns, Jesse Taylor, Julie Jasprizza-Laus, Luke Butcher, Michala Stenzel, Nicole Stephenson, Noel Wason, Phil Flint, Stephanie Haagen, Tanya Rice, Tracey McNee and Troy Crellin. This group provided us with invaluable feedback and without their contribution this report would not have been written.

As well as internal feedback, we would like to thank Christopher Holland for his assistance and comments on the work, and for providing guidance and direction. Professor Tom Calma AO has also acknowledged the importance of this report by taking time to write the foreword and we are very grateful for this.

A special thanks must also be extended to Scott Avery from First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), Paul Wright from Aboriginal Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR), Oliver Tye from National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO), Hayley McGuire from National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition, Annette McCarthy from Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Tamara Shirley from the Australian Human Rights Commission.

This report would not be possible without the engagement of young people who undertake the Youth Survey each year. The purpose of the report is to bring their values and concerns to the forefront of policy; we are grateful for their continuous engagement with us.
Foreword

A Message from Professor Tom Calma AO

Mission Australia’s National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Report allows us to hear from more than 1,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and gather rich insights into their hopes and concerns, their strengths and their challenges.

This adds to the existing research on the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and demonstrates that while many aspirations are shared by all young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people face unique challenges on their journey into adulthood.

There is much to celebrate in this report. Our young people speak about being engaged in education, their plans after school and their confidence in achieving their goals as well as how much they value their family and friendships.

However, it is clear that much more needs to be done if we are serious about ‘Closing the Gap’ for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

In particular, the Youth Survey 2017 highlights particular challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people including high levels of personal concern about coping with stress, school or study problems and body image. While the majority of our young people reported feeling optimistic and confident about their futures, a significant minority were challenged by hopelessness and despair. We need to look at the solutions and practical ways to respond to this.

The answer is not just providing more health and mental health services – although these are needed, especially in rural and remote areas – but ones which are culturally safe and co-designed with and delivered by communities. In a holistic response, we also need to address the deeper structural issues that can weaken wellbeing and build on the strengths of our young people, including their cultural connections.

The levels of housing instability experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are also deeply concerning. As a matter of urgency, affordable housing is needed, particularly in remote areas, and more must be done to prevent homelessness among our young people, including by supporting families. All young people should have a safe, secure and stable home and be protected from bullying and discrimination at school and in their community.

**As a national priority, we must push forward and do everything we can to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people so they can realise their full potential.**

**We will be a richer nation for it.**

Professor Tom Calma AO
Chancellor, University of Canberra and Co-Chair, Reconciliation Australia
Demographic profile of respondents

A total of 24,055 young people aged 15-19 years responded to Mission Australia’s Youth Survey 2017. The largest number of responses came from New South Wales (30.0%), Victoria (19.9%) and Queensland (19.1%). In total, 1,265 (5.3%) young people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Just under half (45.8%) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were female and 44.6% were male.

A total of 26 (2.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported speaking an Indigenous language at home and 156 (13.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated they had a disability.

Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents a third (33.3%) lived in major cities, while two thirds lived in regional areas (66.7%).

Please note, the results in this report relate to those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who responded to the survey and we recognise that this is not representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across Australia. However, a strength of the survey is its focus on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in major cities and regional areas.

Developing and achieving

The majority (84.9%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were studying full-time (compared to 95.6% of non-Indigenous young people), most of whom were at school. Of those that were studying, the majority indicated that they were either very satisfied (9.6%) or satisfied (49.0%) with their studies, with two thirds rating school and study satisfaction as extremely important or very important to them (24.9% and 36.6% respectively).

Of those who were at school, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people chose going to university as their preferred option upon completion of their studies. Nonetheless, significantly lower rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander compared to non-Indigenous young people chose this option (42.3% compared with 71.5%).

One in four (38.3%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported plans to get a job after finishing school (this proportion was greater than that for non-Indigenous young people: 31.7%). One in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated plans to undertake an apprenticeship (20.0%) or go to TAFE or college (19.1%).

Four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported feeling either extremely confident (11.4%) or very confident (25.2%) about their ability to achieve their post-school goals; a similar level to the non-Indigenous sample. A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (12.2% and 28.4%) than females (8.1% and 23.6%) reported feeling extremely confident or very confident. However, and of both genders, 15.8% were only slightly confident, while 3.9% were not at all confident in their ability to achieve their post-school goals.

Just over half (54.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated challenges to the achievement of their study/work goals (compared to 51.4% of non-Indigenous respondents). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females in particular reported the presence of challenges (62.5% compared with 45.1% of males). For both genders, academic ability (16.8%), financial difficulty (13.1%) and mental health (11.1%) were the main challenges identified.

Policy recommendations

Young people need to be skilled and confident, in education and with equal access to tertiary education, training or employment. All young people should have the best foundation for learning and development and be able to participate as valued members of society.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement with education needs to be supported from primary school and extend through secondary school and must involve students, their families and the broader community.
- Financial barriers to post-school pathways need to be addressed through increases to social security payments, more affordable rent for those who need to move away from home, and an expansion of scholarship programs.
Economic wellbeing

Around three in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (31.4%) reported part-time employment compared to 41.1% of non-Indigenous respondents. Only a small minority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (2.2%) and non-Indigenous respondents (0.4%) were employed full-time. Just under half (46.4%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work; this proportion is higher than for non-Indigenous respondents (33.8%). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents, 23.4% indicated getting a job as extremely important, and 27.8% valued it as very important.

Healthy

Almost two thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported that physical and mental health was important to them (extremely important: 33.7%; very important: 31.0%). Additionally, around three quarters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated having participated in sport (as a participant) and over six in ten (61.9%) indicated engaging in sport (as a spectator) over the past year.

Over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported feeling happy with their life overall (52.7%), with 17.2% feeling very positive, and 41.7% feeling positive about the future; these proportions were similar to non-Indigenous responses. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were more likely than non-Indigenous young people to note that the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ was very true of me (12.8% compared with 8.8%). Furthermore, a greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated they felt they have complete control over their life (17.4% compared with 10.8%).

One in ten (11.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported mental health to be a challenge that may impact upon them achieving their post-school goals. This was similar for non-Indigenous respondents (13.3%). The top issue of personal concern for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous respondents was coping with stress, with over one third (38.8%) indicating that they were either extremely concerned (20.0%) or very concerned (18.8%) about coping with stress.

Policy recommendations

Young people should have equitable access to the essentials in life and have good financial management skills. They should have pathways to economic participation, fulfilling employment and independent living.

• Employment programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people should be demand and need-driven and flexible in scope.
• There should be intensive person-centred support services available that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to address challenges to employment within local communities.
• Indigenous-led employment and training programs should be supported with long-term sustainable funding.
There is a need for mental health and wellbeing assessment tools specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait populations; particularly those that can account for cultural differences and experiences like racism and other challenges that disproportionately impact upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait people. The Mission Australia Youth Survey 2017 investigated young people's mood and wellbeing by using the Kessler 6 (K6) questionnaire, which is a mainstream assessment tool that can be used to help diagnose generalised psychological distress, optimally in combination with sensitive questioning and a broader understanding of a client’s situation. Based on their responses to this scale, nearly a third (31.3%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated some form of distress, compared to 24.2% of non-Indigenous respondents. Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were significantly more likely to respond in ways that may indicate some form of distress than males (34.2% compared with 21.2%). Mission Australia will continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health experts to explore culturally and other appropriate ways of assessing the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in future surveys.

**Policy recommendations**

Being healthy is a significant contributor to overall wellbeing and this includes participating in activities such as sport. Health incorporates both physical and mental health and Mission Australia believes that all aspects of health are important for young people to transition successfully into adulthood.

- **The deeper, structural causes of mental health difficulties should be identified and solutions co-designed and co-implemented** under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-leadership including community controlled organisations and health services.

- **Community-led programs that build on cultural determinants of social and emotional wellbeing and cultural strengths should be supported** to help provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with protective factors against mental health difficulties, and particularly against suicide, by supporting a strong sense of ‘social, cultural and emotional wellbeing’.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health organisations should be funded** to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with access to culturally and age appropriate mental health services in close proximity to their homes.
Executive summary (cont)

Housed

The Youth Survey 2017 asked questions about young peoples’ housing and living arrangements. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were almost four times more likely to report that they had lived somewhere else, other than with their parents, over the three months prior to the survey (22.0% compared with 6.2% for non-Indigenous respondents). Of the 22.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who indicated they had lived somewhere else, almost three in ten reported they had lived with relatives/siblings (28.9%), followed by living alone (25.6%) or living with non-related person/s (24.4%).

The Youth Survey 2017 additionally highlights that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to be living in public or social housing compared to non-Indigenous young people, as well experiencing various forms of homelessness, and often from a younger age. Young people were asked how many times (if any) they had moved house over the past three years. 13.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported moving house twice (compared to 8.0% non-Indigenous); 7.2% reported three moves (compared with 4.0%); 3.7% reported four moves (compared with 1.6%) and almost one in ten reported that they had moved house five or more times (9.9% compared to 1.7%).

Young people were also asked whether they had ever experienced a time living without a fixed address, or if they had spent time away from home because they felt they could not go back. 18.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported having experienced a time with no fixed address, living in a refuge, or in transitional accommodation, compared to 5.7% of non-Indigenous respondents. 27.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported having spent time away from home because they felt they could not go back, compared with 10.5% of non-Indigenous respondents. Of the 27.4%, 63.7% indicated that this had first happened when they were between the ages of 12 and 16 (compared with 75.8% of the non-Indigenous cohort), and 31.3% first experienced this at under the age of 12 (compared with 17.9%).

Policy recommendations

A supportive and stable home environment is a particularly important aspect of a young person’s life; it is essential for good physical and mental health and has positive impacts on educational outcomes. Stable housing also provides a platform for other supports in the community through schools or neighbours.

- **Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should address high rates of homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a priority** by funding more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and controlled social and affordable homes across remote, regional and urban areas.

- **Crisis and transitional accommodation models that are culturally appropriate are required as well as supported accommodation models** that are linked to education and employment and more intensive case management supports to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at risk of homelessness.

- **Prevention and early intervention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander young people at risk of homelessness should be funded, build on family strengths and cohesiveness and address the drivers of homelessness such as the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and juvenile justice and domestic and family violence.**
Inclusive and cohesive

Nearly three quarters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that family relationships were either extremely important (47.1%) or very important (26.4%) to them. Friendships (other than family) were the second most highly valued relationships.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people rated their family’s ability to get along as excellent (25.7%), very good (25.1%), or good (21.9%) and they were more likely to turn to a relative/family friend (67.3%) for help with important issues than non-Indigenous young people (60.9%). Yet, almost twice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated challenges in their family relationships as they rated their family’s ability to get along as poor (12.7% compared with 7.0% of non-Indigenous respondents).

Connected and participating

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents rated alcohol and drugs (41.0%), mental health (27.6%) and equity and discrimination (23.1%) as the most important broader social challenges in Australia today. These were the same top three issues identified this year by non-Indigenous respondents, although the order of the first and second top issues were reversed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were more likely than males to identify mental health (39.0% compared with 19.3%), equity and discrimination (25.9% compared with 22.7%), bullying (16.2% compared with 11.1%) and education (11.8% compared with 9.2%) as key challenges facing Australia.

Policy recommendations

Having a strong sense of being included, having mutual support and feeling you have someone to call on at a time of need are critically important for young people. Having these bonds with the people around them plays an important part in transitioning to adulthood. Diversity needs to be respected and supported, with the benefits of this being seen as both strength-building and protective.

- Funding bodies should engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and young people in co-design and the co-implementation of support services to ensure that those services cater for the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- The need for cultural connection should be recognised and built into the design of programs that are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- Services should engage with family and kin and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring with cultural youth mentors where appropriate.

Policy recommendations

It is important that young people have a sense of belonging, feel part of the community and are given opportunities to participate in activities and events that allow them to develop relationships with others. Young people should have their voices heard and be actively involved in decisions affecting their lives.

- A broad range of cultural and other activities should be on offer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to help them feel connected to their communities and build self-esteem through achievement.
- Services should be made available in the local community where possible rather than expecting young people to travel away from family and cultural connections which may be detrimental.
Policy recommendations

Keeping young people safe and feeling safe is a responsibility of the whole of society. Young people need to feel safe in their families, neighbourhoods and schools. All young people should have a safe, secure and stable home and be protected from bullying and discrimination at school and in their community.

- Youth outreach programs are vital to reach vulnerable young people who do not feel safe at home and may spend more time in other potentially risky environments.

- Justice targets should be incorporated into the next iteration of Closing the Gap efforts to close the gap in the rates of imprisonment by 2040.

- Investment in culturally-appropriate early intervention programs is needed to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in juvenile detention.

Supported and resourced

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people nominated friend/s (77.1%), parent/s (70.6%) and relative/family friend (67.3%) as the top sources of support that they would turn to for help with important issues in their lives. Around four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they would go to their GP or health professional (39.8%) or the internet (38.9%) for help with important issues.

Safe

Young people were asked to indicate how concerned they had been about a range of issues over the past year. Around one in six (16.6%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they were extremely/very concerned about drugs (compared to 6.2% of non-Indigenous respondents). Just under one quarter (24.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that they were extremely/very concerned about bullying/emotional abuse (compared to 14.8%) and personal safety (24.3% compared to 14.8%).

Around one in five (19.8%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported that they felt extremely/very concerned about discrimination (compared to 10.6%) over the past year, while 13.9% indicated feeling extremely/very concerned about alcohol (compared to 5.5%).

Policy recommendations

Young people and those around them such as their peers, family and relatives must have access to services to meet their needs.

Mission Australia believes support is essential for young people whether this be universal or more targeted support. These need to be quality services which are holistic and improve outcomes over time. A holistic approach considers all life domains including: housing, recreation, social participation, employment, finances, legal issues, education, child and family relationships, health and mental health, alcohol and other drug use and cultural and personal identity. Services should produce evidence which helps improve service delivery. This includes listening to young people and including their opinions in service development.

- Access to support services that are culturally appropriate and responsive to the holistic needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people should be provided.

- Services should be provided with longer-term sustainable funding to achieve meaningful outcomes in the community.

- A standalone target on people with disability should be incorporated under the Closing the Gap targets that recognises the need for a long-term, whole of government response to support people with disability.
Background

Young people, 15 to 19 years of age, are both inheritors of the past and also direction setters for the future. With that in mind, Mission Australia’s annual Youth Survey among this age group is intended to help concerned Australians and policy-makers understand young people’s present challenges, as well as their aspirations for their future.

The Youth Survey is intended to provide a rich vein of data that policy-makers, community organisations and academic groups can use to identify challenges and better support young people to make the journey from adolescence to young adulthood.

In Australia, young people are often excluded from having a say in the things that affect them. Mission Australia has long advocated that supports in response to the challenges identified by young people must be co-designed and co-implemented with young people, and not for young people. This partnership approach, including the co-design and co-implementation of responses, is particularly important in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context. Such is not only good practice, it is young people’s right as consumers of government services, and – ultimately – their human right.

By focussing on the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, this Youth Survey report offers a platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to communicate their hopes, aspirations and the challenges they face in contemporary Australia. At the same time, the report provides valuable insight that can support service and policy design that is not only culturally-appropriate but reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people’s unique journeys and particular needs.

This Youth Survey 2017 report contains an executive summary; report of key findings with data breakdown; and a discussion of a range of policy recommendations in light of the data. Additionally, the report incorporates reflections and case studies from frontline Mission Australia staff who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across Australia on a daily basis. Overall, this report advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the co-design and co-implementation of responses to the various challenges highlighted.

Please note that throughout the report and in the data tables that the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are compared to those of non-Indigenous respondents. The data tables also contain a breakdown of key data by gender. Please also note that percentages in all tables, figures and text are rounded to one decimal place and may not necessarily total 100%. A number of the quotes included in the policy section of this report are taken from responses to open-ended questions from young people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the Youth Survey 2017. Not all respondents answered all survey questions. The data presented for each question are for those who responded.

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Today, too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people remain challenged by the legacies of the past: dispossession, intergenerational trauma, challenges to wellbeing associated with intergenerational poverty, and challenges to identity and aspirations associated with racism, discrimination and social exclusion.

Australian governments and civil society must work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to co-design and co-implement responses to these challenges. The starting point for this is a commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and self-determination in relation to all areas of life that affect them.

This commitment must include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and provide them with the opportunities to actively take part in decision making around co-design and co-implementation of responses to the challenges they face. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides the standard for engagement based on free, prior and informed consent, and should be put forward as best practice in engaging with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people’s ability to reach their goals and be as healthy, wealthy and educated as other Australians depends on the realisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s collective human right to equality of opportunity across a range of socio-economic subject matter areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in particular should enjoy the same opportunities enjoyed by all other young Australians: to a respected identity; to a culture; to a family; to a secure home; to education; and to employment. Key to achieving these is tackling racism, discrimination and social exclusion, while continuing to provide the resources needed to ‘close the opportunity gap’ across a range of areas.

The transition between adolescence and adulthood has become the focus of researchers across disciplines and has received attention from program designers and policy makers alike. During the transition into adulthood, young people experience and learn to cope with a range of changes that are physical, psychological, financial and social. This transition period is important as it sets the scene for a happy and successful adulthood.

To complete the transition, young people might need to fulfil their educational goals, become economically self-sufficient, and develop and maintain affirming social relationships. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people may also be expected to take on cultural family and community responsibilities as they transition into adulthood.

For the majority of young people, the transition to adulthood takes time and they move from areas of support such as school and friends to more adult contexts of support such as work and establishing their own families. However, for some young people, this transitional period is accelerated from a very young age.
For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, as for all young people, challenges to a smooth transition paced out over a number of years can include family violence, mental health difficulties, poverty, contact with the criminal justice system and disengagement from school.

Racism and discrimination can add further challenges that magnify the effects of these experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, combined with the ongoing challenges that stem from colonisation. Additional support for these young people to transition to adulthood may be required, including from Australian government-funded and other programs.

We at Mission Australia respect that the journeys of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families, mobs and cultures are all varied. We acknowledge that the challenges that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people encounter are complex and context specific; in so doing, we recognise that support must be appropriate and reflective of the unique experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may live within or away from community, as well as on or off country.

Through the Youth Survey, Mission Australia is able to listen to some of the diverse life stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, at the same time as providing valuable data to inform best practice for strengths-based service provision and policy reform.
Key Findings & Data Breakdown: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses to the Youth Survey 2017

For the last 17 years, Mission Australia has conducted an annual self-complete survey of young people aged 15 to 19 across Australia. As well as collecting sociodemographic data, the Youth Survey 2017 sought to capture the views and experiences of young people about a range of issues. Topics covered included education and employment, challenges around their post-school goals, participation in community activities, general wellbeing, their values and concerns, preferred sources of support, and feelings about the future.
The Youth Survey 2017 also asked young people new questions about their housing circumstances and mental health challenges.

This report is based on the responses of 24,055 young people who took part in Mission Australia’s Youth Survey 2017, 1,265 of whom identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This report details the findings specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, while highlighting areas of similarity and difference between the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people.

Profile of respondents

In total, 1,265 (5.3%) respondents to Mission Australia’s Youth Survey 2017 identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Of this total, 1,082 (4.6%) young people identified as Aboriginal, while 105 (0.4%) identified as Torres Strait Islander (the remaining 0.3% identified as both). See Figure 1, below, for a detailed breakdown of the sample in terms of respondents’ identification as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Figure 1: Sample breakdown
Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

Profile of respondents (cont)

State/Territory breakdown
Table 1 below indicates the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents from each state and territory, compared to the corresponding percentages of non-Indigenous respondents. One third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (33.3%) to the Youth Survey 2017 lived in major cities, while the remaining two thirds lived in regional areas (66.7%).

Gender breakdown
Just under half (45.8%) of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to Mission Australia’s Youth Survey were male and 44.6% were female.

Language background other than English
A total of 26 (2.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Survey respondents reported speaking an Indigenous language at home.

Disability
A total of 156 (13.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to the Youth Survey 2017 indicated that they had a disability. The most frequently cited disabilities were (in order of frequency): autism, learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intellectual disabilities and Down syndrome.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW/ACT</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
Education

All young people should have the best foundation for learning and development and be able to participate as valued members of society. The Youth Survey 2017 results show, as indicated in Table 2, the majority (84.9%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were studying full-time (compared to 95.6% of non-Indigenous young people). Around one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (8.4%), however, reported not studying at all – a notably higher proportion than among non-Indigenous young people (2.6%).

A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females reported not studying (9.2% compared with 5.2%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Participation in education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous respondents %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not studying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents who reported that they were currently studying were asked how satisfied they were with their studies. Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. As shown in Table 3, close to six in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported that they were either very satisfied (9.6%) or satisfied (49.0%) with their studies. Levels of satisfaction were slightly lower overall among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents compared with those seen among non-Indigenous respondents: around one in eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were either very dissatisfied (5.8%) or dissatisfied (7.3%) with their studies (compared with 1.4% and 5.3% respectively). A slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females reported feeling either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their studies (4.6% and 8.1% of males compared with 2.8% and 6.1% of females respectively).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Satisfaction with studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous respondents %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who were still at school, 89.8% stated that they intended to complete Year 12 (compared with 97.4% of non-Indigenous young people). The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males who indicated that they did not intend to complete Year 12 was more than three times that of female respondents (14.4% compared with 3.9% respectively).

Respondents who were still at school were also asked what they were planning to do after leaving school. Figure 2 shows notable differences in the reported plans of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents compared to non-Indigenous respondents. Over four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (42.3%) indicated plans to go to university after completing school (which was notably lower than the corresponding proportion of non-Indigenous respondents: 71.5%). One in four (38.3%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported plans to get a job after finishing school (this proportion was greater than that for non-Indigenous young people: 31.7%). One in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated plans to undertake an apprenticeship (20.0%) or go to TAFE or college (19.1%), which were both higher proportions than for non-Indigenous young people (7.4% and 11.5% respectively). A small minority of each group of respondents indicated feeling that no choices are available to me after finishing school (1.0% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents compared with 0.4% of non-Indigenous respondents).

Gender differences

A greater proportion of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males reported plans to go to university after school (53.5% compared with 32.6% respectively). A greater proportion of female respondents also reported travel/gap year plans (26.4% compared with 15.2%) or to go to TAFE or college (21.9% compared with 17.5%) after school. Conversely, a much greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported plans to undertake an apprenticeship (32.2% compared with 9.5%). Similar proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males indicated plans to get a job (39.4% compared with 40.6%) after leaving school, which were both higher than for non-Indigenous respondents.

### Figure 2: Plans after leaving school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to university</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a job</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel/gap year</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get an apprenticeship</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to TAFE or college</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choices are available to me</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option.
Confidence in achieving study/work goals

In 2017, respondents were asked how confident they were in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. Responses for this question were rated on a 5 point scale from extremely confident to not at all confident. As shown in Figure 3, just under four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported feeling extremely confident (11.4%) or very confident (25.2%) in achieving their goals after finishing school (which is similar in proportion to non-Indigenous young people). However, one in five young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were less confident in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school: 15.8% were slightly confident, while 3.9% were not at all confident. A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male than female respondents reported feeling extremely confident or very confident in achieving their study/work goals (12.2% and 28.4% of males compared with 8.1% and 23.6% of females respectively).
Employment

Respondents to the Youth Survey 2017 were asked whether they currently have paid work. Those who answered that they had paid employment were asked to specify how many hours they worked per week, on average. Table 4 shows participation in paid employment amongst both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous respondents.

Only a small minority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (2.2%) and non-Indigenous respondents (0.4%) were employed full-time. However, given the percentage of respondents who were still at school this is not surprising. Around three in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported part-time employment (31.4% compared to 41.1% of non-Indigenous respondents). Just under half (46.4%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work, which was higher than the proportion for non-Indigenous respondents (33.8%). One in five (20.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were not employed and not looking for work (compared to 24.7% of non-Indigenous respondents).

A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males were employed part-time (34.7% compared with 28.8%) or full-time (2.0% compared with 1.1%). Similar proportions of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females reported that they were looking for work (48.1% compared with 47.0%).

Table 4: Participation in paid employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment full-time</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment part-time</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in paid employment, looking for work</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Part-time is considered to be less than 35 hours per week and full-time is 35 hours or more.
Challenges to the achievement of study/work goals after school

Young people should have pathways to economic participation, fulfilling employment and independent living.

In 2017, young people were asked whether they felt there were any challenges which may impact on the achievement of their study/work goals after school. Just over half (54.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they felt there would be challenges to the achievement of their study/work goals (compared to 51.4% of non-Indigenous respondents). A much greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (62.5%) than males (45.1%) reported the perceived presence of these challenges.

Respondents who indicated the presence of challenges were asked to indicate from a number of items which challenges they saw as preventing them from achieving their goals after school. Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated each item as a barrier.

The top three challenges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people saw as impacting the achievement of their study/work goals were academic ability (16.8%), financial difficulty (13.1%) and mental health (11.1%).

These were the same top three challenges as for non-Indigenous respondents, although the proportions for non-Indigenous respondents were generally larger than for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

- A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that family responsibilities and where you live would impact on their achievement of study/work goals after school (10.9% and 8.7% compared with 8.1% and 7.4% for non-Indigenous respondents).

- 13.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated they felt financial difficulty was a challenge to achieving their post-school goals, while around one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents saw a lack of jobs as a challenge to achieving their goals (9.2% compared with 10.3% of non-Indigenous respondents).

- One in ten (11.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported mental health to be a challenge that may impact upon them achieving their post-school goals, which was similar for non-Indigenous respondents (13.3%).

- 7.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that lack of school support would challenge their post-school goals.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were slightly more likely to indicate transport (6.5%) as a challenge to achieving their post-school aspirations than non-Indigenous respondents (5.0%).

- A small minority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (4.7%) reported discrimination as a challenge to achieving their post-school goals (compared with 2.7% of non-Indigenous respondents).
Challenges to the achievement of study/work goals after school (cont)

Gender differences

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, some key differences were observed between male and female respondents. As shown in Figure 4, the top three challenges identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were *academic ability*, *financial difficulty* and *mental health*, whereas the top three challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were *academic ability*, *financial difficulty* and *lack of jobs*.

- Around one in five (19.5%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females highlighted *financial difficulty* as a challenge to their work/study goals.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were more likely than males to indicate *mental health* (17.2% compared with 4.3%), *family responsibilities* (14.9% compared with 7.1%) and *academic ability* (21.0% compared with 14.0%) as challenges to achieving their study/work goals after school.
- Over one in ten (11.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported *where you live* as a challenge to achieving their post-school aspirations (compared with 6.2% of males).
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females noting *lack of school support* (8.0%) and *lack of information* (8.3%) as a challenge to achieving their goals for after school was higher than for males (5.7% and 5.2% respectively). Additionally a greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males also indicated that *transport* would challenge their post-school goals (8.0% compared with 4.7%).
- A slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (4.3%) than females (3.0%) indicated *discrimination* as a particular challenge for their post-school goals.
Figure 4: Challenges to the achievement of study/work goals after school

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of frequency among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
What young people value

In 2017, young people were again asked how much they valued family relationships, financial security, friendships (other than family), getting a job, physical and mental health and school or study satisfaction. Responses for these items were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from extremely important to not at all important. As indicated in Table 5, the three most highly valued items for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents this year were family relationships, friendships (other than family) and physical and mental health. The next most valued item among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents was school or study satisfaction.

Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

- Nearly three quarters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that family relationships were extremely important (47.1%) and very important (26.4%) to them.
- Two thirds (66.9%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people rated friendships (other than family) as extremely important (31.3%) and very important (35.6%).
- Two thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported highly valuing physical and mental health (extremely important: 33.7%; very important: 31.0%).
- Over six in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents rated school or study satisfaction as extremely important (24.9%) or very important (36.6%) to them.
- Around half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people highly valued getting a job (extremely important: 23.4%; very important: 27.8%).
- Over four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents placed a high value on financial security (extremely important: 16.6%; very important: 28.1%).

Table 5: What young people value – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely important %</th>
<th>Very important %</th>
<th>Somewhat important %</th>
<th>Slightly important %</th>
<th>Not at all important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships (other than family)</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and mental health</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study satisfaction</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a job</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely important and very important for each item. Items are listed in order of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
What young people value (cont)

The two most highly valued items for non-Indigenous respondents, as indicated in Table 6, were friendships (other than family) and family relationships.

These were the same top two items for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents, although the order of the items is reversed. The third most valued item for non-Indigenous young people was school or study satisfaction (compared with physical and mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people).

- Around eight in ten non-Indigenous respondents indicated highly valuing friendships (other than family) (extremely important: 39.1%; very important: 42.2%) compared with around six in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (extremely important: 31.3%; very important: 35.6%).

- A greater proportion of non-Indigenous respondents also indicated highly valuing school or study satisfaction (extremely important: 34.1%; very important: 39.5%) compared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (extremely important: 24.9%; very important: 36.6%).

- Getting a job was indicated as more important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents overall (highly valued by 51.2%) than for non-Indigenous respondents (highly valued by 39.1%).
What young people value (cont)

Gender differences

There were some differences in the most highly valued items for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females. While family relationships and physical and mental health were ranked among the three most highly valued items by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females, the other item making up their top three differed. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, family relationships was the most highly valued item, followed by school or study satisfaction and then physical and mental health. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, family relationships was the most highly valued item, followed by friendships (other than family) and then physical and mental health.

- Family relationships were highly valued by 78.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (extremely important: 52.2%; very important: 26.0%) compared with 76.1% of males (extremely important: 46.4%; very important: 29.7%).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males placed a slightly higher value upon friendships (other than family) (extremely important: 31.9%; very important: 38.2%) than females (extremely important: 31.5%; very important: 37.1%).
- Around seven in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females highly valued physical and mental health (extremely important: 35.8%; very important: 33.6%) compared with around six in ten males (extremely important: 31.4%; very important: 32.7%).
- School or study satisfaction was highly valued by around seven in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (extremely important: 29.0%; very important: 40.6%) and just under six in ten males (extremely important: 21.5%; very important: 37.3%).

### Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: What young people value – Non-Indigenous respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extremely important %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships (other than family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely important and very important for each item. Items are listed in order of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
### Table 7: What young people value – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Extremely important %</th>
<th>Very important %</th>
<th>Somewhat important %</th>
<th>Slightly important %</th>
<th>Not at all important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships (other than family)</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and mental health</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study satisfaction</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a job</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely important and very important for each item. Items are listed in order of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

### Table 8: What young people value – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Extremely important %</th>
<th>Very important %</th>
<th>Somewhat important %</th>
<th>Slightly important %</th>
<th>Not at all important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships (other than family)</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and mental health</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study satisfaction</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a job</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely important and very important for each item. Items are listed in order of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
Issues of personal concern to young people

Respondents were asked to rate how concerned they were about a list of issues, shown in Table 9. Responses were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from extremely concerned to not at all concerned. The items were ranked in order of concern by summing together the number of respondents who selected either extremely concerned or very concerned for each item.

The top three issues of concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were coping with stress, school or study problems and body image.

- Almost four in ten (38.8%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that they were either extremely concerned (20.0%) or very concerned (18.8%) about coping with stress. This was top issue of personal concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and non-Indigenous young people alike.

- School or study problems was an issue of personal concern for over one third (35.1%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (extremely concerned: 16.1%; very concerned: 19.0%).

- Body image was also an important issue of personal concern for three in ten (30.7%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (extremely concerned: 16.6%; very concerned: 14.1%).

- Just under three in ten (28.3%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were extremely concerned or very concerned about depression (extremely concerned: 16.0%; very concerned: 12.3%).

- Around one quarter (24.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported feeling extremely concerned (13.3%) or very concerned (11.2%) about bullying/emotional abuse (compared with 5.8% and 9.0% for non-Indigenous respondents).

- 24.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that they felt extremely concerned (13.3%) or very concerned (11.0%) about personal safety.
Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people ranked coping with stress, school or study problems and body image as their top three personal concerns.

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were more likely than non-Indigenous respondents to indicate high levels of personal concern about the vast majority of issues listed.

In particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated higher rates of personal concern than non-Indigenous respondents about drugs (16.6% extremely/very concerned compared to 6.2%), bullying/emotional abuse (24.5% extremely/very concerned compared to 14.8%), personal safety (24.3% extremely/very concerned compared to 14.8%), discrimination (19.8% extremely/very concerned compared to 10.6%) and alcohol (13.9% extremely/very concerned compared to 5.5%).
### Table 10: Issues of concern to young people – Non-Indigenous respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Extremely concerned %</th>
<th>Very concerned %</th>
<th>Somewhat concerned %</th>
<th>Slightly concerned %</th>
<th>Not at all concerned %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping with stress</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study problems</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body image</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family conflict</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/emotional abuse</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely concerned and very concerned for each item. Items are listed in order of concern to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

### Issues of personal concern to young people (cont)

#### Gender differences

Coping with stress and school or study problems were the top two issues of concern for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females, as highlighted in Table 11 and Table 12. The third top issue of concern differed, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females indicating that body image was their third top issue of concern, while for males depression and personal safety were in equal third position. The proportion of female respondents who indicated concern about all of these (and many of the other issues) was much higher than the proportion of males.
• Coping with stress was a major personal concern for over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (extremely concerned: 27.8%; very concerned: 25.3%), compared with around one quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (extremely concerned: 10.3%; very concerned: 13.9%).

• 47.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were concerned about school or study problems (extremely concerned: 18.5%; very concerned: 29.0%) compared with 21.5% of males (extremely concerned: 9.1%; very concerned: 12.4%).

• Around four in ten (41.4%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females indicated concern about body image (extremely concerned: 20.9%; very concerned: 20.5%), compared with 18.1% of males (extremely concerned: 8.8%; very concerned: 9.3%).

• Depression was a personal concern for 34.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (extremely concerned: 17.7%; very concerned: 17.0%) and 18.2% of males (extremely concerned: 8.9%; very concerned: 9.3%).

• Depression and personal safety were the equal third most-indicated personal concerns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (extremely concerned: 8.9%; very concerned: 9.3% and extremely concerned: 9.0%; very concerned: 9.2%, respectively).

• Almost three in ten (28.6%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females indicated they felt extremely concerned (14.0%) or very concerned (14.6%) about personal safety, compared with under one in five (18.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (extremely concerned: 9.0%; very concerned: 9.2%).
### Table 11: Issues of concern to young people – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Extremely concerned %</th>
<th>Very concerned %</th>
<th>Somewhat concerned %</th>
<th>Slightly concerned %</th>
<th>Not at all concerned %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping with stress</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study problems</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body image</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family conflict</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/emotional abuse</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely concerned and very concerned for each item. Items are listed in order of concern to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
### Table 12: Issues of concern to young people – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Extremely concerned %</th>
<th>Very concerned %</th>
<th>Somewhat concerned %</th>
<th>Slightly concerned %</th>
<th>Not at all concerned %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping with stress</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or study problems</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body image</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family conflict</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/emotional abuse</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for extremely concerned and very concerned for each item. Items are listed in order of concern to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

When asked to specify their top issue of personal concern in the last year in an open-ended question, a number of important concerns emerged.

Some of these were similar in theme to those mentioned above including issues with school, mental health, body image, bullying, discrimination, drugs/alcohol and family conflict/separation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people also highlighted concerns about other issues including health, managing family responsibilities, housing/homelessness, interactions with the justice system, financial difficulties and concerns around finding employment.
Where young people go for help with important issues

Having a strong sense of being included, having mutual support and feeling that you have someone to call on at a time of need are critically important for young people. Having these bonds with the people around them plays an important part in transitioning to adulthood.

Young people were asked to indicate from a number of sources where they would go for help with important issues in their lives. Figure 5 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that they would go to each source. The top three sources of support for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people were friend/s, parent/s and relative/family friend.

Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

- The top source of help reported by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people was friend/s (77.1% compared with 84.8%), followed by parent/s (70.6% compared with 78.1%) and then relative/family friend (67.3% compared with 60.9%).
- Six in ten (59.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they would go to their brother/sister for help with important issues in their lives (compared with 53.5% of non-Indigenous respondents).
- Around four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they would go to their GP or health professional (39.8%) or the internet (38.9%) for help with important issues.

Gender differences

Overall, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females indicated similar levels of willingness to approach the sources of help listed. As shown in Figure 5, the top three sources of help for both genders were friend/s, parent/s and a relative/family friend.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were slightly more likely to indicate turning to their parent/s (77.8%), relative/family friend (72.4%), brother/sister (63.3%), and teacher (39.0%) for help with important issues in their lives compared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (70.9%, 70.2%, 61.3% and 37.6% respectively).

Slightly higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males indicated that they would turn to a GP or health professional (42.3% compared with 39.1%) or a school counsellor (35.7% compared with 33.0%) for assistance.

Conversely, higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males indicated that they would go to a community agency (21.5% compared with 16.1% for females), use a telephone hotline (17.5% compared with 8.3%) or access magazines (10.9% compared with 6.5%) for help with important issues in their lives.
Figure 5: Where young people go for help with important issues

- Friend/s
- Parent/s
- Relative/family friend
- Brother/sister
- GP or health professional
- Internet
- Teacher
- School counsellor
- Community agency
- Online counselling website
- Telephone hotline
- Magazines

Non-Indigenous respondents %
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %
Family’s ability to get along

Respondents were asked how well they thought their family got along. Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from excellent to poor.

Table 13 shows that the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people rated their family’s ability to get along positively, rating it as either excellent (25.7%), very good (25.1%), or good (21.9%). However, around one quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people did not report such a positive experience of family relationships: 14.7% rated their family’s ability to get along as fair, while 12.7% rated it as poor (compared with 12.0% and 7.0% respectively for non-Indigenous respondents).

Compared with non-Indigenous respondents, almost twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents rated their family’s ability to get along as poor (12.7% compared with 7.0%).

A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males rated their family’s ability to get along as excellent (31.9% compared with 21.2% for females).

Table 13: Family’s ability to get along

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues rated as the most important in Australia today

Young people should have their voices heard and be actively involved in decisions affecting their lives. Young people were asked to list the three issues they considered to be the most important in Australia today.

- Just over four in ten (41.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people identified alcohol and drugs as an important issue in Australia today.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were more likely than non-Indigenous young people to nominate alcohol and drugs as an important issue (41.0% compared with 31.5%). Conversely, non-Indigenous respondents were more to identify mental health (34.1% compared with 27.6%) and equity and discrimination (27.6% compared with 23.1%) as important issues.

The information provided by respondents was categorised and is listed in order of frequency in Table 14. In 2017, the top three issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people identified as the most important in Australia today were alcohol and drugs, mental health, and equity and discrimination. These were the same top three issues identified this year by non-Indigenous respondents, although the order of the first and second top issues were reversed.

- Around one quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people identified mental health (27.6%) and equity and discrimination (23.1%) as important issues in Australia (compared with 34.1% and 27.6% respectively of non-Indigenous respondents).
- Other important issues identified by over one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents included bullying, crime, safety and violence, international relations, the economy and financial matters and education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and drugs 31.5</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health             34.1</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity and discrimination 27.6</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying                  10.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime, safety and violence 11.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International relations   13.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The economy and financial matters 12.8</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education                 13.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment                10.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics                  6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents provided three open-ended responses, which were coded and aggregated. This table shows only the top ten issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. It may not include the top issues for non-Indigenous respondents.
Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

Issues rated as the most important in Australia today (cont)

Gender differences

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, some differences were observed between male and female responses to the question about the three most important issues in Australia today. As shown in Table 14, the top three issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females were the same, although the order of the second and third items was reversed: mental health was the second top issue for females, while for males it was equity and discrimination.

Compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were more likely to identify mental health (39.0% compared with 19.3%), equity and discrimination (25.9% compared with 22.7%), bullying (16.2% compared with 11.1%) and education (11.8% compared with 9.2%) as key issues facing Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, however, were more likely than females to identify alcohol and drugs (43.7% compared with 40.7%) and international relations (12.8% compared with 10.4%) as key issues.

Participation in activities

It is important that young people have a sense of belonging, feel part of the community and are given opportunities to participate in activities and events that allow them to develop relationships with others.

Young people were asked to identify the activities that they have been involved in over the past year from the list of options shown in Table 15. The top three activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were sports (as a participant), sports (as a spectator) and arts/cultural/music activities. Comparatively, the top three activities identified by non-Indigenous respondents were sports (as a participant), sports (as a spectator) and volunteer work.

- Around three quarters (73.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated taking part in sports (as a participant).
- Over six in ten (61.9%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported engaging in sports (as a spectator).
- Around half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they had participated in arts/cultural/music activities (50.4%) and volunteer work (47.5%).
- Around four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported they had been involved in student leadership activities (38.2%).
- Over one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people had taken part in youth groups and clubs (34.9%), while almost three in ten had participated in a religious group/activity (28.1%) or an environmental group/activity (27.9%).
- Around one in eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they had participated in political groups or organisations over the past year (12.9%).
Participation in activities (cont)

Gender differences

The top three activities for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males were the same, although male respondents reported involvement in arts/cultural/music activities and volunteer work in equal proportions.

• 78.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and 70.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were involved in sports (as a participant) over the past year.

• A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male respondents were involved in sports (as a spectator) (65.8%) than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (58.4%).

• Greater proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were engaged in arts/cultural/music activities (57.1%) and volunteer work (52.2%) than males (both at 43.1%).

Table 15: Activities young people were involved in over the past year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sport (as a participant)</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport (as a spectator)</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/cultural/music activities</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer work</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student leadership activities</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth groups and clubs</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious group/activity</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental group/activity</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political groups/organisations</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items are listed in order of frequency among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
Living arrangements over last three months

A supportive and stable home environment is a particularly important aspect of a young person’s life. Stable housing is essential for good physical and mental health; it has positive impacts upon educational outcomes as well as social relationships; and, it provides a platform for other supports in the community, through schools or neighbours.

In 2017, the Youth Survey asked new questions about young peoples’ housing and living arrangements in order to investigate their housing stability and potential experiences of homelessness. Youth Survey respondents were asked whether they had spent most of their time over the past three months living with their parent/s or somewhere else. As indicated in Table 16, the majority (78.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported living with parent/s over the past three months (compared with 93.8% of non-Indigenous respondents). However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were almost four times more likely to report that they had lived somewhere else, other than with their parents, over the past three months (22.0% compared with 6.2% of non-Indigenous respondents). Very similar proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males (19.4% and 20.7% respectively) indicated having lived somewhere other than with their parent/s over this time period.

**Table 16: Living with parent/s over the last three months**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, with parent/s</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, somewhere else</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people who reported that they had lived somewhere other than with their parent/s over the last three months were then asked which adult/s they had lived with over this period.

As indicated in Table 17, of the 22.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who indicated they had lived somewhere other than with their parents over the last three months, almost three in ten indicated they had lived with relatives/siblings (28.9%), and around one quarter indicated living alone (25.6%) or living with non-related person/s (24.4%). Comparatively, the most commonly reported alternatives to living with their parent/s over the past three months for non-Indigenous young people were living with non-related person/s (43.2%), followed by relatives/siblings (26.6%) and friends (19.3%).

Of those who indicated they had lived somewhere other than with their parents over the last three months, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were notably more likely than male respondents to indicate that they had lived with relatives/siblings (41.7% compared with 28.1%). Conversely, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males who had lived away from their parent/s were more likely to report that they had lived with non-related person/s (31.6% compared with 23.3% for females) or alone (20.2% compared with 11.7%).
Young people were also asked to choose from a list of options which residential setting best described where they stayed most of the time over the past three months. As seen in Table 18, over two thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported living in a privately owned or rented house/flat (67.0% compared with 91.0% for non-Indigenous respondents), while over one in ten indicated they lived in public/social housing house/flat (12.3% compared with 2.5% of non-Indigenous respondents). A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents than non-Indigenous respondents indicated that they had lived in a boarding house (8.2% compared with 3.6%), out-of-home care (2.4% compared with 0.4%) or somewhere else (10.2% compared with 2.5%).

There were a number of gender differences apparent in the residential setting reported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males compared to females. A greater proportion of females than males indicated having lived in a privately owned or rented house/flat (75.5% compared with 65.5%), while greater proportions of males than females reported having lived in each of the other residential settings listed.

### Table 17: Adult/s lived with over the last three months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatives/siblings</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live alone</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-related person/s</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster parents</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items are listed in order of frequency among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

### Table 18: Residential setting lived in over last three months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private owned or rented house/flat</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/Social Housing house/flat</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhere else</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding house</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-home-care (not foster care)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Items are listed in order of frequency among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.
Living arrangements over last three months (cont)

In order to gauge levels of housing stability, young people were asked how many times they had moved house in the past three years.

As seen in Table 19, just under half (48.4%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported that they had not moved house in the last three years (compared with 66.9% for non-Indigenous respondents), while 17.6% reported moving house only once in this time (compared with 17.9%). This indicates stable housing arrangements.

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported that they moved house more often than non-Indigenous young people. Over the past three years, 13.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported moving house twice (compared to 8.0% for non-Indigenous respondents); 7.2% reported three moves (compared with 4.0%); 3.7% reported four moves (compared with 1.6%); while almost one in ten reported that they had moved house five or more times in the past three years (9.9% compared to 1.7%). Male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated very similar frequencies of moving house over the past three years.

### Table 19: Number of times moved in the last three years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiences of homelessness

The Youth Survey 2017 asked young people if they had ever experienced a time when they had no fixed address or lived in a refuge or transitional accommodation. As shown in Table 20, 18.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported having experienced a time with no fixed address, living in a refuge, or in transitional accommodation (compared to 5.7% of non-Indigenous respondents). A slightly greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females indicated having experienced such a time of these transitional living arrangements (16.5% compared with 13.8%).

Young people who reported having experienced a time when they had no fixed address or lived in a refuge or transitional accommodation were then asked whether or not a parent/guardian had been present with them during any of these experiences.

Of the 18.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who indicated such an experience, only around four in ten (42.2%) reported being accompanied by a parent/guardian during all of these experiences without a fixed address (compared to 69.6% of the 5.7% of non-Indigenous respondents). Additionally, of the 18.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who indicated an experience of living without a fixed address, over one in five (22.0%) indicated a parent/guardian was present during some but not all of these experiences (compared with 14.5% of their non-Indigenous counterparts), while over one third (35.8%) reported that a parent/guardian was not present during any of these experiences (35.8% compared with 15.9%).

Considerable differences were observed between the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were notably more likely to report they had a parent/guardian present during all experiences of living without a fixed address (55.8% of the 13.8% of females, compared with 36.4% of the 16.5% of males). Conversely, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were much more likely to report not having a parent/guardian present for any of the experiences of living without a fixed address (39.8% of the 16.5% of males, compared with 26.0% of the 13.8% of females).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 20: Experienced a time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Indigenous respondents %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 21: Parent/guardian present during experience of a time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Indigenous respondents %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, during ALL experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but not during ALL experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2017, young people were asked if they had ever spent time away from home because they felt they could not go back.

As indicated in Table 22, over one quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (27.4%) reported having spent time away from home because they felt they could not go back (compared with 10.5% for non-Indigenous respondents). A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males reported this experience (31.4% compared with 19.3%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people who indicated having spent time away from home due to feeling unable to return were asked at what age this had first occurred.

As can be seen in Table 23 below, of the 27.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who indicated that they had spent time away from home because they felt they couldn’t go back, almost two thirds (63.7%) indicated that this had first happened when they were between the ages of 12 and 16 (compared to 75.8% of the 10.5% of non-Indigenous respondents). Additionally, of the 27.4%, nearly one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported that this first occurred when they were less than 12 years old (31.3% compared with 17.9% for non-Indigenous respondents).

Analysis of responses by gender reveals notable differences between the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females who that they had spent time away from home because they felt they couldn’t go back.

In particular, almost twice the proportion of males indicated they had first spent time away from home when they were under 12 years old (34.1% of the 19.3%, compared with 17.9% of the 31.4% of females).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less than 12 years</strong></td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12-16 years</strong></td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17-19 years</strong></td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiences of homelessness (cont)

Respondents who reported that they had spent time away from home were also asked how frequently they had done so over the past three years.

As shown in Table 24, among the 27.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who reported that they had spent time away from home, 84.9% indicated they had done so on more than one occasion over the past three years (compared with 79.6% of their non-Indigenous counterparts). Of the 27.4%, three in ten (30.2%) had spent time away from home because they felt they couldn’t go back on more than ten occasions (compared with 20.0%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were more likely than non-Indigenous young people to be unsure of the number of times they had spent away from home because they felt they could not go back (15.7% compared with 10.5%).

As seen in Table 24, responses were fairly similar among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males at either end of the spectrum. A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males reported they had spent time away from home between two to five times (35.8% compared with 29.3%), while a greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females indicated spending time away from home between six to ten times over the past three years (14.1% compared with 6.8%).

Table 24: Frequency of spending time away from home (among young people reporting spending time away from home)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 times</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 times</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 times</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people who reported that they had spent time away from home were also asked about the length of time spent away from home on each occasion.

Of the 27.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who indicated that they had spent time away from home because they felt they couldn’t go back, just over three in ten (31.6%) reported typically spending between one day to one week away from home (compared to over four in ten (45.8%) non-Indigenous respondents), while around one fifth (19.3%) reported spending more than six months away from home on each occasion (compared with 5.3% of non-Indigenous respondents). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females reported similar typical lengths of time spent away from home.
Table 25: Typical length of time spent away from home on each occasion (among young people reporting spending time away from home)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One day or less</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day to one week</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One week to one month</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month to six months</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than six months</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental health and wellbeing

Being healthy is a significant contributor to overall wellbeing, and incorporates both physical and mental health. All aspects of health are important for young people to transition successfully into adulthood. Young people were asked to rate how happy they were with their life as a whole on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 indicates feeling very sad, 5 as not happy or sad, and 10 indicates they felt very happy. In line with recommendations from the authors of this question, responses were standardised on a scale of 0–100, in which 100 is rated as the happiest. As Table 26 shows, over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they felt happy about their lives overall (52.7% reported in the 70-100 range, compared with 63.5% of non-Indigenous respondents). However, almost one in six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they felt unhappy with their life as a whole (15.8% reported in the 0-30 range, compared with 9.3% of non-Indigenous respondents), and nearly one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (8.9%) reported feeling very sad about their life overall, compared to nearly one in fifty (1.8%) non-Indigenous young people.

Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 26: How happy young people are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous respondents %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – Very happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – Not happy or sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – Very sad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, responses to this question by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males in particular fell at either extreme of the scale.

Around twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male respondents compared to females indicated both that they felt very happy with their life overall (18.3% compared with 8.2%) and very sad (7.3% compared with 3.4%).

The Youth Survey 2017 asked young people to indicate the frequency of particular moods or over the past four weeks according to a six-item, five-point scale. The scale ranges from 1-5, where 1 indicates all of the time and 5 represents none of the time. Scores across the six items are summed to produce a total. This question is employed using the Kessler 6 (K6) questionnaire, which is a recognised assessment tool that can be used to help diagnose generalised psychological distress, optimally in combination with sensitive questioning and a broader understanding of a person’s situation. Based on their responses to this scale, nearly a third (31.3%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated some form of distress, compared to 24.2% of non-Indigenous respondents. Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were significantly more likely to respond in ways that may indicate some form of distress than males (34.2% compared with 21.2%). Mission Australia will continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health experts to explore culturally and other appropriate ways of assessing the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in future surveys.

The Youth Survey 2017 also asked young people to rate how much control they feel they have over their life on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates no control and 7 represents complete control.

As can be seen in Figure 6, a greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people than non-Indigenous young people indicated they felt they have complete control over their life (17.4% compared with 10.8%). However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were also more than three times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to report feeling as though they had no control over their life (10.2% compared with 3.0%).

Once again, responses to this question by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males in particular fell at either extreme of the scale. Almost twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females indicated feeling that they had complete control over their life (22.9% compared with 12.1%). Just under one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (8.5%) compared to around one in twenty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (5.5%) indicated feeling as though they had no control over their life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 27: Indications of distress (based on the Kessler 6 scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Indigenous respondents %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings & Data Breakdown (cont)

Mental health and wellbeing (cont)

Figure 6: Perceptions of control over life

![Bar chart showing perceptions of control over life for different levels of control: 7 - Complete control, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 - No control. The chart includes data for Non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents, as well as for females and males.]
Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale of 1-7 how true the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ was of them, where 1 represents not very true of me and 7 indicates the statement is very true of me.

Over one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported that the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ was very true of me (12.8% compared with 8.8% for non-Indigenous respondents). However, a greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people than non-Indigenous young people indicated that the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ was not very true of me (14.3% compared with 9.0%).

Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males expressed much higher levels of agreement with the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ than females. More than twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported that the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ was very true of me compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (17.6% compared with 7.3%). Conversely, over one in eight (13.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females indicated that the statement ‘I have high self-esteem’ was not very true of me (compared with 9.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males).
How do young people feel about the future?

Youth were asked to rate on a five-point scale how positive they felt about the future, where 1 indicates very positive and 5 represents very negative.

As can be seen in Table 28, almost six in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported feeling either positive (41.7%) or very positive (17.2%) about the future, which was comparable to non-Indigenous respondents (62.6% feeling positive or very positive).

However, almost three in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they felt neither positive nor negative (28.3%) about the future, while just over one in eight felt either negative (5.5%) or very negative (7.4%). Almost three times the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (7.4%) reported feeling very negative about the future (compared to non-Indigenous respondents: 2.8%).

Notably greater proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females reported feeling very positive about the future (21.2% compared with 12.3%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings about the future</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very positive</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither positive nor negative</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very negative</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy context: the way forward

Over 1,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across Australia shared their hopes and concerns in the Youth Survey 2017.

Overall Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are happy, feel positive about the future, and feel in control of their lives.

They are engaged and participating in education, are satisfied with their studies and place high value on their schooling.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people showed how much they value work, their health, their families and friendships, and the findings show that these young people feel they can turn to these supports when they need help with important issues in their lives.

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are confident in achieving their post-school goals, they indicated that they are facing challenges along the way that may impact upon their work and study goals after finishing school.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses to the Youth Survey 2017 also indicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are particularly challenged around personal safety, bullying, mental health and discrimination, as well as their housing arrangements.

It is up to us as a society to ensure the right policies and programs are in place to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to pursue their post-school goals, to overcome the challenges they face to achieving them and to address their pressing personal concerns.

Governments, families, educational institutions, health professionals, employers and community organisations all have important roles to play in facilitating successful youth transitions and addressing these broader societal issues.

We must ensure that all young people are supported to make successful transitions into further education, training and employment; are healthy, safe and housed; feel included and connected within their communities and have the necessary supports to combat the challenges that arise in their lives.
Developing and achieving

*Equality of opportunity in education is a critical factor in supporting young people to reach their full earning potential as adults.*

Education has multiple, compounding benefits in addition to improved employment prospects including: higher levels of self-esteem and sense of agency; and better health, mental health and resilience.

The vast majority (84.9%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people surveyed were studying full-time and intended to complete year 12 (89.8%). Many of the young people who were currently studying also reported feeling satisfied with their studies (58.6%), and also placed a high value on school or study satisfaction (35.1%).

However, around one in ten (8.4%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported not studying at all, while around one in eight of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who were studying reported feeling dissatisfied (5.8%) or very dissatisfied (7.3%) with their studies, which may lead to future disengagement.

**School engagement**

The national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students school attendance rate has remained stable since 2014 (83.5% in 2014 and 83.2% in 2017). However, the target is not on track to be met. Challenges to school attendance remain, particularly in remote areas where attendance and retention rates tend to decline with age.

These challenges can be magnified by schools’ lack of knowledge of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community cultures and histories, and their failure to develop culturally-appropriate relationships with the children, young people and their families.

Calls to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with education in culture and language while at school are receiving increasing support. Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers through programs such as the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) 2011-2016 is also likely to improve engagement.

Established in 2014, the Australian Government’s ‘Remote School Attendance Strategy’ (RSAS) aims to increase school attendance rates among 14,500 students in 78 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. To date, the program has improved attendance by 48% in RSAS schools, although it has been criticised as requiring greater tailoring to the needs of specific communities.

“The teachers need to be trained in Cultural Awareness and they need to learn about our Culture and respect our culture. This will make them aware when they teach and help them learn to respect all cultures.” F, 17 NSW
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Developing and achieving (cont)

Navigator Girls on the GO and Boys on the BOUNCE
Dandenong and District Aborigines Cooperative Limited (DDACL) is funded by Mission Australia through the Communities for Children program to deliver the ‘Girls on the Go’ and ‘Boys on the Bounce’ programs to facilitate school engagement with and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families.

This is the only program of its kind in the City of Greater Dandenong, as such it provides an essential support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a culturally safe and supportive environment. Participants are referred through local primary schools, local services and the DDACL.

Girls on the GO program is a culturally-tailored program for Aboriginal girls to help maintain their participation in school while supporting girls through later primary years and the transition to secondary school. Boys on the BOUNCE runs a similar culturally-tailored program for Aboriginal boys which supports their school engagement through later primary years and the transition to secondary school. Both programs also develop complementary education/information and support for parents, grandparents and partners, and facilitate referrals into other services offered by the DDACL and additional appropriate mainstream services.

The program incorporates a range of different activities which support students with: social and emotional well-being; healthy eating; trust and confidence; physical activity; reconnecting to culture; body image; personal safety; and finish with a celebration at the end of the program.

The programs are delivered through an empowerment and positive role modelling approach. Facilitators encourage the participants to actively make decisions about their own health needs, which supports the continuation of positive practices at the completion of the program.

The flexible approach of this program provides ongoing support and mentoring for children experiencing challenges. The responsive nature of the program has been proven to support children achieve positive outcomes, including increased school engagement.

Post-school aspirations and pathways
Over four in ten (42.3%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents planned to go to university after completing school (compared with 71.5% of non-Indigenous respondents), while one in four (38.3%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported plans to get a job after finishing school, compared to 31% of non-Indigenous respondents. Females were more likely to report plans to go to university than males (53.5% compared with 32.6%).

Over one third (36.6%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported feeling extremely confident or very confident in achieving their goals after finishing school. However, one in five (19.7%) young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were less confident in their ability to achieve their goals.

In addition, just over half (54.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they felt there would be challenges to the achievement of their study/work goals after finishing school (compared to 51.4% of non-Indigenous respondents). The top three challenges cited were academic ability, financial difficulty and mental health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were more likely to report all of these challenges than males.

We know that socioeconomic status impacts upon educational outcomes and targeted funding is required to address disadvantage and the inequity in education that may lead to a disparity in academic results.13

Year 12 attainment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have increased substantially over the last decade: 65% in 2016, compared to 48% in 2006.14 Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ enrolments in university courses have more than doubled over the same decade. 15

“I need to keep my grades high so I can make it in to university and get a job. It seems jobs in the areas I am looking at are sparse.” 15, M, QLD
Yet, the gap still has to close. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be less likely to be studying or employed than non-Indigenous young people. Further, university ‘drop out’ rates are two times higher than that of non-Indigenous students.

In the Youth Survey 2017, financial difficulty was cited by 13.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people as a challenge to achieving their study/work goals after completing school.

Lack of financial resources can be a major inhibitor for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing further education and training, as well as for young people from rural and regional areas who may need to relocate to pursue their study or career goals.

Increases to Youth Allowance and rent assistance payments and improved access to affordable accommodation are required to ease the financial pressure on young people and enable them to pursue their goals.

Youth Allowance rates currently leave young people struggling to meet their basic needs and the private rental market is extremely unaffordable in many places. Over 50% of recipients of Youth Allowance are living below the poverty line. The payment rates must be urgently increased.

Further investment in scholarship programs and targeted supports for under-represented groups is also required. The 2017 Federal Government Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP), for example, aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to meet the challenges of university by offering scholarships, tutorial assistance, mentoring and establishing safe cultural spaces on campuses.

Young people also need to be made aware of the financial supports that are available and provided with help to navigate them if needed.

The findings from the Youth Survey 2017 indicate that one in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated planning to undertake an apprenticeship (20.0%) or go to TAFE or college (19.1%) after finishing school, which were higher proportions than for non-Indigenous young people (7.4% and 11.5% respectively).

In light of this finding, access to TAFE and apprenticeships should be improved, particularly in regional and remote areas. Further, vocational options should be better and earlier integrated into the school curriculum to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through these pathways.

“I believe if I work harder I could get an apprenticeship and use the help and support that is at school.”

M, 17, NSW

Information on the supports available for students also needs to be better promoted to young people, schools and the community sector to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people receive the benefit of such support.

Where supports are made available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, they can overcome challenges to education and employment.

Aboriginal Access Centre, TAFE SA

TAFE South Australia’s (SA) Aboriginal Access Centre provides support for Aboriginal students to access and participate in TAFE. This includes individual case management and tutorial support.

When an Aboriginal student participates in the centre’s programs, a Training Support Officer is assigned to them for the duration of their course. The Training Support Officer works with the young person to develop an individual learning plan that maps their education pathway. The Aboriginal Access Centre offers a variety of programs through many TAFE SA sites, including regional and remote locations.
Policy recommendations

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement with education needs to be supported from primary school and extend through secondary school and must involve students, their families and the broader community.

- Schools should be equipped to build culturally-appropriate relationships with students and their families, and to provide education in culture and language, and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers should be increased.

- Financial barriers to post-school pathways need to be addressed through increases to social security payments, more affordable rent for those who need to move away from home, and an expansion of scholarship programs.

Developing and achieving (cont)

Young Indigenous Leadership Program – IMPACT

IMPACT is a Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership program that runs over three years for young people in Years 10-12. The program is delivered by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) with assistance from Charles Darwin University, the Northern Territory Government, Kentz, Shell and Samsung. It is run and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and focuses on social action, skill development and building positive networks, aiming to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to be active community members and role models, while motivating them to complete Year 12 and to transition into post-school pathways.

A 2014 evaluation of the IMPACT program found that all participants completed Year 12, reporting increased aspiration for the future and all went onto further education, training or employment. Participants also gave back to their communities through volunteering and developed networks and leadership skills, better equipping them for life beyond school.18

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)- School Based Traineeships

School-based trainees work across a range of settings and train as allied health assistants.19 Trainees complete one or two days a week of work experience and rotate each term through the Deadly Choices health promotion team, the Work it Out chronic disease rehabilitation program and children’s therapy services.

Trainees receive a comprehensive introduction to work as an allied health assistant, and are mentored by allied health and health promotion staff.

IUIH is committed to mentoring trainees through their traineeship and into work and/or further study after training. Over half of the 2013 trainee graduates are currently enrolled in the University of Queensland Tertiary preparation program.

IUIH is partnering with University of Queensland to launch Deadly Pathways. This program provides intensive support for Indigenous children from disadvantaged families to access practical pathways into secondary and tertiary education.
Economic wellbeing

Employment plays an important role in young people developing independence. It can also contribute greatly towards mental health and wellbeing. Employment can provide young people with a sense of purpose and value as well as an opportunity to develop relationships with other people.

Challenges to finding employment

The Youth Survey 2017 found that around three in ten (31.4%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported part-time employment, while just under half (46.4%) indicated that they were currently looking for work.

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consistently challenged by higher rates of unemployment, particularly for those young people living in regional or remote areas. The 2018 Prime Minister’s Closing the Gap Report found that the employment rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people has actually fallen over the past decade.

The Youth Survey 2017 drew attention to the challenges that young people may encounter when looking for work. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated a range of challenges, including financial difficulty, a lack of jobs, where they live, and transport. There are fewer labour market opportunities in regional and remote communities. Family responsibilities can also challenge participation in work and education, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and some but not all of these responsibilities are cultural.

The social determinants of health include employment, but health conditions in turn can challenge a person’s capacity to hold down employment. Discrimination can also directly impact employment prospects and also impact upon a person’s mental health.

In order to assist young people to meet their goals, we need to address the challenges that they encounter when seeking employment, as well as assisting them to negotiate employment pathways.

Indigenous-led employment and training programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people should be demand- and need-driven, as well as flexible in their scope. These need to be funded over the long-term to enable sustained change.

Broader pre-employment programs, such as Transition to Work, are also useful to transition young people from education to employment and it is promising to see the recent expansion of this program to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are eligible to participate.

“Need to make more jobs available for junior students. I currently haven’t been employed for ages and I have been trying and it is so hard to get a job and it puts more stress on my schooling/university because I currently can’t get a job.” F, 16, VIC

“More of a concerted effort from government, private, public and NGO sectors on decreasing the prevalence of youth unemployment and underemployment.” F, 16, VIC
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Economic wellbeing (cont)

Transition to Work
The Transition to Work (TtW) program focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other young people aged 15-21 who are facing challenges to stay in school or gain employment. From 1st of January 2018, the strict eligibility criteria were relaxed to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 to 21 who are not engaged in education or employment are able to access TtW. In the program, Youth Employment Specialists assist young people to develop practical skills, connect with education or training providers, engage with work-experience opportunities and local community services, as well as identifying job opportunities to suit their aspirations and skill set and the needs of the local job market. By intervening early to help young people stay in school, engage in training or find work, they are likely to have better outcomes.

The Indigenous Rangers - Working on Country
The Indigenous Rangers - Working on Country program is an innovative employment program providing opportunities for Aboriginal young people to remain on country and be employed. Funded by Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the program aims to build on the existing skills of Indigenous rangers to take up surveillance and compliance opportunities with government regulatory agencies and other fee-for-service work. An evaluation found that the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) and Indigenous Rangers - Working on Country program were successful across a broad range of outcome areas.

Charcoal Lane
Charcoal Lane is a social enterprise in Fitzroy (Melbourne) that combines a restaurant specialising in native flavours with a comprehensive training program for young people who have experienced vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment. Charcoal Lane enables Aboriginal and other young people to gain both accredited hospitality qualifications and professional experience within a supportive developmental environment. On completing traineeships at the restaurant, young people are well prepared to move into careers in hospitality, as well as other industries.

Case study
Kenneth* had some interactions with the justice system and was referred to Charcoal Lane to find a culturally safe space to complete the requisite hours under his Community Work order. He indicated that he experienced several challenges including alcohol and drug dependence, diagnosed learning disability and minimal employment experience. He was then referred to another Aboriginal community service where he was provided with support to complete a 3 week pre-employment program where he indicated that he needed additional support with his literacy and numeracy. Kenneth was connected to a Re-connect education and training worker who supported him with course work. He was also referred to a job services agency that is geared specifically towards supporting those with learning difficulties – ensuring that appropriate supports are put in place to support his dealings with government agencies, such as phone calls instead of text messages, and support to navigate forms like a tax file number application.

Following the successful completion of the pre-employment program, Kenneth was invited to commence his first official paid employment as a trainee at Charcoal Lane. Over the next 6 months he will complete a Certificate II in Hospitality whilst working in both chef and waiter roles in a hatted restaurant sharing culture through food. During this time Kenneth will also engage in fortnightly Life Admin sessions that address topics such as healthy relationships and money management.

*Name has been changed for confidentiality
Policy recommendations

- Employment programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People should be demand and need-driven and flexible in scope.
- There should be intensive person-centred support services available that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to address challenges to employment within local communities.
- Indigenous-led employment and training programs should be supported with long-term sustainable funding.
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Healthy

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people care about their health: almost two thirds (64.7%) of respondents placed a high value upon physical and mental health.

At a national level, mental health and alcohol and drugs were each nominated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people as two of the most important issues facing Australia today.

Mentally healthy and ‘well’

The Youth Survey 2017 demonstrated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people feel positive about the future and in control of their lives. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people also reported challenges around their health; particularly around mental health difficulties (in the form of body image, stress and depression) and wellbeing (feelings of self-efficacy, control over life and feelings about the future).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have endured and survived a traumatic and deeply challenging colonisation period that affected all aspects of their collective lives and continues to challenge communities, families and individuals today.

At the population level, higher rates of mental health difficulties among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are intertwined with entrenched poverty, substandard and overcrowded housing, health conditions and disabilities, intergenerational un/under-employment, stressors and trauma, racism and discrimination, and at-risk behaviours in response to sometimes desperate situations.

In particular, the members of the Stolen Generations and their descendants are ‘more likely to have had contact with mental health services,’ with children in their care often challenged by higher rates of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In many cases, responding to population mental health challenges means addressing their deeper, structural causes. These should be identified and solutions co-designed and co-implemented under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-leadership including community controlled organisations and health services. The needs of young people should be prioritised as directed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their representative organisations.

Social and emotional wellbeing is holistic and deep-rooted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023 recognises that health concepts are culturally shaped and that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, health and mental health are included in a broader ‘social and emotional wellbeing’ concept which connects the individual to ‘the health of their family, kin, community, and their connection to country, culture, spirituality and ancestry.’

Community-led programs that build on cultural determinants of social and emotional wellbeing and cultural strengths should be supported to help provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with protective factors against mental health challenges, and particularly against suicide, by supporting a strong sense of ‘social, cultural and emotional wellbeing’ that includes a positive Indigenous cultural identity. These cultural determinants vary but can include culturally-shaped connections to family, kin, community, and country.

Yet, in many cases, mainstream health and mental health programs do not account for the social and wellbeing concept when working with or treating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

“The majority of mainstream services are not effective in helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. We have seen that in a lot of services the participant is the only Aboriginal person and in group or support settings, it is natural that they don’t feel fully comfortable.”

Program Manager, WA (Mission Australia)

Program funding must be flexible enough to provide for differences, tailor services to meet community and individual needs and to support younger age groups where critical issues arise.
It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have access to culturally and age-appropriate mental health services, which are in close proximity to their homes. The Australian Government should invest in building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and controlled health organisations to deliver these services in communities.

**Discrimination and mental health**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to experience high levels of discrimination. Our Youth Survey 2016 found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were significantly more likely to report having experienced discrimination on the basis of race or cultural background compared to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people (54.7% compared to 28.3%).

“Racial discrimination needs to be addressed, racism hurts young kids and well as old people.”  
F, 16, WA

While many young people show great resilience in the face of discrimination, studies have shown that discrimination challenges mental health, with effects including increased psychological distress, depression and anxiety.

Investment is needed in community, organisational and media interventions to combat discrimination across Australia. Education initiatives are also needed to address the attitudes and behaviours of young people directly. This includes highlighting the impacts of racism as well as building knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture.
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Healthy (cont)

beyondblue’s Invisible Discriminator
This campaign encourages everyone in Australia to do something about his or her behaviour.

Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning
is designed to support the 21,000+ early learning services, primary and secondary schools in Australia to develop environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.

Racism. It stops with me
is a campaign from the Australian Human Rights Commission which engages with organisations and communities to develop antiracism activities, materials and educational tools to support change. This campaign has received support from more than 350 organisations.

Suicide prevention
The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide is a critical public health challenge for Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide deaths were reported at five times the rate of non-Indigenous young people in the 15-19 year age group between 2008-2012.

Designed to complement the mainstream National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the 2013 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy was developed to respond to this public health challenge. It recognises the need for investment in holistic and integrated approaches that helps individuals, families and communities have hope for, and optimism about, the future.

In addition to mainstream integrated approach interventions, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSI SPEP) highlighted the need for community-led, locally-based and culturally-appropriate ‘upstream’ preventative activities to address community-level challenges associated with suicide. Further, ATSI SPEP underlined the need for programs that build on cultural determinants of social and emotional wellbeing and its protective factors to have a positive impact against complex mental health challenges, including risks of suicide.

Recognising the intersectionality between mental health, suicide and substance dependence, the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing requires the integration of mental health, alcohol and other drug, and suicide prevention services in communities. However, the Strategy needs a focused implementation plan that is properly costed and operationalised if it is to shape the mental health space.
**Gift of Gallang**

**The Gift of Gallang (GoG) is a school-based wellbeing program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Inala region (Grades 4-6).**

The program has a strengths based approach with a focus on healing mind, body and spirit. Program development occurred after a need for a suicide prevention program was identified by key community groups and Mission Australia. The wellbeing of individuals, families and communities had been significantly impacted by several deaths by suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Concern was held that additional suicide attempts may have occurred as children as young as 8-11 years of age had expressed suicide ideation.

In order to foster resilience and wellbeing, GoG was designed with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Inala through the formation of the Committee of Hope and supported by Mission Australia and Inala Wangarra. Committee members consisted of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members from Inala including staff from local community service organisations, Queensland Health and community Elders. The Committee of Hope worked in consultation with the former Cultural Connect Worker with Mission Australia, currently Community Resource Officer with Inala Wangarra to develop the overarching purpose of the program as well as contributing to the content and format of the program.

Consultation began in late 2015 and after considerable collaboration, the program ran for the first time this year across Term 2 in a local primary school. The program duration was for one hour across nine weeks with content aiming to provide students with strategies to foster social and emotional wellbeing, as well as a strong connection to community and culture. The facilitators that delivered the sessions were local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, purposefully selected by the Committee of Hope.

Mission Australia is currently completing an evaluation of GoG to determine facilitators and barriers to the consultation process and if program goals were met. Initial reported outcomes have been positive, including a high engagement of students with the program, as well as increased community connections. Another recognised strength is that the consultation and development process has allowed ownership of the ‘Gift of Gallang’ to rest with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Inala, Queensland.

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**Alcohol and drugs**

**In the Youth Survey 2017, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people expressed concern about alcohol and drugs as an issue in Australia.**

Continued and targeted public health messaging is required to reduce alcohol-related harm at all ages across Australia.

As a personal concern, 9.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to the Youth Survey 2017 reported being extremely concerned about alcohol, and 10.6% indicated extreme concern about drugs. This is compared with 2.3% and 3.1% respectively among the non-Indigenous sample.

For some young people, drug and alcohol dependence can be a serious issue requiring access to effective and appropriate treatment. Yet, many treatment facilities are only available to those over 18 years of age and may be inappropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Mainstream drug and alcohol interventions that are not culturally appropriate or holistic in approach have been found to be less effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Access to culturally appropriate detoxification and rehabilitation facilities in or close to communities are vital to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people overcome the challenge of alcohol and drug dependence.

Youth-specific facilities that cater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, take a holistic approach to young people’s needs, and provide a safe, secure and encouraging environment are much more likely to succeed long-term and should be invested in.
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Healthy (cont)

Even where services are available, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people may not have access to appropriate follow-up support to help maintain sobriety. The broader challenge of alcohol and drug use in some communities exacerbates the potential of relapse for rehabilitated young people upon their return. Capacity to work with the family as well as the young person is needed. Additionally, there is a strong association between alcohol and drug use, mental health difficulties and homelessness. Wrap-around supports are necessary in this context.

Services also need to support access to housing, employment, education and other community-based services for people who have recovered from alcohol and/or drug dependence.

For example, Mission Australia’s Drug and Alcohol Youth Service (DAYS) in WA provides follow up support for young people until they are 23 years of age, and the majority of the participants remain engaged for the duration.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and drug workers play an important role in preventing and responding to alcohol and drug related harm and are supported by the National Alcohol and other Drug Workforce Development Strategy (NADWFDS). Heavy workloads, challenges of isolation when working in remote areas, and dealing with clients with complex comorbidities and health and social issues make such positions a challenge. Yet the status and pay of such workers often does not reflect the important role they have and difficulties they face. More support for this workforce is required.

“One of the biggest challenges I see for (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) young people is when they move off country to participate in rehabilitation. We are based in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. If a young person wants to participate in our program, they are moving off country and so they are losing connection with their community and their local elders. We try to connect them with the local elders in our area as soon as we are able to, to see if we can connect them with mob and country here as a visitor. We need to make sure that they are able to participate in treatment in their local area.”

Program Manager, NSW (Mission Australia)
“At Triple Care Farm (a Mission Australia rehabilitation service for young people), of all the young people (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous), 91% had a co-accrued mental illness. 73% had attempted to take their life in the 12 months prior to entering treatment. It is an exceptionally complex group of people who are accessing treatment and care.”

Program Manager, NSW (Mission Australia)

“About 60 to 70% of young people coming to our service (Mac River rehabilitation centre) have a primary caregiver or parent that uses substances regularly at home. So it is really important that when we take someone out of that environment and put them in a residential environment – there is parallel servicing of the family back at home as well … If we could support mum or dad to work on their drug or alcohol issue while the young person is working on theirs, then there is likely to be a more sustained outcome in the long term.”

Area Manager, NSW (Mission Australia)
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Healthy (cont)

Junaa Buwa! Centre for Youth Wellbeing and Mac River Centre

Junaa Buwa! Centre for Youth Wellbeing and Mac River Centre are Mission Australia’s residential rehabilitation centres for young people who have entered, or are at risk of entering, the juvenile justice system and have a history of alcohol and other drug use. Funded by NSW Department of Justice, they offer residential and outreach services as well as educational and living skills training and aftercare support.

Since leaving the rehabilitation facility, Max has completed a Diploma of Community Services, has not used alcohol or drugs, and maintains his tenancy. He has also rebuilt his relationship with his mother and sister. Max has also been able to do extra work on TV programs such as ‘Black Comedy’ and ‘Cleverman,’ which provided him with opportunities to connect with his culture and community. Max has been successful in obtaining employment as a detox worker at a well-known facility in the inner city. He has demonstrated his ability to use learnings from his past experiences to help other young people in similar situations and is proud of the fact that he is now supporting other young people with their journey to recovery.

*Name has been changed for confidentiality

Policy recommendations

- The deeper, structural causes of mental health difficulties should be identified and solutions co-designed and co-implemented under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-leadership including community controlled organisations and health services.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health organisations should be funded to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with access to culturally and age appropriate mental health services in close proximity to their homes.

Case study

Max* is a young Aboriginal person from Maitland, NSW. He was incarcerated in juvenile detention for 12 months in 2013 and prior to that he was experiencing homelessness.

After his release, Max was determined to go through rehabilitation to overcome his alcohol and drug dependence. Max went through a detoxification process at a local hospital and following this, he was referred to Mission Australia’s Mac River Centre Residential Rehabilitation Program. Upon the successful completion of rehabilitation, he was supported with housing and long-term accommodation brokerage, counselling and support coordination, life skills, and access to a range of medical services.

The services cater for young people aged 13-18 years in New South Wales with Junaa Buwa! located in Coffs Harbour and Mac River in Dubbo.

Young people undertake residential rehabilitation for 12 weeks which is followed by 12 weeks after care support. The services take a holistic approach including case management addressing mental, physical, social and inter and intra personal challenges. More than 80% of clients are Aboriginal young people. The Junaa Buwa! AOD Outreach Program was established in 2012 and targets 13 to 18 year olds at more than eight local high schools.

Policy recommendations

- The deeper, structural causes of mental health difficulties should be identified and solutions co-designed and co-implemented under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-leadership including community controlled organisations and health services.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health organisations should be funded to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with access to culturally and age appropriate mental health services in close proximity to their homes.
Housed

Housing is a foundation for good physical and mental health, positive education and employment outcomes, and supportive networks in the community.

The home provides a sense of identity and security for children and young people, as a safe place to call their own which is critical for their social, emotional and intellectual development. Numerous international legal instruments recognise access to housing that is affordable, habitable, accessible, culturally appropriate and safe as a human right.

The evidence demonstrates that the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people can be challenged by overcrowded housing, living in out-of-home care, and living in a sole-parent family.

Homelessness or housing insecurity presents further challenges. Service data already shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people represented 1 in 4 of those aged 15–24 years who presented alone, and sought support from, specialist homelessness services (SHS) in 2016-17. Further, while the number of young people overall using SHS appears to be decreasing over time, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people accessing these services is increasing.

The Youth Survey 2017 adds to the evidence base by highlighting that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to be living in public or social housing compared to non-Indigenous young people, as well experiencing various forms of homelessness, and often from a younger age. These can challenge health, wellbeing, economic and educational outcomes.

Having ready access to early intervention support services, and crisis or transitional accommodation can help to offset some of the challenges of housing instability and homelessness. These services can help to address the often-complex needs of young people in these situations and identify appropriate referral pathways to address mental health and health difficulties, family conflict or family violence, any contact with the criminal justice system, and alcohol and drug related challenges.

Measures to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and juvenile detention are vital aspects of addressing increased risk of homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

We also know that for young people, poor family functioning and family conflict can be precursors for homelessness. This often starts with couch surfing and can lead to more entrenched homelessness.

In the Youth Survey 2017, over one quarter (26.4%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated a personal concern around family conflict (extremely concerned: 13.7%; very concerned: 12.7%) and over one in four (27.4%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people did not report such a positive experience of family relationships, rating their family’s ability to get along as either fair or poor.

Early intervention is particularly crucial for young people to promote family reconciliation where possible as is the provision of safe and stable housing where the young person cannot live with their family.

Young people also have to deal with a largely unaffordable housing market in many parts of Australia and there is an inadequate supply of social and affordable housing options to cater for the young people who need them.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities have identified the need to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-designed plan to systematically identify and meet housing needs by the end of 2018.

There is a need for community-led, culturally-appropriate frameworks when considering and otherwise co-designing housing to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs and that, if required, can accommodate cultural family, kin and community responsibilities by flexibly allowing for the accommodation of visiting relatives and so on.

Some inroads have been made to address overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) and National Partnership on Remote Housing (NPRH), however this has now expired.
Recently we were able to find a 4-bedroomed house for an Aboriginal family of 10. In our region (West and Far-West NSW), these big houses are hard to come-by. Very rarely we see a 4-bedroom house becoming available...Building houses with more bedrooms must be a key part of the housing solution to address homelessness in regional and remote Australia.”

Area Manager, NSW (Mission Australia)

Housed (cont)

A recent review identified that 5,500 more houses are needed in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia to address housing needs, including sub-standard and overcrowded housing.57

While the Northern Territory has been provided with much needed further funding for remote housing, the Federal Government has indicated that negotiations with other State Governments are ongoing,58 and there is little clarity as to the future funding of remote housing in other states.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should address overcrowding as a priority by facilitating additional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and controlled homes in remote communities and regional centres.

In addition to an increase in social and affordable housing and remote housing, supported accommodation models that are linked to education and employment, as well as those with more intensive case management supports should be invested in to meet the needs of young people who require additional supports.

Further, homelessness programs must have sufficient funding to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in urban, regional and remote areas. They must be adapted to meet cultural needs in consultation with local communities.

Broken Hill Young People’s Homelessness & Housing Support Service

This service is funded by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and supports young people aged 12-15 who are challenged by potential homelessness or who are homeless or inappropriately accommodated in the Broken Hill, Dareton and Central Darling area.

Aboriginal young people are a priority group of this service. The service supports and case manages clients complex needs by the following approaches:

• Early intervention and prevention through outreach to keep young people housed.

• Supported crisis and transitional accommodation with an emphasis on assisting young people move into stable housing and live independently.

• Post-crisis support to help clients address the causes of homelessness in order to prevent future episodes.

• Access to mental health services, family support, financial help or counselling, legal advice, education and employment opportunities, community participation and family restoration.

The service has ten properties used as ‘transitional units’ to enable young people to gain a successful rental history over a three-month period to help them apply for private rental accommodation.

It also provides intensive case management to support young people to maintain a housing lease through living skills programs, ‘rent it keep it’ programs and tenancy support programs. The aim of the program is to support clients to transition into permanent, stable and safe accommodation.
Youth Accommodation Support Services (YASS) (WA)

Operating from a Perth residential facility, this service provides 24/7 accommodation and support for up to six young people, aged 15 to 18 years, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Providing holistic support for up to three months, the service aims to help young people to address issues underlying their homelessness (e.g., drug and alcohol issues, mental health and family relationships), increase life skills (e.g., financial management, cooking), transition to stable long-term accommodation and engage/re-engage with education or employment.

Case study

Alice* is a 17-year old Aboriginal young woman from Western Australia. Alice’s mother was challenged by alcohol and drug dependency and Alice experienced homelessness as a young person.

Alice herself became a mother to two children at a young age and was a survivor of family violence. She left her abusive partner and her children were placed in the care of a family member.

She was working with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS) in relation to reunification with her children and visitation. The DCPFS referred Alice to the Western Australian Youth Accommodation Support Service (YASS). When she arrived at YASS, she was challenged not only by homelessness, but prescription drug dependency and mental health difficulties. She was also pregnant. Alice was already in touch with an Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation. YASS case workers registered her with a local medical practice and supported her to attend health, mental health and antenatal appointments.

She left YASS in October 2017 and moved into a housing support program for young mothers. Alice still maintains phone contact with YASS and continues to engage with a range of services including the mental health support services she received when she was at YASS.

* Name has been changed for confidentiality

Policy recommendations

- Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should address high rates of homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a priority by funding more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and controlled, social and affordable homes across remote, regional and urban areas.

- Crisis and transitional accommodation models that are culturally appropriate are required as well as supported accommodation models that are linked to education and employment and more intensive case management supports to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at risk of homelessness.

- Prevention and early intervention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at risk of homelessness should be funded to help build on family strengths and cohesiveness and address the drivers of homelessness such as the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and juvenile justice and domestic and family violence.
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Inclusive and cohesive

Positive relationships with parents and the support of friends are protective factors for mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, social support is also important across childhood, adolescence and into adulthood as the young person moves towards independence and becomes more confident in a range of settings.

The Youth Survey 2017 found that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people alike each ranked friends, parent/s, relative/family friend and brother/sister as their top-four sources of support for important issues in their lives. These informal channels of support are highly important as the first point of contact for young people experiencing difficulties.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, family provides a sense of kinship – the feeling of family togetherness, the ability to rely on each other, and the creation of spiritual bonding which helps to give hope and strength to Aboriginal people.

Services should work to meaningfully and respectfully engage with family and kin networks to provide culturally-appropriate holistic support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Where possible, the funding bodies should engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the design and development stage of various support services to ensure that those services understand the cultural nuances and cater for the needs of those who will be in receipt of the services.

Peer-to-peer mentoring with appropriate cultural youth mentors offers an important pathway for skilful support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that supports them with their own needs as well as the cultural aspects of their social and emotional wellbeing.

A vibrant culture and connection to community are significant factors in strengthening the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, which is essential to achieving positive wellbeing, education and other outcomes. Conversely, a limited connection to culture may challenge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people’s self-esteem and self-identity.

This need for cultural connection should therefore be recognised and built into programs that are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Services should also be made available in the local community where possible rather than expecting young people to travel away from family and country, which may be impactful.

Assertive outreach and building relationships with young people are also essential to effective service delivery and need to be factored into funding and contracts.

“Living in extended families, people look up to their elders and seek advice from them ... If the elders understand and have a relationship with the community services, they can refer young people to those services. There should be a better connection with community elders to support young people.”

Cultural Officer, QLD (Mission Australia)
“There should be more support for services to go to the schools, meet (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) young people at their homes or some other place they are comfortable with like a café. Case workers invest a lot of time and effort to building relationships with young people. Simple things like the ability to drive young people to their appointments all add up to them trusting the services ... Funding contracts should be flexible to make sure the young person is able to decide what support they need, not the other way around.”
Program Manager, SA (Mission Australia)

Headspace Pilbara

Headspace is trialling a collaborative outreach service in the remote Pilbara, with a strong component tailored to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Instead of young people coming to the headspace hubs, headspace workers operate across the region: they are embedded in high schools and youth centres and they can make home visits to families and elders to help their young relatives.

Headspace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Mental Health Traineeship Program

Headspace has also successfully established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Mental Health Traineeship Program which provides young people with education and employment opportunities. Among its many positive outcomes, the program has expanded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workforce in remote areas and is continuing the conversation around mental health within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
Deadly Sista Girlz

The Deadly Sista Girlz program is delivered by the Wirrpanda Foundation through funding received by Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The program is delivered by strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female mentors who offer a stable environment in which participants can discuss current and personal issues they may be facing. Each girl has the opportunity to be individually mentored throughout the program and also have positive social interactions with their fellow Sista Girlz in a fun and caring environment.

Program content includes women’s sexual health, cultural identity, self-esteem, career development, nutrition and drug and alcohol awareness.

In 2017 the program expanded to include a female AFL Academy which includes weekly training and matches with the predominant aim of incentivising school attendance.

The Deadly Sista Girlz Program gives young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls more opportunities to expand their thinking and become active members and leaders in their communities, creating a brighter future for themselves, their families and the generations to come. Since 2007, Deadly Sista Girlz has reached over 4,500 Indigenous girls and is currently delivered to 11 full-time sites nationally.

Policy recommendations

• Funding bodies should engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and young people in co-design and the co-implementation of support services to ensure that those services cater for the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

• The need for cultural connection should be recognised and built into the design of programs that are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

• Services should engage with family and kin and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring with cultural youth mentors where appropriate.
Connected and participating

Participating in activities helps young people to build social networks, as well as developing new skills.

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated taking part in sport (as a participant) (73.5%) or (as a spectator) (61.9%), while around half of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait respondents indicated that they had participated in arts/cultural/music activities (50.4%) and volunteer work (47.5%) over the past year.

When young people live in communities that are inclusive and encourage belonging, research shows us that they have more positive futures and are less likely to engage in risk taking behaviours.66

Participation in cultural activities within the community, such as in art, sport and ceremony, has been found to foster cultural strength, pride and enhanced self-esteem. Involvement in community activities has also been credited with improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ long-term physical and mental health, as well as with increasing social cohesion in communities.67

Traditional Camps – Townsville QLD

Mission Australia in collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS), provides camps on traditional country to support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are involved in the criminal justice system and are at high risk of reoffending. Up to 10 camping trips per year are planned to a local national park to do culturally appropriate activities to strengthen young people’s connection to culture and country.

These camps are based on the premise that connection to mob and to country is an essential part of health as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. The cultural camps aim to enhance the self-esteem and cultural pride of Indigenous young people, particularly those who may feel disconnected from their cultural identity. After the camp, the elders, who act as mentors for young people, maintain regular contact with the participants.

Case study

Paul* was a sixteen year old Aboriginal young person who was referred to Supported Community Accommodation Townsville (SCAT) for his first offence – a domestic violence matter involving his mother and sister.

The needs assessment with Paul and his family identified that he was at risk of homelessness due to his long-term threatening behaviour towards female family members. As part of the case plan process, Paul and his family identified that SCAT was the most appropriate housing service, and a referral proposal was sent to the Townsville Youth Justice Service.

The SCAT program worked with him to identify his individual goals and strategies by which they could be achieved. These included training in life-skills, appropriate, non-violent, respectful, culturally appropriate relationships between male and females, anger-management techniques, and communication skills. Some of these referrals resulted in Paul developing a strong relationship with the local PCYC boxing program, being connected with Aboriginal mentors, and being involved in billycart building and other local community initiatives. Paul’s day included boxing training, visiting his mother, and returning to the SCAT at night before curfew.

Over the course of the 6 month program, Paul’s confidence developed rapidly, he began speaking to female staff and then the females in his family respectfully. During his stay at SCAT, Paul also took part in the first Cultural Camp run by Mission Australia and ATSILS.

Following this process, Paul has not re-offended; his relationships with his family members continue to improve; and he continues to have a strong relationship with 3 of the camp volunteers. He has highlighted his cultural and spiritual needs with these volunteer mentors, and has re-established connections with elders from his family.

*Name has been changed for confidentiality
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Connected and participating (cont)

**National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy**
The National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) is an Aboriginal governed not-for-profit organisation based in Redfern, NSW that operates across a number of Aboriginal communities across Australia. It works with Aboriginal young people to empower them through health, education, sport and cultural programs, using elite athletes as role models and engaging with business partners and sports organisations to deliver positive and effective programs. These programs aim at increasing school attendance and completion rates, building employment aspirations and improving employment outcomes, and increasing cultural pride, confidence and leadership skills amongst Aboriginal young people.

**Policy recommendations**

- A broad range of cultural and other activities should be on offer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to help them feel connected to their communities and build self-esteem through achievement.
- Services should be made available in the local community where possible rather than expecting young people to travel away from family and cultural connections which may be detrimental.

**Safe**
The findings from the Youth Survey 2017 highlight that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are challenged by personal safety, bullying, and discrimination.

Around one quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported feeling extremely concerned or very concerned about bullying/emotional abuse (24.5%) and personal safety (24.3%). It is imperative that young people feel safe in their homes, schools and communities; this encompasses safety both at home and in the broader neighbourhood, in both physical and emotional dimensions. If young people feel unsafe at home, they may spend more time in other potentially risky environments. Youth outreach programs are therefore vital to reach vulnerable young people where they are at.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are significantly over-represented in youth detention. Children of imprisoned parents are also at a higher risk of homelessness and disrupted childhoods than other young people. The recent Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) report highlights that rates of incarceration are deeply interrelated with other forms of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.

“Diversionary and rehabilitative approaches are essential to make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not punished for their disadvantage and to break the cycle of poverty, substance abuse, mental health concerns and crime.”
State Director (Mission Australia)
Clean Slate without Prejudice – Redfern

The Clean Slate without Prejudice Program commenced in Redfern, NSW, in June 2009. The program was initiated by the Superintendent of the Redfern Police Force in collaboration with local Aboriginal leaders and organisations, such as Babana Aboriginal and Centrelink, and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth at risk of offending. This includes those who have committed a crime but have not yet been sentenced, those incarcerated in juvenile justice centres, and young offenders who have been released back into the community.

The program encompasses a range of strategies including early intervention, developmental crime prevention, positive relationships, support networking and behavioural workshops. An Aboriginal mentor brings the participants to boxing training three days a week and helps them find accommodation, employment, and education or training, as appropriate. Participation in the program is voluntary and youth can stay in the program as long as they want.

The Redfern Police Force are also involved, training alongside the young people and working with the judiciary to have the program form part of a suspended sentence. Crime rates relating to robbery offences have dropped in Redfern since the inception of the program in 2009.

The Panyappi Indigenous Youth Mentoring Project

The Panyappi Indigenous Youth Mentoring Project is a mentoring program specifically for Indigenous young people aged 10-18 living in the Adelaide area of South Australia (SA). The program aims to reduce the incidence of high risk behaviours and criminal acts by breaking the cycle of negative behaviours and providing support and opportunities for young Indigenous people whereby self-esteem, identity and a sense of direction in life are developed and monitored by appointed mentors. Key objectives of the program include:

- **To intervene** in pathways of offending behaviour and bring about a positive shift in each young person’s attitude towards offending and in their behaviour.
- **Decrease** each participant’s contact with the juvenile justice system and/or agencies associated with the juvenile justice system.
- **Promote** self-discovery and self-determination by young people participating in the project, their family and the wider community.
- **Work collaboratively** with all agencies that have mutual responsibility for resolving the young person’s difficulties.

The project is based on culturally appropriate protocols which allow the young people to connect with Elders. The project has been evaluated both nationally and internationally and the evaluation of this program demonstrated numerous positive outcomes for young people as well as their families and the community.
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Safe (cont)

Justice Reinvestment Program
Justice reinvestment is a data-driven approach to improve public safety managed by not-for-profit organisations to reduce corrections and related criminal justice spending and reinvest savings in strategies that can reduce crime and strengthen communities.77

Justice reinvestment diverts a portion of the funds spent on incarceration to communities where there is a high concentration of young offenders. The money that would have been spent on custodial services is diverted into early intervention, crime prevention and diversionary programs that address the causes of crime in these communities, creating savings in the criminal justice system which can be tracked and reinvested in communities.

KPMG conducted a preliminary evaluation of the Justice Reinvestment program in 2016 and indicated that when compared to other crime prevention programs, this had a number of promising criteria for success and that the data driven and community led approach had the potential to address underlying causes of crime.78

Policy recommendations

• Youth outreach programs are vital to reach vulnerable young people who do not feel safe at home and may spend more time in other potentially risky environments.
• Justice targets should be incorporated into the next iteration of Closing the Gap efforts to close the gap in the rates of imprisonment by 2040.
• Investment in culturally-appropriate early intervention programs is needed to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in juvenile detention.
Supported and resourced

Friend/s (77.1%), parent/s (70.6%), relatives or family friends (67.3%) and brother/sister (59.2%) were the most commonly cited sources of help for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

All people need support and, commonly, this comes from family, friends, neighbours and communities. However, there are occasions when support from family, friends, neighbours and communities cannot be realised.

Some young people have complex needs or may live away from their families, and as such may require a greater degree of long-term support. Several circumstances lead people to seek assistance from outside their immediate support networks, including a breakdown in family relationships, social stigma, isolation or complex needs that require specialist support services. Such support needs to provide assistance towards the progressive realisation of goals and the achievement of milestones, whilst empowering and building resilience.

Young people need to feel confident seeking help and know where to turn. Equally those who young people turn to for support must be equipped with the information and resources to effectively help young people in times of need.

In light of rising concerns about mental health, young people’s tendency to turn to friends should be recognised as an opportunity to educate young people about ‘mental health first aid’ and provide peer support networks.

It is also pleasing to note that around four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they would go to their GP or health professional (39.8%) for help, and one third of young people indicated that they would turn to a teacher (36.9%) or school counsellor (33.3%) for support.

Over one in three (38.9%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people would go to the internet for help, while around one in six (15.5%) would access an online counselling website and over one in eight would phone a telephone hotline (13.8%) for help with important issues.

Therefore, where appropriate, technology that provides an alternative to face-to-face service delivery should be supported and invested in to meet the needs of young people. However face-to-face service provision is also required, including in more remote locations and should be invested in over the longer term.

There are examples where policies and particularly funding modalities have been quite promising, and even successful, but by the time they reach the stage of evaluation they have already been defunded or significantly restructured.

“More support needs to be offered specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Social, Emotional (mental) and Physical health sectors”
F, 19, VIC

“By the time we build relationships with the local Aboriginal organisations, the community and hire trained and qualified staff to deliver services, the funding round has run out. It should at least be for 3 years or 5 years so that there’s continuity of support.”
Program Manager (Mission Australia, SA)
Policy context: the way forward (cont)

Supported and resourced (cont)

Continuity of funding is vital to sustain programs and services appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly considering that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to turn to the community organisations when they need support.

Disability

A total of 156 (13.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to the Youth Survey 2017 indicated they had a disability.

The most frequently cited disabilities were autism, learning disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intellectual disability and Down syndrome.

Close to 5% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014-15 aged 15 – 24 years reported a severe or profound disability.

“I need to access more funding for disability support, so that I’m not concerned about that one family member while I’m away from the house while at school.”

F, 17, TAS

Policy recommendations

• Access to support services that are culturally appropriate and responsive to the holistic needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people should be provided.

• Services should be provided with longer-term sustainable funding to achieve meaningful outcomes in the community.

• A standalone target on people with disability should be incorporated under the Closing the Gap targets that recognises the need for a long-term, whole of government response to support people with disability.

“WE need to access more funding for disability support, so that I’m not concerned about that one family member while I’m away from the house while at school.”

F, 17, TAS

Government policies, guidelines and services that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability should provide holistic, targeted support according to need whilst reflecting cultural understandings around disability.

Specifically, First People Disability Network (FPDN), in their Culture is Inclusion report continuously highlight the need for the provision of ‘on country’ disability supports, which acknowledge that many people return to country and receive informal care through their community rather than accessing systemically supported services in non-remote areas. The strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community care should be explored further through sector development and research to set a goal to enhance wellbeing by fostering social inclusion through active participation in community.

It is suggested that there are opportunities to better target policies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with disability such as the Closing the Gap refresh process and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The FPDN as well as the Productivity Commission emphasise the importance of introducing a standalone target on people with disability under Closing the Gap targets that recognises the need for long-term, whole of government response to support people with disability.

The NDIS has the potential to improve the lives of people with disability and as of June 2018, 6.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants received approved NDIS plans. However, concerns have been raised by FPDN in relation to communication issues and challenges around the application process. There are particular limitations in terms of receiving the necessary supports under the NDIS in remote areas where there may not be any service providers. The Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Early Childhood Education Intervention (ECEI) services are likely to address some of these challenges.

As noted throughout this report, Mission Australia calls for services that are culturally competent and respond to the needs of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which involves operating in a participatory and engaging way.
Notes

1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations Unite 2016; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2014
2 Hunt 2013
3 Xie, Sen, and Foster 2014
4 The data displayed in this report have been defined using the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Areas. The ‘major cities’ classification referenced in this report aligns with the ‘Major Cities of Australia’ remoteness area, while ‘regional areas’ is derived from the combined total of the ‘Inner Regional Australia,’ ‘Outer Regional Australia,’ ‘Remote Australia’ and ‘Very Remote Australia’ remoteness areas. As such, the capital cities of Darwin and Hobart have been classified under ‘Inner Regional Australia’ as per the remoteness area classification for these regions. Respondents to Mission Australia’s Youth Survey 2017 were classified into these remoteness areas according to the postcode provided. Comparisons were made between postcode data and ABS ASGS remoteness areas was done using geographical correspondences made available by the ABS for 2012 postcode regions and 2011 remoteness areas. Correspondences are a method for reassigning data from one geographical region to another. Although correspondences are not always exact (e.g. a postcode region may be split into different remoteness areas if the boundary for a remoteness area crosses that postcode region), converting smaller geographic units to larger units usually results in relatively more accurate data conversion than when converting larger to smaller areas or between areas of similar size. As postcode regions are smaller than remoteness areas, relative to each level of remoteness, correspondences utilised within this report are relatively exact. Correspondence tables used in this report can be accessed at: http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1270.0.55.006July%202011?OpenDocument
5 See also our recent report on youth homelessness: Fildes, Perrens, and Plummer 2018
6 Cummins and Lau 2005, 13
7 Kessler et al. 2003; Kessler et al. 2010
8 Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (Australia) 2018, 51
9 Purdie and Buckley 2010
10 Brackertz 2016, 9
11 Buckskin 2015, 177
12 Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (Australia) 2018, 56
13 Mahuteau et al. 2015, 2
14 Venn 2018, 8
15 Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (Australia) 2018, 68
16 Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) 2016, 13
17 See TAFE SA 2018
18 Foundation for Young Australians 2015
19 Institute for Urban Indigenous Health 2014
20 Dillon 2016
21 See Social Ventures Australia 2016, 18
22 Venn 2018, 1
23 Venn 2018, 2
24 Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (Australia) 2018, 77
25 See Mission Australia 2018
26 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016a; Hunter 2007, 88–89
27 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015; Healing Foundation 2017
28 Dillon 2016
29 Lindstedt et al. 2017, 4 See also Gee et al. 2014a, 55–56; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project 2016, 17
30 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2017a. See also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project 2016, 17
31 Lindstedt et al. 2017, 4 See also Gee et al. 2014a, 55–56; Schultz and Cairney 2017, 8; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016a
32 Lindstedt et al. 2017, 5, 22 See also Gee et al. 2014a, 55–56; Skerrett et al. 2018, 14
33 Vogl et al. 2016; Ferdinand, Paradies, and Kelaher 2012
34 Beyondblue 2018
35 Narragunnawali 2017
36 Australian Human Rights Commission 2014
37 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015, 80; Department of Health 2013; Skerrett et al. 2018, 13
38 Department of Health and Ageing 2013
39 See Dobia and O’Rourke 2011, 10
40 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2017a, 14
41 National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee 2014, 5
42 See Mission Australia 2017
43 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction 2014, 5
44 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction 2014, 5
45 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction 2014, 5
46 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010, 10
48 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016b. Although it must be noted that the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in overcrowded conditions in both remote and non-remote communities has significantly decreased over the last decade; see Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2016, 10.3
49 Lindstedt et al. 2017, 2 See also Family Matters and Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Care 2017; Dean 2018
Notes

50 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016b
51 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018
52 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018
53 Dockery et al. 2013, 52–53. See also Mental Health Council of Australia 2009; Memmott and Nash 2014; Brackertz 2016
54 Holland 2018, 6
55 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014, 23
56 National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) 2018
57 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2017b, 24
58 Law Council of Australia 2018, 23
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71 Australian Law Reform Commission 2017, 494–96
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Mission Australia helps people regain their independence – by standing together with Australians in need, until they can stand for themselves.

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