



BUILDING INDEPENDENCE & PARTICIPATION

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Committee Secretary
Mental Health Select Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Queensland 4000

YFS submission to the Mental Health Select Committee Inquiry into opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders – February 2022

YFS welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Mental Health Select Committee Inquiry into opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders.

For more than 30 years, YFS has supported young people and families to overcome adversity, get their lives on track and thrive. Every day we see the impacts of psychological distress and inter-generational trauma. We believe that there are many factors in addition to healthcare that should be targeted to improve mental health, including unemployment, low income, and low social connectedness and social support.¹

Mental health issues in children and young people can have negative effects on life outcomes, including lower educational attainment, higher drop-out rates and poorer engagement with study and school.² We would therefore like to see a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and in particular a focus on the mental health needs of children and young people in any reforms of the Queensland mental health system.

We believe that Queensland Government reforms should include:

- Building the capacity for young people to understand, navigate and access mental health support. For example, one on one support through this process, comprising advocacy, engagement, and assistance.
- Continuing to support young people's emotional wellbeing through access to suitable employment and education, supporting them to feel a sense of purpose. Young people who are unemployed, especially those experiencing long-term unemployment, are disproportionately affected by mental ill-health than both their employed peers and older cohorts of unemployed people.³ Most mainstream employment programs don't work for disengaged and marginalised young people, and vulnerable young people often need intensive support to engage with targeted programs.
- Reducing waitlists and delays in accessing support, including a review of the Headspace model and accessing regular appointments with a single psychologist. Unsuitable delays in accessing support risks exacerbating issues and mean that the opportunity to prevent or manage issues before they escalate is missed.

¹ Australian Government Productivity Commission (2019), The Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health - Issues Paper: www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/mental-health/issues, p4

² Ibid., p25

³ Yourtown, Long-term youth unemployment discussion paper https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Long-term%20Youth%20Unemployment%20Discussion%20Paper_0.pdf

- Providing supported pathways for vulnerable young people to access mental health support. For example, YFS has an arrangement with a skilled youth psychologist to provide sessions on our premises for young people engaged with the Next Step Plus.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas in future detail. For further information please do not hesitate to contact Daniel Brookes, Client Service Manager via email on danielb@yfs.org.au or by phone on 07 3826 1500.

About YFS

For more than 36 years, YFS has backed people in Logan and surrounding areas not just to overcome adversity, but to thrive.

Our work is grounded in a shared understanding of people's experiences, needs, challenges and strengths. We help people change their lives by working alongside them to assist them to identify and achieve their goals, giving them hope for the future and confidence to succeed.

We support people to build their capacity to live independently and participate in their community through integrated services and partnerships. For example, families escaping domestic violence work with our domestic violence counsellors, financial counsellors, housing specialists and employment advisors.

Our evaluations show integrated approaches are cost effective. They break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and crisis.

YFS service areas include families with children, young people, managing money and debts, finding a place to live, substance use, domestic and family violence, legal help, getting into the workforce (including our social enterprise Substation33) and community education.

Our Vision: Building independence and participation

Our Purpose: YFS backs vulnerable people to overcome adversity and to thrive.

Our Values: Excellence, Integrity, Optimism, Steadfastness, Courage