



## Consumer and Community Engagement Strategic Framework 2020-2023

### Introduction

YACSA is the peak body in South Australia representing the interests of young people, youth workers, organisations and networks throughout the non-government youth sector. Policy positions are independent and not aligned with any political party or movement. YACSA supports the fundamental right of all young people to participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life, particularly the decision-making processes that impact them.

YACSA welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Consumer and Community Engagement Strategic Framework 2020-2023.

YACSA maintains that a range of diverse consumer input and participation is vital in the development of health services in South Australia. Engagement opportunities should be continuous, engage a range of participants and employ a variety of engagement processes. This diverse input and participation in health care development, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation will ensure that services are culturally appropriate, and that the system is trusted and valued.

### Engaging young people in decision making process

YACSA believes that young people are the experts in their own lives and are best placed to highlight concerns and develop solutions to the issues that impact them and their communities. Young people have a range of experiences, thoughts, ideas and perspectives that can enrich decision making processes and lead to more relevant and whole of community decisions, projects, policies, programs, use of resources and outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

Providing consumer engagement opportunities for young people means ensuring they are continuously involved in the decisions that affect their lives. This engagement can occur in a variety of ways and can be informal or formal. However, to be effective, engagement should be continuous, diverse and meaningful. Engaging with young people means that policy decisions, programs and services delivered to them are appropriate, relevant, supported and responsive to their needs<sup>2</sup>.

### The right to participate

In Australia, young people have a right to participate in and contribute to the decisions that affect them. These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNROC) (Article 12 & 13). The UNROC is clear that all young people are independent citizens and therefore, have rights<sup>3</sup>. The participation of a range of consumers should be continuous and play an integral role in evaluating and improving health services over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Government of South Australia, Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people, viewed online 10 May 2019 <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/318>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Health literacy

A significant level of health literacy is a prerequisite to engaging effectively with health care and health service development. We know that health literacy informs and motivates health seeking behaviour and contributes to prevention and early intervention, diagnosis and treatment, but research tells us that health literacy rates are relatively low across the population<sup>4</sup>. Young people (15-29) in particular, only demonstrate a 36.5% “adequate” health literacy level with even fewer (5.9%) demonstrating a “more than adequate” health literacy level<sup>5</sup>. Mental health literacy is also particularly important amongst young people, with the ability to understand and identify the experience of mental health issues a vital first step in accessing treatment<sup>6</sup>.

With the importance of health literacy in the overall experience of health and wellbeing, particularly for young people, as well as assisting health services to effectively partner with individuals and communities, how will health literacy rates be improved to effectively engage young people in service planning, development, monitoring and evaluation, particularly as part of this strategic framework?

### Specific comments on the strategic framework

*Definitions: Consumer Engagement (page 11)*

Insert “healthcare monitoring and evaluation” into the dot point list.

*Value: inclusive of diversity (page 17)*

#### Young people

Generally, young people face significant barriers to accessing health services ranging from geographical location and transport issues, to a lack of knowledge of health issues and health literacy to simply not being able to afford health services when weighed against the other basics of life<sup>7</sup>. With the knowledge that early experiences of poor mental and physical health act as a significant precursor to a negative experience of health later in life, it is imperative that young people are engaged in informing service development, access and evaluation.

As young people aren’t a homogeneous group, a variety of engagement methods will need to be employed. The Better Together Youth Engagement Guide<sup>8</sup>, written by YACSA and the former Department for Communities and Social Inclusion outlines a range of mechanisms to better engage young people in the community.

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Australia’s health 2018. Australia’s health series no. 16. AUS 221. Canberra: AIHW.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Health Literacy, Australia, June 2008. ABS cat. no. 4233.0. Canberra: ABS, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Kelly, C, Jorm, A.F., Wright, A, “Improving mental health literacy as a strategy to facilitate early intervention for mental disorders”, MJA, Vol. 187, No. 7, October 2007, pp. S26-S30.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Select Committee on Poverty in South Australia, viewed online, 26 March 2019, <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/617>, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, Government of South Australia, Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people, viewed online 10 May 2019 <https://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/318>

## LGBTIQ+ young people

YACSA would like to see an articulation of other diverse groups that will be engaged as part of this engagement framework. For example, LGBTIQ+ young people experience a range of disparate health impacts, particularly in regard to mental health and suicidality<sup>9 10</sup>. Within the context of service access, LGBTIQ+ individuals are more likely to hide their sexuality when accessing services<sup>11</sup> and the effects of heteronormativity and homophobia can dissuade LGBTIQ+ people from accessing services in the first place. As such, regular engagement with LGBTIQ+ young people that provides intelligence on the issues they face will assist in developing the services and programs that encourages greater service access.

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<sup>9</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, Face the Facts: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people, viewed online, 26 March 2019, [https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/7\\_FTF\\_2014\\_LGBTI.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/7_FTF_2014_LGBTI.pdf), 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Black Dog Institute, #mindthefacts, viewed online, 25 March 2019, <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/about-us/news-and-media/mindthefacts>, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Macapagal, K., Bhatia, R., & Greene, G. J. Differences in Healthcare Access, Use, and Experiences Within a Community Sample of Racially Diverse Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Emerging Adults. *LGBT Health*, 3(6), 434-442, 2016.



GPO Box 2117  
ADELAIDE SA 5001  
T: 08 8211 7546  
E: [yacsa@yacsa.com.au](mailto:yacsa@yacsa.com.au)  
W: [yacsa.com.au](http://yacsa.com.au)



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