



Tuggeranong Community Council Youth Engagement Forum 2021 Summary Report



Introduction

The fourth Tuggeranong Community Council Youth Engagement Forum was held on 29 April 2021. The first Forum was held in 2017, when the Tuggeranong Community Council (TCC) and its *Youth Engagement Subcommittee* identified some key topics of concern for young people living in the Tuggeranong region. The council felt it was important to have a follow up discussion with a broader group of young people, with the aim of expanding the conversation and to capture feedback from a larger cross-section of young people in the region. The Forum was planned with the support of TCC members and Communities@Work. The consultation activity utilised a World Café approach, which is a creative and interactive process, where community members come together to have their say.

The *TCC Youth Engagement Subcommittee* gained support from TCC members to help plan the event. In addition, the subcommittee approached the Community Development program at Communities@Work to assist with planning and facilitation of the Forum. Each organisation played a significant role in ensuring the success of the Forum and both contributed to the luncheon provided.



The TCC invited all high schools and colleges in the region to attend. Students from seven high schools and colleges in Tuggeranong participated and provided their opinions on topics of interest as identified by the *TCC Youth Engagement Subcommittee*.

Image source: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

Students and teachers who attended on the day were provided with lunch, then the event officially commenced at 1.00pm, with the Vice President of the TCC welcoming attendees and providing a brief background on how the consultation activity was developed, and the intended outcomes for the information captured on the day.

The key topics of interest were identified through the *TCC Youth Engagement Subcommittee* and formed the basis of topics for discussion. Each topic was allocated a table and facilitator, and throughout the activity attendees rotated around different tables to provide feedback on each topic.

The hosts for each table were volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, and their key role was to welcome and engage attendees in a discussion around their table topic.

Evaluations completed at the end of the event showed that students were very happy with the youth consultation activities. In fact, students were so engaged that they stayed after the proposed deadline to complete all rotations, to make sure they had a say on all topics.

Table facilitators set the scene for each topic and posed a range of questions to stimulate discussion. Students were encouraged to participate in discussions and to jot down any ideas that they would like included in the Summary Report. Content for each table topic form the basis of this report.

CLIMATE CHANGE - *Sophia Hamblin Wang – Mineral Carbonisation International*

Most students were alarmed and concerned that Climate Change (CC) was going to impact their future and felt that not enough was being done. Others didn't know and didn't care. Students voiced concerns across the following areas:

- Education Access - Most students had learned about Climate Change (CC) for the first time in Year 7 or 9, in HASS. Others had heard about it before but usually that was at the discretion of a teacher who wanted to teach it. Currently there is no Climate Change subject in the National Curriculum.
- Information Access - "We get our information from social media" - Instagram, google, TikTok, Podcasts"... It is "full of biases so I don't know what to believe" .
- Mental Health - "Climate Change affects my mental health" ... "It will change our world".
- Bureaucracy and Barriers - "Change takes ages to implement, and if I wanted my school to be more sustainable it would take so many meetings with the executive staff, and even then, it's hard to get them to listen. It affects my motivation.
- Social Stigma about Activism - "There is stigma around climate activism. If you choose to do it, then you're seen to be labelled.
- Government - "We can't rely on the Government", ... it does what's best for some, but not for all".
- Notable Sustainability initiatives in Schools - Environmental Captains, Compost bins in schools, Social Justice League, Deposit schemes in schools, Tree Planting, Kitchen Garden, Sustainability Squad (Chickens, solar panels, E-waste), Earth Day.

Recommendations:

- Climate Change to be a compulsory part of the National Curriculum.
- Increased access/development of basic and simple climate change education material seems very important for this discussion, to be distributed in the various social media channels.

EMPLOYMENT – Beth Peters, Careers and Transitions Officer, ACT Education Directorate

Most of the students were aware of the services provided by the schools but very few had accessed these other than the College students. Only the Year 12 students had identified what study or work they were pursuing in 2022. They all put this down to having access to a Career Practitioner for support and advice. The overwhelming result of this discussion was that all high schools need to engage a fulltime qualified careers practitioner. Students would then be able to access:

- Resume writing assistance
- More information on different/unusual careers.
- Assistance in how to apply for a job, e.g. writing resumes and interview techniques
- More information nights and more opportunities for work experience
- Programs to assist in confidence building and being able to adapt to change.
- More work placements in IT e.g. Help desk
- More first job opportunities
- More programs available at local CIT Tuggeranong
- Information about starting a business e.g. entrepreneurship.

Approximately 60% of the students have part time jobs with the majority being in the hospitality area. Approximately 30% were currently trying to gain part time employment and the remaining were not planning on gaining employment.

The main hurdles for the students were:

- Compatibility and time restraints - School conflicts with work could be a challenge.
- Employers requiring experience which is frustrating if you don't have any.
- Employers not getting back to the students when they had applied for a position.
- Government should open up positions for people with mental health issues and disabilities.
- More work experience opportunities for jobs that require an ATAR.
- COVID-19 has been a challenge for many as the job market has been affected.

ENVIRONMENT and WATER – Markus Dirnberger, Astrophysics Masters Candidate

Students would like these top issues addressed by Government:

- Concrete funding and action to enable all the lakes in Canberra to be free of blue-green algae and actually useable for sporting and recreational purposes without health concerns, in particular Lake Tuggeranong. - students felt in its current state it *“negatively affected their health and wellbeing”*;
- Increase school resources to allow environment and sustainability to be a part of the high school curriculum, in particular, through practical courses such as gardening in a school garden, as well as hands-on farming and horticulture skills;
- Provide source separated bins (recycling, food organics, residual) accessible at all schools; education campaigns and bin contents monitoring to get students and teachers to use them properly;

- Encourage self-sufficiency and educate about growing food and composting in backyards at home, as part of education campaigns about lowering our carbon footprint;
- The Government to show leadership on environmental regulation in order to make a bigger impact than simply shifting responsibility to individuals. Actions speak louder than words;
- Improve diversity of Government members in terms of factors such as gender and age balance;
- Increase subsidies to encourage electric car and battery storage adoption;
- Increase quantity of recycling drop off centres, in particular container deposit scheme drop-off points at every supermarket;
- Encourage people to buy second-hand clothing and goods through op-shops;
- Improved community engagement on environmental issues, and increased funding for environmental projects in Government; and
- Better air regulation.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING – *Mahri Henderson, Headspace Tuggeranong*

Many young people stated that they would not seek out anyone for assistance with their mental health. Many felt they didn't have enough accessible information and stated negative experiences were a big barrier to seeking out support.

- Practical barriers including finances, "wait times", 'having to make a call', work-school balance, and stigma induced fears and worries.

There was a consensus that more counsellors, psychologists, and youth workers were needed in the south of Canberra, with many reflections around lack of accessibility and wait times. There was also a recognition that health promotion could be targeted at supporting specific groups to access mental health support. Specific groups mentioned were: LGBTQIA+ communities and those with stressful home lives.

Students wanted people to be approachable and mentioned Youth Workers and sports coaches as trustworthy people who they could talk to. Many commented that they had concerns about accessing Mental Health Services and were uncertain of how their parents may be informed.

Recommendations:

- Students felt there should be more mental health professionals in schools e.g. psychologists, counsellors, youth workers etc. - someone should be there every day;
- Students felt there should be more support and training for school staff to better understand and support youth mental health;
- Raise awareness with young people and schools of their rights when accessing mental health services, in order to support understanding and calm worries in relation to confidentiality;
- To share information with young people about the different roles of support - youth workers, counsellors, psychologists, social workers etc;
- To share information that helps people identify the best kind of supports for them.
- Promote online self-support options;

- Advocate for more mental health support groups in Tuggeranong;
- Advocate for more funding around mental health support staff;
- Explore how stigma is affecting young people in Tuggeranong, and how best to tackle it across the community;
- More health promotion on how and when, and where to reach out for mental health support; and
- Further consultation on how young people would feel most comfortable receiving mental health support.

PLACES AND ACTIVITIES IN TUGGERANONG – Ciara Duggan – YWCA Canberra

Safe places around Tuggeranong mentioned included: the youth centres and sporting facilities, Tuggeranong Pool, Limelight, Hyperdome, Skate parks and bowls, Adventure playgrounds Kambah and Gordon were mentioned a few times by multiple students from across the Tuggeranong region, Church Groups, PCYC. They also liked places where young people were, including: Computer Clubhouse, Basketball Courts, Friends' Homes (this was very popular), Civic (this was very popular), King Pin – City, Local Shops (this was very popular).

They felt that while there were some good sporting facilities in Tuggeranong not all sports were available. Some sports you needed to leave the Tuggeranong region to pursue them. This was particularly mentioned with female sports. Young Women also explained that many of the playing fields that you have to access for training are not accessible from public transport.

Young people explained that there are limited job opportunities in the Tuggeranong region if you would like to work in an industry other than fast food. Most young people who had employment explained that they worked in the Woden or Weston area. Young people also mentioned they needed to leave the region for WEX opportunities.

Other places and opportunities young people would like to see in Tuggeranong include:

- More night events – use of the stage in Tuggeranong Park (young people mentioned this a couple of times noting it was underutilised), concerts, and live music;
- Other activities/places: Snapchat events, Clubhouse expansion, Art stuff, theme parks and arcades, local music festivals, Spotify Radio for youth, outlet centre, youth markets, safer areas, and events for LGBT youth. Students want young people to be included in consultation, planning and execution of events.
- Sporting facilities: roller skating rink – this was a very popular suggestion amongst all young people, motorsport, Tuggeranong basketball courts revamped, adjusted skate parks, free swimming pool, AMF upgrade (young people travel from Tuggeranong to go bowling because the facilities are better in other regions), multisport facility;
- Clean Lake;
- Jobs: WEX – there are not enough opportunities in the Tuggeranong Region for Work Experience – you must leave the region to complete your work experience, young people would like “Youth Job” ads to be created and shared.
- Young people feel Tuggeranong is the “Last region to get anything cool.”

SAFETY - Lee-Anne Johnson – Community Engagement Team ACT Policing

The majority of students felt safe within the Tuggeranong area however, concerns were mentioned around lighting especially in carparks, around Lake Tuggeranong, and Sulwood Drive. Some students felt that more cameras and security was needed in the multi-story carpark at Southpoint, especially at night. Students were also concerned about:

- Speed's vehicles travel through Anketell Street (near Southpoint) and through school zones
- The blue green algae in the lake

Students don't feel safe in the area between McDonalds and KFC where there is often groups of young people (and "Eshays") that gather. Students reported activities such as drinking, drug deals, fighting and harassment towards the general public.

The bus interchange and the skate park were also mentioned by some students for similar reasons. Incidences in other areas were also mentioned.

Students felt these areas could be made safer if there was better lighting, more CCTV cameras and security. Students thought that revamping the bus interchange and making it look nicer would also help make it feel safer. Students also wanted:

- A safe place for young people to hang out and more police, possibly police bike/foot patrols through the town centre areas and training/education about what to do if something happens.

The majority of students were not overly concerned with the amount of crime in Tuggeranong or believed it was a major problem. The main points mentioned were shoplifting, speeding, tailgating, drugs, racism, and graffiti.

- One young student believed that due to the stigma of drug use in Tuggeranong, people are reluctant to help someone in need.

There seemed to be a common theme that there was a fear of police, with a couple of the reasons being the amount of equipment/weapons they carry on them, possible media attention, and the belief that if police approach them they are in trouble and will be arrested.

- Some ideas put forth include: improve training for police to enable them to better engage with young people, officers speaking at schools from primary school age onwards, more involvement at youth centres, possible work experience and talks at Colleges to see how police are trained.
- The students thought that safety talks and information sessions (Q&A) at schools would be good and would show that police were there to help as well if needed, not just for crime – there is an assumption that police are the enemy.
- One student felt that it was hard to engage with police officers due to numerous involvements with other family members – as police may have pre-conceived ideas

TRANSPORT - Lizzy Green, Communications and Engagement team, Transport Canberra

Students walk, ride, catch the bus and get lifts to school, work and activities. Many students who recently obtained their licence have stopped catching the bus due to:

- Taking too long to get from point A to point B and services are unreliable
- Feeling unsafe and driving is more convenient

Improvements that would make students consider using public transport more, include:

- More buses and drivers, more reliable and frequent services
- More direct routes from suburb to suburb e.g. Erindale to Tuggeranong
- Cleaner buses – including hand sanitizers
- Being able to pay for the bus with debit card or phone payments
- Free school travel for students – “Fining non-paying students seems unfair”
- Better and more consistent policies on harassment
- Easier to use online services – “Myway” transfers take a long time
 - QR codes at stops that lead directly to real time services for that stop
 - One-stop app to include timetables, journey planner, Myway
 - Free Wi-Fi on buses and USB charging points on board
- Dedicated College school buses so they don't have to rely on public routes
- More buses with seats that face inwards for accessibility and socialising
- More buses with indigenous artwork on-board and outside
- Bike racks on all buses
- Feedback on light rail was mixed and included:
- Concerns about disruption caused by construction and removal of trees
- Most students have not used the light rail to date
- Many students don't travel out of Tuggeranong so expected they wouldn't use services
- Money would be better spent on improving services and existing public transport
- Students who were positive about the light rail think it will make getting to other town centres easier

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES – Catherine Jones – Tuggeranong Community Council

Current involvement in the TCC Youth Subcommittee - Only three students had heard of the TCC Youth Subcommittee, two of whom are already members, students were unclear on what their involvement would entail and what would result from being involved.

All students stated they would like to continue to be involved in youth consultations and would like the scope to digitally record Forum content in real time e.g. via google docs.

Students felt current table topics were relevant and of interest to young people. Students provided their ideas on future Forum table topics and requested access to and provision of:

- Information and support focussed on future careers/career opportunities prior to Year 10 and information on University options and School Based Apprenticeships (SBAs);
- School curriculum to include development of life skills relevant to becoming independent adults across a range of areas:

- Social justice and Legal issues – e.g. knowing your rights at work
- Politics, how Parliament works
- Australian history (more than just White colonisation)
- Navigating Gender/Identity/Sexuality
- Housing and Homelessness – affordable housing, dealing with landlords, renters' rights
- Volunteering opportunities

To continue further engagement with the TCC, young people would like see:

- More group discussions following a similar format as the Forum (providing the topics are relevant and of interest to young people).
- TCC events/engagement opportunities advertised via the school's social media channels.
- Use of social media to engage with young people – Facebook (for awareness raising/events), Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok.
- The TCC to consult with schools and students to gauge the importance of specific issues.
- Face to face interviews, surveys, or discussions (across a range of age groups, e.g. 13-17 years); and
- More community events held in Tuggeranong.

Recommendations: As a result of this consultation, young people would like to see the following outcomes:

- Opportunities for continued consultation with young people within the Tuggeranong region.
- More facilities and events for young people in Tuggeranong e.g. all ages activities and festivals;
- Improved public transport - increased frequency of buses on the weekends;
- Increased awareness and advertising of activities and events so young people know about what is happening locally;
- 24-hour access to student friendly places/spaces for group study purposes and online access to resources;
- Improved sporting facilities e.g. current Basketball Sports Facility to cater for a wider variety of sports;
- More programs and increased visibility of resources in Tuggeranong;
- Better access to work opportunities;
- Raising community understanding of environmental issues e.g. lake clean-up
- Access to more driving courses.

TCC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT - 2021/2022

1. Push for more work on cleaning up the Lake (*Climate Change, Environment, Youth Places, Future Opportunities*)
2. Increased access/development of basic and simple climate change education materials – Climate Change should be part of the National Curriculum and is taught to all (*Climate Change*)
3. Better career support for students - more career practitioners in high schools (*Employment*)
4. More work experience opportunities (*Employment, Places and Activities*)
5. Provision of separated bins including food organics (*Environment*)
6. Increased subsidies to encourage electric car and battery storage adoption (*Environment*)
7. Advocate for more funding for health promotion and mental health groups in Tuggeranong (*Mental Health & Wellbeing*)
8. More night-time activities for young people and greater utilisation of Tuggeranong Park (*Places and Activities*)
9. More indoor sporting facilities e.g. roller skating, revamped basketball facilities, and multi-sport facility (*Places and Activities, Future*)
10. Improved lighting in various areas and increased safety measures in areas around McDonalds - more CCTV cameras (*Safety*)
11. More police and bike/foot path patrols through town centre and problem areas (*Safety*)
12. More buses/better access and more frequent bus routes (*Transport*)
13. Better apps for timetabling, MyWay top ups (*Transport*)
14. Better interchange and safer bus stops (*Transport and Safety*)
15. Opportunities for continued consultation with young people within the Tuggeranong region, consultation to include planning and execution of recommendations and outcomes (*Future Opportunities*)
16. Increased publicity/advertising across the range of activities, events and opportunities available to young people within Tuggeranong (*Future Opportunities*)

