

7 September 2023

Office for Youth
Department of Education
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Submitted via email: youth@education.gov.au

Re: headspace National submission – Youth Engagement Strategy

headspace National welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the discussion paper on the Commonwealth Government's Office for Youth discussion paper on Australia's youth engagement strategy.

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12- to 25-year-olds. headspace has more than 154 centres across Australia in metropolitan, regional and remote areas, as well as online and phone support services through eheadspace. Our work builds the mental health literacy of young people and families and reduces stigma associated with mental health and the associated barriers to seeking help. headspace can help young people with mental health, physical health (including sexual health) alcohol and other drug services, and work and study support. Our work also involves providing schools and their communities with expert advice and guidance on mental health and wellbeing, responding to loss through suicide and supporting communities following major disaster events. At the heart of all our services are young people, their needs and the needs of those who support them.

Attached are headspace National's responses to the discussion questions.

Our responses highlight:

- mental health and wellbeing and access to mental health services as critical issues facing young people, and which can be impacted by a range of other factors and challenges in young people's lives
- the headspace model as an effective example of youth engagement, beginning with youth and family reference groups at local place-based centres and also embedding youth and family engagement at the national level through a range of governance structures
- practical ways in which barriers to youth engagement can be overcome, including establishing and implementing meaningful engagement frameworks, establishing clear purposes, roles and responsibilities for engagement, and providing a range of supports for young people
- the need to consider intersectionality and diverse representation when engaging with young people.
- the importance of establishing structures, processes and support to enable effective, meaningful and purposeful youth engagement, including considering the different types of engagement that can be useful when engaging with youth.

headspace National would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspects of our submission further, including the headspace National Youth Reference Group (hY NRG) meeting with the Office for Youth. We are currently inducting a new hY NRG cohort and meeting with this group would provide a valuable opportunity to gain fresh perspectives from young people.

We look forward to the development of the Youth Engagement Strategy and seeing young people at the centre of driving decision-making about issues that are important to them.

Yours sincerely

Jason Trethowan
Chief Executive Officer

headspace National submission – Youth Engagement Strategy

Introduction

headspace National welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australian Government's discussion paper on Australia's Youth Engagement Strategy to inform how the government works with young people.

As an organisation, headspace places the voices of young people and their families at the centre of everything that we do.

Our submission comprises the following sections:

1. Issues that are important to young people
2. Embedding youth engagement
3. Barriers for young people engaging with the Australian Government
4. Engaging with diverse young people
5. Youth engagement model

The submission nominates mental health as the most important issue for young people. The first section justifies this and considers some of the social determinants of mental health and wellbeing that young people identified as being important issues to them.

Key inputs to this submission include:

- data from the 2022 headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey. This biennial population-based survey assesses Australian young people's mental health and wellbeing status, help-seeking behaviours, experiences of loneliness, attitudes and experiences related to social media, cyberbullying, racism, discrimination, and concerns related to climate change. The 2022 survey provides national data from over 3,000 young people
- the *School-Aged Youth Participation Report* which involved a survey of 872 people, including young people aged 12 to 18 and families of a school-aged young person. The survey was undertaken to inform the development of resources to support best practice youth participation with school-aged young people (e.g. frameworks, implementation guides)
- a review of participation at headspace which involved comprehensive engagement with headspace National staff, hY NRG, the Family Reference Group and Australian Youth Advocates for Mental Health, to understand participation activities and identify areas to strengthen participation.

1. Issues that are important to young people

As the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, headspace is a strong advocate for young people and their wellbeing. We deliver services and national programs that aim to achieve our vision of all young people being supported to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.

During the life stages of adolescence and young adulthood, young people experience rapid changes in many areas of life – physical, social, emotional and psychological – as well as many major life transitions. This makes them particularly vulnerable to mental health issues and also means that it is difficult for them to know whether what they are experiencing is normal or not and whether and when they need to seek help. Consequently, prioritising the mental health and wellbeing of young people and the factors that impact these is critical.

Through our research and services for young people and families, we have a strong understanding of the factors driving increased levels of mental ill-health amongst young people, and the importance of supporting their mental health and wellbeing during this transformative stage of life. It is our contention that this is the most important priority issue for the Australian Government's youth engagement.

Mental health is a significant and growing issue for young people

Now more than ever, young Australians need access to support for their mental health and wellbeing, including established and proven programs that help them to overcome barriers to social and economic participation to avoid lifetimes of disadvantage and dependency.

As a country, we have faced significant challenges in recent years...These crises have significantly affected the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and continue to do so. – National Plan for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention¹

One in two young Australians needed mental health support from May to July 2022.² Three-quarters of all mental health issues emerge before the age of 25.³ Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people, responsible for more than 40 per cent of deaths among 15 to 24-year-olds.⁴ Some young people are disproportionately affected by mental ill-health, suicide, discrimination, stigma and access to services. This includes young people who are First Nations, from multicultural backgrounds, and those who identify as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Young people are finding it harder to overcome challenges than they were two years ago.⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education and work. In 2022, 100,000 children were not in school and many more not attending regularly.⁶ A large proportion of young people experienced unemployment.⁷

The *National Youth Mental Health Survey* (headspace Survey 2022) of 3,107 young people in August 2022, highlighted that two in five young people in Australia (39%) were struggling with their mental health – being highly distressed psychologically and having poor social, emotional and psychological wellbeing – and nearly half were unable to carry out usual activities on at least one day in the preceding two weeks (44%). Many young people indicated: they have a hard time dealing with stressful events (36%); it is hard

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Health (2021). *Prevention Compassion Care: National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*.

² Mental Health Australia. (2022). *Report to the Nation*. Retrieved from: https://mhaustralia.org/sites/default/files/docs/mha_report_to_the_nation_a4.pdf.

³ Kessler, R.C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K.R., & Walters, E.E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593-602. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593>.

⁴ Department of Health (2020). *A report detailing key themes and early findings to support initial advice of the National Suicide Prevention Adviser*.

⁵ headspace National. (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

⁶ Black, S. (2022, 26 September). "Families can fall apart over this stuff: the children refusing to go to school. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/sep/26/families-can-fall-apart-over-this-stuff-the-children-refusing-to-go-to-school>.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *Labour force, Australia*, 'Table 22. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original', time series spreadsheet, cat. no. 6202.0. Retrieved from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0>.

for them to snap back when something bad happens (33%), and that they tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in their life (31%).⁸

Young people face barriers to accessing mental health services

Accessing a mental health service can be difficult and expensive. Lack of access risks missed diagnoses, worsening conditions, longer morbidity and increased levels of distress, with potential increased risk of self-medication with alcohol or other drugs, self-harm and/or suicide.

headspace was established in 2006 to address the challenges that young people aged 12 to 25 are facing in accessing support.

Mental health literacy: during this life stage, young people experience rapid changes in many areas of life – physical, social, emotional and psychological. This can make it difficult for them to know whether what they are experiencing is normal or not and if they should seek help.

Stigma and self-stigma: Stigma is one of the main barriers to young people accessing support for their mental health. In 2022, hY NRG met with the National Mental Health Commission to provide input into the Commonwealth Government's consultation on the National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy.

Young people may have little experience accessing services before. In headspace surveys, young people have identified confidentiality as a very significant barrier; they're often afraid of their parents or peers finding out, and often think that it's an all or nothing situation – that people either know everything about them or nothing about them.

Stigma is shame associated with a label. It's usually caused by fear and ignorance; a society with low mental health literacy is generally quite fearful of what they don't know. So stigma leads to rejection and it also leads to people changing their view of themselves.

Young people may also hold different attitudes or standards for themselves and others – they may feel happy for someone in their life to seek support for their mental health or mental ill health, but less willing to seek help for their own mental health.

Stigma also operates as a service-level barrier to access. Stigma is still current even in health care settings, including hospitals and mental health services. headspace was developed and created in order to address many of these issues including how the systems are set up and how young people aren't necessarily able to access services even if they did want to (e.g. due to needing a referral from a health professional, needing to meet eligibility criteria for specialist care such as living in the right area or being the right age, and needing to pay to access GPs or private providers).

The independent evaluation of the national headspace program identified specific group of young people in which stigma, among other barriers, prevents them from seeking help. These include young people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), First Nations, living in remote and rural areas, and who identify as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community.⁹ The headspace review of cultural safety and awareness also found that stigma is a barrier to First Nations young people accessing mental health services, and that building community awareness and capacity to deal with mental health issues is key to reducing the stigma around mental health.¹⁰

Location: In regional Australia, specialist services often aren't available or they operate during the day when young people are either at school or working and can't afford to take time off work.

Cost: For young people, particularly those living in regional, rural or remote communities, accessing a mental health service can be difficult and expensive. headspace seeks to address this challenge by providing free or low-cost services.

⁸ headspace National. (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

⁹ Department of Health. (2022). *Evaluation of the National headspace Program – Final Report*.

¹⁰ headspace National. (2021). *Embedding cultural practice and safety project report*.

Access to services covered under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) are diminishing. headspace data shows substantial reductions in bulk billed services – the proportion of young people receiving MBS services at headspace centres has nearly halved over the past five years, falling from 41 per cent in 2018 to 23 per cent in 2022.

Absence of bulk-billed mental health services significantly impacts at-risk young people, causing them to go without assessment or care due to lack of access and/or cost. This can lead to diagnoses being missed and mental health conditions becoming worse, with other flow on affects such as self-medication, self-harm and/or suicide.

The young people living in these areas are already disadvantaged by their financial stressors, remoteness, social isolation, lack of public facilities and transport...The loss of [bulk billed mental health services] or adding a gap payment will create barriers for anyone trying to access help. (headspace Mount Barker)

Cultural barriers: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and young people from CALD backgrounds face many structural, systemic and cultural barriers to seeking help. These include a distrust of mainstream health services, experiences of historical and ongoing exclusion and racism, and care which is not culturally safe or appropriate.

Young people may be not seeking help for their mental health

Seven in ten young people indicated they would be willing to see a mental health professional if they were experiencing a mental health problem (70%). However, two in five young people were likely to deal with personal or emotional problems on their own (40%), as opposed to speaking to someone. Among these young people, the most common barriers to seeking help included preferring to sort out emotional / personal problems on their own, getting worried what other people might think, and feeling too overwhelmed to talk to anyone when they have a problem.

Mothers, friends, intimate partners and fathers are the preferred sources of support among Australian young people if they are experiencing a personal or emotional problem.

Stigma – of mental illness generally, and of seeking help for mental illness – is particularly a barrier to seeking help for First Nations and multicultural young people.¹¹

The prevalence of mental ill-health among young people and their attitudes to help-seeking highlight the importance of utilising a variety of approaches to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

Two outcomes we would like to see are:

1. continued and strengthened focus on building mental health literacy amongst young people, families, schools and communities to reduce stigma and encourage early help-seeking.
2. increased access to mental health services, including age-appropriate and culturally safe services, and removal of barriers to access for young people such as where they live, needing referrals, or having to pay out of pocket costs.

Several other priority issues for young people are social determinants of mental health

Mental health and access to support are the overarching priorities for youth engagement, but young people identify related issues that are also important to them and which also impact their mental health and wellbeing. These are summarised below, with further detail provided in **Appendix 1**.

¹¹ headspace National. (2015). *Service Innovation Project Component 2: Social Inclusion Model Development Study*.

Cost of living: Young Australians perceive economic pressure as one of the top 10 reasons for why the mental health of young people is getting worse.¹² They identified the issues that most urgently need to be addressed as: financial instability/cost of living; housing affordability; and homelessness.¹³

Outcomes we would like to see achieved are:

- increased income support payments (i.e. JobSeeker and Youth Allowance) to lift all young people above the poverty line
- an income support system that is fair and fit for purpose (i.e. based on need rather than age).

Education and employment: Young people who are disengaged from employment and education are at increased risk of long-lasting negative outcomes including socio-economic exclusion, long-term welfare dependency, and poor mental health.^{14,15}

Outcomes we would like to see achieved are:

- adequate resourcing for vocational services that are known to have an impact on supporting young people to engage with work and study
- identifying and supporting young people who are not captured in unemployment statistics, such as those who are not actively looking for work, those who are homeless and those who may have severe mental health conditions.

Concerns about the future of our climate: Eco-distress and eco-anxiety particularly affect young people.¹⁶ Young people highlighted climate change as an urgent and significant concern and worry that our country/government is not doing enough to address climate change. As the generation who will be most impacted by the effects of climate change, young people deserve to be involved in conversations around how climate change is being addressed.

An outcome we would like to see is greater involvement of young people in decision-making about addressing climate change.

Unsafe relationships and negative experiences with others: traumatic and challenging experiences include: family or domestic violence, sexual violence and online bullying. Young people are worried about discrimination, conflict with family and conflict with friends.¹⁷ The Australian Institute of Family Studies in 2021 reported that an alarming one in three teenagers aged 14 to 17 had experienced discrimination, with unfair treatment due to body size or appearance being the most common, followed by race, and sex-based discrimination.¹⁸

Outcomes we would like to see to achieved are:

- strengthened national curriculum around discrimination and consent education
- established cultural capability frameworks for schools.

¹² headspace National. (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

¹³ *ibid*.

¹⁴ Powell, A., Salignac, F., Meltzer, A., Muir, K., & Weier, M. (2018). *Background report on young people's economic engagement*. Centre for Social Impact, UNSW.

¹⁵ Gore, F.M., Bloem, P.J., Patton, G.C., Ferguson, J., Joseph, V., Coffey, C., Sawyer, S.M., & Mathers, C.D. (2011). Global burden of disease in young people aged 10–24 years: a systematic analysis. *The Lancet*, **377**(9783), 2093-2102.

¹⁶ Doctors for the Environment Australia. (2021). *How climate change affects mental health in Australia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dea.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-How-Climate-Change-Affects-Mental-Health-in-Australia-v3-1.pdf>.

¹⁷ headspace National. (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

¹⁸ Evans-Whipp, T. (2021). *Teenagers' experiences of discrimination (Growing Up in Australia Snapshot Series – Issue 1*. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

2. Embedding youth engagement

Key takeaways

- The headspace model is an example of embedding youth engagement at all levels of an organisation and being dedicated to understanding and meeting their needs. There are youth and family references groups at local place-based centres and at the national level, as well as young people participating in governance structures at a local and national level.
- Different types of engagement can be useful, including: *consulting* to obtain and act upon feedback and input; *collaborating* closely with young people throughout the whole process/project; and *empowering* young people to lead work.

The headspace model

headspace is proactive in providing opportunities for young people to guide headspace's direction and ensure voices that have historically been overlooked are heard.

Engagement starts with the establishment of the **local, place-based headspace centres** which are embedded in communities across Australia.

The **headspace Model Integrity Framework** provides the overarching model which guides programs and operations at headspace centres. Three of the sixteen components of this model are:

- *Youth Participation* – refers to the central and continuous involvement of young people in their own care and in the governance, design, development, delivery, evaluation, and continuous improvement of headspace services.
- *Family Participation* refers to the central and ongoing involvement of family in the care of a young person and in the governance, design, development, delivery, evaluation, and continuous improvement of headspace services.
- *Community Awareness and Engagement* - Working with the local community to increase mental health literacy, reduce stigma, encourage early help-seeking and promote access to headspace services, while building strong relationships with young people, their families and friends, other local services, and the broader community.

Each headspace centre has a local youth reference group and many have a family reference group, with members who have lived experience of mental ill-health or supporting a young person with mental ill-health. They actively participate in the governance at both strategic and operational levels of the service, including becoming involved in community awareness projects and campaigns in the local community. Each headspace centre also has a community awareness and engagement officer who promotes headspace services and supports increased community awareness of mental health and help seeking.

As a national organisation, **headspace National** has broad perspective and reach across Australia. Youth engagement is achieved through a range of different mechanisms to engage young people in governance and decision making at all levels. This includes the following.

- **The headspace Youth National Reference Group (hY NRG)**, which consists of a diverse group of young people of varying ages, genders and cultural backgrounds, including identified First Nations positions. There are representatives from each state and territory who work with headspace to ensure young people's voices and opinions remain front and centre, including through guiding headspace policy, governance, services, campaigns, peer support, and program design. Many young people join hY NRG after being involved in local youth reference groups, which provides headspace National the opportunity to learn from young people's experiences at a grassroots level.

- **Youth Advisors** to the headspace National Executive team and Youth Advisors who sit on the headspace National Board to bring the voice of lived experience and ensure the headspace Strategy keeps young people at its core.
- The **headspace National Family Reference Group**, which consists of people with lived experience of supporting a young person with mental health challenges. headspace considers family to be an integral part of a young person's circle of care and recognises that family and other caregivers – whether by birth, choice or circumstance – hold a significant role in supporting a young person by fostering a sense of belonging and connection through their shared experience. The term family may include parents, caregivers, siblings, partners, Elders, kin, mentors and other community members who are viewed by the young person as people who play a significant emotional, cultural, faith-based or other role in their life.
- A **Family Strategy** – headspace is committed to meeting families where they are at. As such, headspace National has developed a Family Strategy and one of the aims of this is for the experience, expertise and perspectives of families to be valued, and consistently embedded in decision-making and planning throughout the organisation to improve outcomes for young people and their families.
- **Australian Youth Advocates for Mental Health**, a group of young people from across Australia who use the diversity of their lived and living experience to reduce stigma and improve the experiences of young people facing mental health challenges through the Visible project. Visible creates partnerships with young people and artists to create an expression that is representative of their mental health journey. The project captures both the outcome and process of creating the artistic expression to support conversations about mental health and wellbeing.
- **First Nations Youth Advisory Council**, a newly created group of up to 10 diverse First Nations young people from across the country. The Council will directly inform the First Nations Wellbeing and Engagement division at headspace National on the experiences of First Nations young people across the country ensuring their lived experience and voices inform the design and delivery of programs and projects.
- **Youth Advisors to the First Nations Cultural Governance Committee**, who ensure the lived experience and self-determination of young First Nations people are heard and supported in the Cultural Governance of the organisation.

Through these mechanisms, headspace ensures that young people and their families are supported at the local and national levels to engage in a range of ways, including in developing campaigns, participating in focus groups, and lived experience storytelling.

Levels of youth engagement

To determine appropriate levels of engagement and build capacity of headspace National staff to engage meaningfully, headspace National uses an adapted version of the **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Framework** which was designed to support effective engagement through providing a range of levels of public participation.

headspace National utilises the following types of engagement from the IAP2 Framework.

- **Consult:** headspace National leads the work but obtains feedback, advice and guidance from young people and/or family to enable headspace to contribute to discussions, research and organisational positions, and make informed decisions representative of young people. Examples include: online surveys/polls, document reviews, focus groups, governance meetings, interview panels.
- **Collaborate:** headspace National teams lead the work and young people and/or family are involved throughout the process, actively contribute in different ways, provide advice and share decision making. Examples of this type of engagement for headspace include: co-design processes, steering committees, working groups, design workshops, governance committees, and youth advisors.

- **Empower:** Young people and/or family lead the work in collaboration with headspace teams or divisions. They are responsible for delivering outcomes and making decisions within agreed scope and resources. Examples of this type of engagement for headspace include: youth-led projects, workshops and training.

Examples of youth engagement at headspace National

Young people and families are invited and supported to participate at all levels of the organisation, as outlined above, in a range of short-, medium- and long-term opportunities. This ensures they have opportunities to inform, advise and collaborate on areas of work across the organisation including service provision, programs, policy and governance. Specific examples are outlined below.

- **Visible** brings together young people from diverse backgrounds and artists to collaborate and share lived experience stories through art (including visual art, music, dance, sculpture and film). Visible aims to reduce stigma, encourage connection, community care and conversations about mental health whilst also advocating at a national level for change. Using art as a tool for advocacy transcends language barriers and invites audiences to engage in lived experience story sharing in a fresh way.
- **Out-Spoken** is a video series featuring young people talking about sexuality, gender, LGBTIQIA+ representation in media, intersectionality and their experiences being part of the LGBTIQIA+ community.
- **Working groups** on headspace National projects. Recent examples include a new project to improve participation with school-aged young people (historically underrepresented in participation opportunities) and redevelopment of an orientation, induction and professional development program for hY NRG.
- **Focus groups** to inform research, policies and federal government strategies. A recent example is a focus group to inform the National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy.
- **Representation at public forums, events and media** to inform or contribute to discussions based on lived experience and expertise. Recent examples include a young person speaking on SBS's Insight program, regular representation on online community chats with e-headspace and speaking at events.
- Participating on **interview selection panels** as a youth representative for new staff at headspace to provide advice and expertise based on their lived experience.

3. Barriers for young people engaging with the Australian Government

Key takeaways

- Barriers can be categorised into three key areas: a lack of reciprocity between those engaging and those being engaged; unclear purpose of the engagement; and a lack of supports to encourage and facilitate engagement.
- Barriers can be overcome by: establishing and implementing meaningful engagement frameworks; having clearly established purpose, roles and responsibilities for the engagement; and providing a range of practical supports for young people and families.

headspace National's *School-Aged Youth Participation Report* and the review of headspace participation practices undertaken in 2023 highlight barriers to achieving effective and meaningful participation with young people and how these can be overcome.

The need for establishing and implementing meaningful engagement frameworks

A lack of reciprocity between young people and those engaging with them can be a barrier to young people engaging. When young people don't think any change will come as a result of their involvement and/or where there is not a positive relationship with facilitators, they are less likely to engage. If young people don't have a positive experience of engagement, they are less likely to engage again in the future due to the mental load of continually having to re-tell stories. This is also linked to a mistrust of institutions and/or power imbalances, which can also impact on young people feeling comfortable to have open and honest conversations.

Specific groups can be under-represented in engagement activities, including young people who are First Nations, multicultural, living with a disability and who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. School-aged young people are also often underrepresented in engagement outside of the school setting. Periods of transition in a young person's life also make it more difficult to promote engagement opportunities, such as the transition from school to work or further study, and from study to employment.

Frameworks and age-appropriate strategies are necessary to achieve meaningful engagement with young people and to build their confidence and capacity to engage. These frameworks should outline the various levels of engagement sought (e.g. consultation, feedback, co-design) and be underpinned by principles of good participation including: equity; transparency; learning and curiosity; openness and courage; influential; cultural safety; and diversity.

There should be a commitment to breaking down power imbalances (e.g. by ensuring young people are able to attend in pairs or groups, and facilitation creates space and respect for their input) and ensuring that young people are represented at all levels within an organisation or engagement process.

Engagement opportunities must also be supportive, inclusive and safe for young people and their families from different backgrounds and experiences. This is explored below in the section on "Engaging with diverse young people".

Moreover, our responses to the sections on the "Youth Engagement Model" and "Embedding Youth Engagement", should also be considered here as guiding principles and examples to achieve meaningful engagement.

The need for clear purpose, roles and responsibilities

Lack of clarity about the purpose of their engagement, how their experiences or perspectives may be used, and what is expected of them can leave young people reluctant to engage.

Young people are more likely to engage if it is clear what they will be expected to do, what activities they will be involved in and the time commitment required. Likewise, they are most likely to have the support of their family if this information is communicated clearly.

Youth friendly and accessible information should include:

- the purpose of the engagement
- the process for engaging and robust orientation
- roles, responsibilities and expectations including decision-making and accountability
- the structures, policies and strategic direction of the organisation undertaking the engagement
- feedback processes to ensure transparency and accountability.

There is also a role for Government to play in building the confidence of young people, communicating to them the value that they can bring and the meaningful contributions they can make. Involving young people early in the process, maintaining communication with them throughout the process, and communicating to them the outcomes and benefits that are achieved as a direct result of their participation are all critical components of effective engagement.

Government might consider redirecting resources allocated for engagement to organisations that are experienced in effective youth engagement, rather than engaging directly. At headspace, for example, we tailor engagement so that it is appropriate for the sector and the topics and issues that are pertinent to young people and their mental health.

The importance of providing a range of supports for young people

Personal supports are important to build confidence for participation. A lack of confidence can contribute to reduced engagement, including a belief that their opinion is not needed, they don't have the right experience or skills to meaningfully contribute, and/or they don't want to speak for other people. Family engagement and support is important for providing consent, personal encouragement, transport, and allowing time away from family or educational responsibilities.

A lack of practical supports is a major barrier to young people engaging, particularly at in-person meetings, due to: timing and frequency of engagements and their own time constraints and competing priorities; and locations being difficult to get to and with limited or costly transport options. Young people with a disability and those from different language or cultural backgrounds can face additional barriers to participation.

Providing safe and welcoming environments is critical to ensuring young people feel safe and confident to share their opinions. Providing culturally safe environments is important, as well as creating homophobia and transphobia-free spaces. Cultural practice and safety are central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth participation.

Young people and their families also need to be assured that those facilitating engagement with young people are friendly and supportive and that trained staff will be present to support them if required, for example through providing mentoring, cultural support and mental health support.

Providing multiple opportunities to engage can also maximise access and inclusion. This could include providing engagement activities of varying lengths, different engagement types (e.g. verbally, written, video), and different roles for young people and families. Such diversity can mitigate engagement challenges for people faced with competing priorities, and would accommodate differences in digital literacy and preferred engagement modes.^{19 20}

Training and adequate briefing and debriefing can encourage meaningful engagement, such as providing material and questions in advance for young people to consider. Opportunities to provide feedback at

¹⁹ Ipsos. (2023). *School-Aged Youth Participation: Final report prepared for headspace*. (unpublished).

²⁰ Day Four Projects. (2023). *headspace Participation*. (unpublished).

different times can assist (for example, leaving a miro board open after a meeting ensures that those who need more time to gather their thoughts can still contribute). The most effective approaches may be dependent on the cohort. For example, the *School-Aged Youth Participation Report* found young people were more likely to engage in online activities that meet young people where they are.

Other practical supports could include:

- free access to devices and Wi-Fi
- transport assistance
- remuneration to recognise the expertise young people are providing
- translation services that ensure contextual translation, rather than just pure language translation where there is a risk of losing the context needed for understanding.

4. Engaging with diverse young people

Key takeaways

- Diversity entails a broad range of young people including First Nations young people, multicultural young people, young people who use alcohol and other drugs, young people experiencing homelessness, young people living with a disability, young people who identify as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community and young people living in regional and remote areas.
- For multicultural young people, one person or community is not representative of all culturally diverse communities.
- In-person engagement is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth participation to foster a relational approach.
- There are a range of frameworks and resources that the Australian Government should consider, and there should be a strong focus on cultural safety, child safety and clinical safety when engaging with young people.

headspace encourages the Commonwealth Government to consider the needs and perspectives of a broad range of young people, and those who often don't have the same access to participation opportunities. These include First Nations young people, multicultural young people, young people who use alcohol and other drugs, young people experiencing homelessness, young people living with a disability, young people who identify as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community and young people living in regional and remote areas.

While we explore some of these below, we encourage the Government to bring an intersectional lens to all engagements with young people, to acknowledge “the intersecting identities of people from historically marginalised groups” and to take “a holistic approach to understanding individual experiences, and how social identities, positions and forces interact in a person’s life”.²¹ For example, a young person may identify as a migrant, recently arrived, a lesbian and a person with a disability and all these factors may individually but also collectively influence them”.²²

Safe and inclusive engagement means providing opportunities and creating environments in which all participants are valued, they feel safe, an individual’s sense of identity and belonging is promoted, and discrimination is not tolerated.

All engagement with young people must be culturally safe, and staff who are engaging with youth must be culturally competent. Cultural competency refers to “the attitudes, knowledge and skills of a practitioner that enables them to engage effectively with people who have a different cultural background to themselves.”²³

There is also opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to practise cultural humility – recognising and starting conversations about power imbalances by reflecting on one’s own culture, beliefs, values and biases, and how these have been influenced by power structures and societal norms.

²¹ Orygen. (2021). *Fact Sheet: Intersectionality and youth mental health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/trans-and-gender-diverse-young-people/Fact-sheets/Intersectionality-and-youth-mental-health>

²² Orygen and The Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2019). *Designing mental health services for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds: Good practice framework*. Retrieved from: [https://www.orygen.org.au/About/Service-Development/Youth-Enhanced-Services-National-Programs/Primary-Health-Network-resources/Designing-mental-health-services-for-young-people/Good-Practice-Framework- Orygen-2019-\(1\)](https://www.orygen.org.au/About/Service-Development/Youth-Enhanced-Services-National-Programs/Primary-Health-Network-resources/Designing-mental-health-services-for-young-people/Good-Practice-Framework- Orygen-2019-(1))

²³ Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2016). *Inclusive Organisations: A guide to good practice strategies for engaging young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in services and programs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmy.net.au/resource/inclusive-organisations-good-practice-guide/> .

Multicultural young people

One person or community is not representative of all culturally diverse communities. Different terms and definitions are often used interchangeably (e.g. refugee and migrant, culturally and linguistically diverse, multicultural), however, none of these fully capture the diverse experiences of young people from migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, international students, those on temporary visas and first- and second-generation migrants.

There are underlying themes that can be explored as a collective, but these should not form the basis on which assumptions about effective cultural responsiveness are made. The unique needs and cultural differences of multicultural and multifaith communities should be considered in all engagement activities.

First Nations young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth participation occurs when “young people have genuine and meaningful involvement in decision-making processes in a way that recognises and values their rights to self-determination, experiences, knowledge and skills”.²⁴

Our First Nations Youth Advisory Council place self-determination at the centre of meaningful youth participation. They highlight the need for dedicated spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, facilitated by Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander people. Young people with whom headspace National engages also highlight:

- the importance of supporting truth telling, culture, history, and language
- the importance of the relationship between Elders and young people in the design and the coordination of groups
- the need to formalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific groups within governance structures
- in-person engagement as central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth participation to foster a relational approach.

Frameworks and resources for consideration

Creating culturally safe and inclusive environments for youth participation requires appropriate frameworks, scaffolding, resourcing and supports at all levels – systemic, organisational and individual – to support both participants and the staff who are facilitating engagement activities.²⁵

Cultural governance frameworks can be used to define overarching values, the approach and process in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s voices and cultural values are implemented in the governance structures of an organisation.

Frameworks and resources the Government could consider when developing the youth engagement strategy include the following.

- **Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB)** – a holistic framework of wellbeing that is used by First Nations people. SEWB is much broader than an individual having a healthy mind and body. It provides a way of understanding the interconnectedness of community, spirit and ancestors, and culture and Country, in the delivery of culturally safe care.
- **National Youth Settlement Framework** – provides tools and resources to equip policymakers and service providers with knowledge and skills to support young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.²⁶

²⁴ Koori Youth Council. (2020). Wayipunga resource. Retrieved from: <https://wayipungaresource.org/>.

²⁵ Orygen and The Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2019). *Designing mental health services for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds: Good practice framework*. Retrieved from: [https://www.orygen.org.au/About/Service-Development/Youth-Enhanced-Services-National-Programs/Primary-Health-Network-resources/Designing-mental-health-services-for-young-people/Good-Practice-Framework-Orygen-2019-\(1\)](https://www.orygen.org.au/About/Service-Development/Youth-Enhanced-Services-National-Programs/Primary-Health-Network-resources/Designing-mental-health-services-for-young-people/Good-Practice-Framework-Orygen-2019-(1))

²⁶ Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia. (2020). *National Youth Settlement Framework*. Retrieved from: <https://myan.org.au/resources/national-youth-settlement-framework/>.

- **Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia: Towards culturally inclusive service delivery** – allows mental health organisations and individual practitioners to evaluate and enhance their cultural responsiveness. It is mapped against national standards to help organisations meet their existing requirements, and provides free access to a wide range of support and resources.²⁷
- **Guide to good practice strategies for engaging young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in services and programs** – outlines an Inclusive Organisations Good Practice Framework which contains eight good practice principles and provides practical strategies and guidance on how to achieve each one.²⁸
- **Cultural Safety Framework for LGBTQIA+ Communities** – outlines key components of cultural safety for people identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.²⁹
- **Wayipunga Resource** – an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth participation framework developed by the Koorie Youth Council (KYC) to provide workers, organisations and government with strategies to support the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in decision-making processes.³⁰ The framework highlights the importance of:
 - respecting and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, families and communities as First Nations and sovereign custodians of land
 - supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples as decision-makers and sovereign peoples
 - recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's participation as a meaningful contribution to Australian society.³¹

The headspace review of participation practice identified the following practical ways to create culturally safe spaces and experiences.

- Explicitly acknowledging and valuing diverse cultural experiences and expertise in all engagements.
- Providing access to cultural mentors who are well resourced with time and budget to build and maintain relationships throughout participation initiatives.
- Ensuring anti-racist approaches, including diversity in recruitment of staff, training in anti-racism, cultural safety, and diversity and inclusion strategies.
- Ensuring there are opportunities to participate in First Nations or multicultural specific groups, as well as in broader engagement modalities, to further build culturally safe spaces.
- Considering the inclusiveness of engagement approaches, including acknowledging differences in digital literacy and preferred engagement modes.
- Emphasising diversity in recruitment processes (in participation experiences and more generally) as a means to modelling inclusion.³²

²⁷ Embrace Multicultural Mental Health. *The Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia: Towards culturally inclusive service delivery*. Retrieved from: <https://embracementalhealth.org.au/service-providers/framework-landing>.

²⁸ Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2016). *Inclusive Organisations: A guide to good practice strategies for engaging young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in services and programs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmy.net.au/resource/inclusive-organisations-good-practice-guide/>.

²⁹ Mukerjee R., Wesp, L. & Singer, R. (2021). Cultural Safety Framework for LGBTQIA+ Communities. In: *Clinician's Guide to LGBTQIA+ Care: Cultural Safety and Social Justice in Primary, Sexual, and Reproductive Healthcare*. Springer Publishing. Retrieved from: https://connect.springerpub.com/binary/sgrworks/6d02d7bcaf67a1bf/3c57b3180b469f3fe817e05a762ed6db52017c762e948561a47441dc9ccc5f6c/9780826169211_0001.pdf.

³⁰ Koorie Youth Council. (2020). Wayipunga resource. Retrieved from: <https://wayipungaresource.org/>.

³¹ *ibid*.

³² Day Four Projects (2023). *headspace Participation*. (unpublished).

5. Youth engagement model

Key takeaway

- To support implementation of the Youth Engagement Model and support effective, meaningful and purposeful youth engagement, it will be important to establish a range of structures, processes and support.

headspace National welcomes the introduction of the Youth Engagement Model, which provides an overarching governance structure to facilitate engagement with young people.

To support the model, it will be important to establish structures, processes and support to enable effective, meaningful and purposeful youth engagement. These could include the following.

- Clear purpose and intended outcomes for each engagement, with terms of reference to guide the operation of groups, committees and other elements of the engagement model.
- Defined roles and responsibilities for each key stakeholder/group and the activities undertaken by each.
- Ensuring membership of the steering committee and advisory groups is representative of the diversity of young people, and have broad representation, considerate of lived experience and intersectionality.
- A framework that outlines different levels of engagement (e.g. participation, co-design, consultation, feedback) to ensure it is clear where decision making powers lie.
- Principles of good participation including: equity; transparency; learning and curiosity; openness and courage; influential; cultural safety; and diversity.
- Measures to encourage safe, open and supportive youth engagement, including an awareness of power dynamics and how these can influence young people's engagement with each other, staff and decision makers.
- Utilising multiple strategies to engage young people, including online, face to face, one off and short-, medium- and longer-term opportunities to maximise representation from a variety of young people.
- Ensuring staff who are facilitating engagement with young people have access to development opportunities to ensure they have the skills needed to effectively and safely engage with young people.
- Ongoing and regular engagements, through establishing meaningful partnerships rather than offering ad-hoc engagement requests.
- Celebrating successes and learning from engagement activities should be included as a key element of the model so it is clear to young people, families and the broader public the benefits that can be achieved from partnering and working with young people.

Appendix 1 – Priority issues for young people that impact their mental health and wellbeing

Cost of living

In the *National Youth Mental Health Survey* (headspace Survey 2022), young Australians perceived economic pressure as one of the top 10 reasons for why the mental health of young people is getting worse.³³ They identified the issues that most urgently need to be addressed as: financial instability/cost of living (48%); housing affordability (35%) and homelessness (18%).³⁴ In the 2021 Census, nearly a quarter of all people experiencing homelessness (122,494 people) were aged between 12 and 24 years.

Similarly, when asked about their concerns for the future, young people were fairly worried or very worried about being able to afford a house (52%) and the affordability of rent (44%). The headspace Survey 2022 also indicated that many young people are feeling hesitant to have children due to the cost of living; and they feel that the cost of living was more affordable for their parents' generation.

Findings from the Mission Australia Youth Survey echo these findings in relation to cost of living concerns for young people, reporting that 54.8 per cent of survey respondents were concerned about financial security, and 22 per cent listed economic and financial matters as one of the most important issues in Australia today.³⁵

Monash University's 2022 Australian Youth Barometer also highlights the rising cost of living and increases in rent or housing prices as barriers to achieving financial security for young people, with 90 per cent of young Australians surveyed experiencing financial difficulties at some point during the past 12 months.³⁶

Cost of living pressures are amplified for multicultural young people due to numerous systemic and cultural barriers. A survey by the Centre for Multicultural Youth found 42 per cent of young people surveyed experienced some housing insecurity in their first five years in Australia and 47 per cent rated their mental health as okay or poor.³⁷

First Nations young people are also disproportionality affected by barriers to securing rental housing, and higher rates of homelessness, due to longstanding socioeconomic disadvantage stemming from the ongoing impacts of colonisation and discrimination.

COVID-19 has impacted the financial wellbeing of young people; the impact of COVID is explored below in the section on education and employment.

The headspace Survey 2022 also asked young people about their future aspirations and what they are most looking forward to. Some of the top responses included living independently (40%) and buying a home (39%).

To address these issues, key outcomes we would like to see are:

1. increased income support payments (i.e., JobSeeker and Youth Allowance) to lift all young people above the poverty line
2. an income support system that is fair and fit for purpose (i.e., based on need rather than age).

³³ headspace National (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Leung, S., Brennan, N., Freeburn, T., Waugh, W., & Christie, R. (2022). *Youth survey report 2022*. Mission Australia. Retrieved from: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-impact-policy-advocacy/youth-survey>

³⁶ Walsh, L., Gallo Cordoba, B., Waite, C. & Cutler, B. (2022). *The 2022 Australian Youth Barometer*. Monash University. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.26180/21541410.v4>

³⁷ Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2018). *Forging futures: How young people settling in Victoria are faring*. Retrieved from: https://cmy.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Forging-Futures-SUMMARY2018_FINAL.pdf.

Education and employment

Almost one in five young people aged 17-25 accessing headspace centres are not engaged in any form of employment, education or training. In many regional and rural areas this figure rises to one in three young people. A significant percentage of these young people are not receiving a welfare payment and as such are not accessing federal government employment or career support.

Participation in education or employment is recognised as a strong protective factor for young people's mental health and a key driver of positive lifetime outcomes; conversely, non-participation is seen as a major risk factor.³⁸ Young people who are disengaged from employment and education are at increased risk of long-lasting negative outcomes including socio-economic exclusion, long-term welfare dependency, and poor mental health.^{39,40}

In the headspace Survey 2022 youth unemployment was nominated by 14 per cent of young people as an issue that most urgently needs to be addressed. Young people reported feeling fairly worried or very worried about study pressure (44%), job opportunities (37%) and work pressure (33%).⁴¹ Many also felt their parents had greater employment opportunities than them.

COVID has exacerbated these issues. Prior to COVID many young people were finding it difficult to secure full-time employment and build their financial security. Young people were then disproportionately affected by job losses during COVID lockdowns; 55 per cent of the jobs that were lost between June and September 2021 were held by young people.⁴² In 2020, the youth unemployment rate was the highest it has been in almost 25 years, and an ongoing impact on young people's economic participation and earning potential was forecast.⁴³ After the Coronavirus Supplement ceased, young people were again finding it difficult to meet the costs of job searching including phone, internet and travel costs and it is clear that the pandemic will continue to impact on young people's job prospects, financial security and involvement in society in the longer term.⁴⁴

First Nations young people are also disproportionately affected by unemployment and low income. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 to 24 years is 31.8 per cent, compared to 16.7 per cent for non-Indigenous people.⁴⁵

Top survey responses from young people about their future aspirations and what they are most looking forward to included developing their career (54%) and further study (21%). To achieve this aspiration, equal access to education and employment for all young people and access to vocational support is critical.

Without support, these young people will likely continue to be trapped in a cycle of unemployment, lack of access to housing and poor mental health.

Key outcomes we would like to see achieved are:

³⁸ Holloway, E., Rickwood, D., Rehm, I., Meyer, D., Griffiths, S., & Telford, N. (2017). Non-participation in education, employment, and training among young people accessing youth mental health services: demographic and clinical correlates. *Advances in Mental Health*, **16**(1): 19-32.

³⁹ Powell, A., Salignac, F., Meltzer, A., Muir, K., & Weier, M. (2018). *Background report on young people's economic engagement*. Centre for Social Impact, UNSW.

⁴⁰ Gore, F.M., Bloem, P.J., Patton, G.C., Ferguson, J., Joseph, V., Coffey, C., Sawyer, S.M., & Mathers, C.D. (2011). Global burden of disease in young people aged 10–24 years: a systematic analysis. *The Lancet*, **377**(9783): 2093-2102.

⁴¹ headspace National (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

⁴² Littleton, E. & Campbell, R. (2022). *Youth unemployment and the pandemic*. The Australia Institute. Retrieved from: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/P1143-Youth-unemployment-and-pandemic-Australia-Web.pdf>.

⁴³ Borland, J. (2020). Scarring effects: A review of Australian and international literature. *Journal of Labour Economics*, **23**(2), 173-87.

⁴⁴ National Youth Commission of Australia (2021). The youth income guarantee: A fair and accessible income support system for young people. National Youth Commission of Australia National Inquiry into Youth Employment and Transitions. <https://nycinquiry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-Youth-Income-Guarantee-Full-Report-14222.pdf>

⁴⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). "Labour force characteristics". Retrieved at:

<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4714.0~2014-15~Main%20Features~Labour%20force%20characteristics~6#:~:text=The%20unemployment%20rates%20for%20Aboriginal,for%20non%20Indigenous%20people>.

1. adequate resourcing for vocational services that are known to have an impact on supporting young people to engage with work and study
2. identifying and supporting young people who are not captured in unemployment statistics, such as those who are not actively looking for work, those who are homeless, and those who may have severe mental health conditions.

Concerns about the future of our climate

In 2021, Australians were even more worried about climate change than the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶ In the first 10 months of 2022, Australia experienced 41 natural disaster events impacting more than half the local government areas.⁴⁷ Extreme climate events cause increased rates of mental health disorders, substance abuse, violence and suicide⁴⁸ and have long-term effects on wellbeing.⁴⁹ Eco-distress and eco-anxiety particularly affect young people.⁵⁰

The headspace Survey 2022 highlighted climate change as a significant concern for young people, with 34 per cent indicating this was an issue that urgently needs to be addressed and 45 per cent being fairly worried or very worried about it. Half of respondents worry that our country/government is not doing enough to address climate change (50%). Two in five felt fearful of the future due to the impact of climate change, and indicated they worry that whatever actions they take to address climate change won't really matter (41% each).

A recent study by Mission Australia and Orygen, conducted with the University of Melbourne, found that one in four Australians aged 15 to 19 were "very or extremely concerned" about climate change, which contributed to harming young people's mental health.

One-third of young people in Australia always worry or often worry that outbreaks of severe weather may be the result of a changing climate (32%). A further one in four tended to worry:

- when they heard about climate change, even when the effect of climate change may be some time away (27%)
- about what the future may hold when they think about climate change (26%)
- about how climate change may affect people they care about (23%).⁵¹

The headspace Survey 2022 revealed another source of worry for young people is natural disasters, with 32 per cent of young people indicating they are fairly worried or very worried about them.

As the generation who will be most impacted by the effects of climate change, young people deserve to be involved in conversations around how climate change is being addressed.

A key outcome we would like to see achieved is involving young people in discussions and decision making about addressing climate change, as they are the generation that will be impacted by this into the future.

⁴⁶ Patrick R, Garad R, Snell T, Enticott J, Meadows G. (2021). Australians report climate change as a bigger concern than COVID-19. *The Journal of Climate Change and Health*, 3(0):100032.

⁴⁷ Testimony of Brendan Moon, Coordinator General for National Emergency Management to Senate Estimates Committee, 28 Oct 2022.

⁴⁸ Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. (2020). *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report*.

⁴⁹ Kim Usher and others. (2021). The 2019–2020 Bushfires and COVID-19: The Ongoing Impact on the Mental Health of People Living in Rural and Farming Communities. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 1–3.

⁵⁰ Doctors for the Environment Australia (2021). *How climate change affects mental health in Australia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dea.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-How-Climate-Change-Affects-Mental-Health-in-Australia-v3-1.pdf>.

⁵¹ headspace National (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

Unsafe relationships and negative experiences with others

In the headspace Survey 2022, other issues that young people feel most urgently need to be addressed were connected to traumatic and challenging experiences including: family or domestic violence (20%), sexual violence (20%) and online bullying (18%). Young people indicated that they are fairly worried or very worried about:

- discrimination (31%)
- bullying online (29%) and in person (29%)
- conflict with family (27%) and conflict with friends (25%).⁵²

The Australian Institute of Family Studies in 2021 reported that an alarming one in three teenagers aged 14 to 17 had experienced discrimination, with unfair treatment due to body size or appearance being the most common, followed by race, and sex-based discrimination.⁵³

The report found that “67 per cent of those experiencing repeated body discrimination can be expected to develop depressive symptoms, around half (48%) will develop high levels of anxiety, and just over a quarter (26%) will injure themselves or attempt suicide”.⁵⁴

Key outcomes we would like to see to address these issues are:

- strengthened national curriculum around discrimination and consent education
- established cultural capability frameworks for schools
- increased mental health literacy amongst young people, their families, schools and communities
- increased access for all young people to quality and affordable mental health services and healthcare.

⁵² headspace National (2022). *headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey Online Survey – 2022*. (unpublished).

⁵³ Evans-Whipp, T. (2021). *Teenagers' experiences of discrimination (Growing Up in Australia Snapshot Series – Issue 1)*. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

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