


FEBRUARY 2023

Tasmanian Youth Story CONSULTATION REPORT

UNEARTHING THE STORY OF YOUNG TASMANIANS 18-25 YEARS

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the palawa and pakana people as the traditional, original and continuing custodians of lutruwita (Tasmania) and the continuing connection that Tasmanian Aboriginal people have to the land, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present.



“I know that there are a lot of welcome to country and acknowledgement of country happening at events and programs... but just for that, to be everywhere is awesome.

I don't know how it feels for a non-indigenous person to hear that [welcome to country]. But I know as an indigenous person just sitting in a room and having that I just feel so sort of heard...

It's just a tiny thing, but it just makes such a huge difference.”

– 19 (SHE/HER) SOUTH



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About YNOT

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) is the peak body representing young people 12–25 years and the youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT works to ensure policies affecting young people in Tasmania are relevant, equitable and effective, and that young people have a voice on issues that matter to them.

Our vision is for a Tasmania where all young people are valued and can achieve anything.

Our purpose is to drive positive change with young people and the youth sector in Tasmania.

About Brand Tasmania

Brand Tasmania is responsible for taking a best practice approach to ensure the Tasmanian brand is strengthened locally, nationally, and internationally, and is promoted as a key asset of the Tasmanian community.

Our purpose is to bring more value to everything Tasmanian.

Our mission is to inspire and encourage Tasmanians, and those who want to be Tasmanian, to quietly pursue the extraordinary.

Acknowledgements

YNOT would like to thank the young people who participated in the Tasmanian Youth Story consultation process. We also acknowledge the youth workers and community for encouraging young people to be involved. Special thanks goes to Your Town, Anglicare Tasmania Eveline House and City Mission Launceston 'The Mish', for hosting interview sessions and supporting their clients to participate.

The Project was developed through online co-design workshops with young people, who identified the project outcomes and informed our consultation methodologies. Thank you to the 20 young Tasmanians who participated for helping shape a successful project. We also acknowledge Tom (22, South) of TJH Creative, for his graphic design skills and Nick (22, North) of Nick H Visuals for photography.

A special thanks to The20 for leading the interview process and supporting development of the 'Tasmanian Youth Story'. Thank you to Errin and Robbie (The20) for mentoring our young interviewers and supporting them

to develop new skills in interviewing and social research. Thanks to Daniel (20, South), Susannah (21, South) and Remus (24, South) for joining YNOT and The20 in the interview consultation process, and for supporting young Tasmanians to speak up on matters important to them.

We would like to express our gratitude to the University of Tasmania (UTAS) for in-kind use of the Mobile Interactive Learning Environment (MILE) Truck and personnel. We also acknowledge and thank the work of Prof. Robert Hoffman and Prof. Swee-Hoon Chuah from the UTAS Tasmanian Behavioural Lab for developing and sponsoring The Great Tasmanian Coordination Game to test the interview findings.

A final thanks goes to the team at Brand Tasmania for partnering with YNOT to unearth the story of young Tasmanians 18–25 years.

The Tasmanian Youth Story project was funded by Brand Tasmania, an initiative of the Tasmanian Government.



Executive Summary

What's it like being a young person in Tasmania?

This was the question posed to the young Tasmanians who participated in this project through online workshops, one-on-one interviews, and Roadshow workshops. Altogether, 185 young Tasmanians shared their stories and experiences about what life is like for them now, and the Tasmania they want to see in twenty years.

This is what they said.

We're Tasmanian, and proud of it. Young Tasmanians love this island's natural beauty; our relaxed pace of life; our empathetic, kind people and the supportive, helpful communities they create; our human heritage, both European and Aboriginal; and our vibrant cultural scene. All these things, young people said, make them proud to call themselves Tasmanian first.

We love our Tasmanian heroes. Young people are inspired by fellow Tasmanians who have made it on the local, national and international stages. Young Tasmanians are particularly proud of people who have proven that you can do it here, on your own terms; by people who have brought about, and are still fighting for, social and environmental change; and by local heroes who support as well as inspire the people who come into contact with them.

Anyone can be a Tasmanian – with the right attitude. But newcomers have to know that pride in Tasmania is an essential part of the Tasmanian identity.

We increasingly feel that Tasmania can be a place of opportunity. Many participants were excited about new kinds of job opportunities in the state and increased opportunities to go into small business for yourself, and were confident that there are more opportunities out there than may meet the eye. But Tasmania also offers opportunities beyond the professional: the chance to lead a well-rounded life, with time for exploration of the island's natural beauty, for community activities, for doing something creative, or just for spending with friends and family.

But we're often worried. Many young Tasmanians are afraid that they will never have stable rental housing, let alone be able to afford to buy a home themselves. They're worried about making ends meet while they're stuck in casual jobs or on short-term contracts, especially when they don't have the life or financial skills to manage money well. They're worried about climate change, and ongoing damage to the natural environment that they value so highly. And too many young Tasmanians still experience racism, homophobia, transphobia or ableism, particularly in rural and regional areas.

And life is often just harder than it needs to be. Barriers to entering the job market, problems getting around without a private car, and under-stimulation all contribute to young people feeling stymied and bored. Some of the things that make Tasmania special can also have a shadow side: for instance, our emphasis on warm social connections can make it easier to find a job if you have them, but harder if you don't.

Tasmania's advantages aren't distributed equally. Young people from high socio-economic backgrounds have better access to everything from jobs to Tasmania's wild places and cultural highlights. And young people who live outside the major population centres have fewer job opportunities, fewer public transport options, and fewer social activities available to them.

We're frustrated with being shut out. Young Tasmanians feel as though young people's voices are excluded, ignored, or even silenced when it comes to strategic planning, agenda-setting, and the planning and running of everything from services to community activities. As a consequence, not only are policies and programs less effective, but young people are pushed towards either apathy or conflictual activism.

Our mental health is suffering. These worries and frustrations, as well as other factors, are taking a toll on young people's mental wellbeing – a situation that isn't helped by the state's lack of timely, affordable support services, especially outside urban centres.

What kind of Tasmania do we want to see in twenty years?

A Tasmania that hasn't lost what makes it special. Young people want a Tasmania of the future to retain the things that they value now – unspoiled natural beauty, heritage landscapes and structures, a calmer pace of life, and human and community connection. This means continuing to resist pressures to become just like everywhere else.

A Tasmania with opportunity and security for all. Young people want a future Tasmania that you don't have to leave to lead a satisfying and secure life, but also that doesn't leave anyone behind. Young people think that getting there will involve, for example, a greater diversity of job opportunities available across the whole state; a just transition to a greener future for many industries; a more equitable approach to hiring than word-of-mouth; more job opportunities for people living with disability; and increased access to secure affordable housing.

A more open and diverse Tasmania. Young people hope that Tasmanians will become more accepting and accommodating of differences – something that will make it easier for people from diverse communities to stay connected to their regions and benefit everyone's mental health.

A Tasmania that celebrates its Aboriginal heritage. Young people increasingly respect Aboriginal heritage as an important part of Tasmania's sense of place, and Aboriginal knowledge as important in connecting to and preserving Tasmania's natural environment.

A Tasmania where all voices are welcome in shaping the state. Marginalisation of young people's voices leads to bad policy outcomes as well as an 'us-versus-them' generational mindset. Young people want to see communities unified in seeking out constructive solutions that will benefit all generations.



What will help us get there?

Meaningful involvement of young Tasmanians in government and industry strategic planning, decision-making and leadership. This means better engagement of young people in consultations, and capacity building to help them participate in policy discussions, strategic planning and decision making on issues impacting them.

More opportunities for intergenerational collaboration. Better mutual understanding, young people feel, will make it easier for all generations to work together towards shared goals.

Support for diversity, inclusion, cohesion and reconciliation. Young people want safe opportunities for young people from different identities to meet and exchange stories, as well as more opportunities to learn from and support Tasmania's Aboriginal communities.

What do we need in the meantime?

To help young people thrive personally and professionally now, Tasmania needs more services and programs to support young people's mental wellbeing and resilience; more safe spaces for social connection; a smoother path for young people seeking to move into independence; more opportunities for young people to build local connections and networks; more support to help young newcomers integrate into Tasmanian communities; and more inspiring Tasmanian stories.

KINGSTON
BEACH

Image by Moon Cheese Studio

Recommendations

Setting the stage for the future

RECOMMENDATION 1:

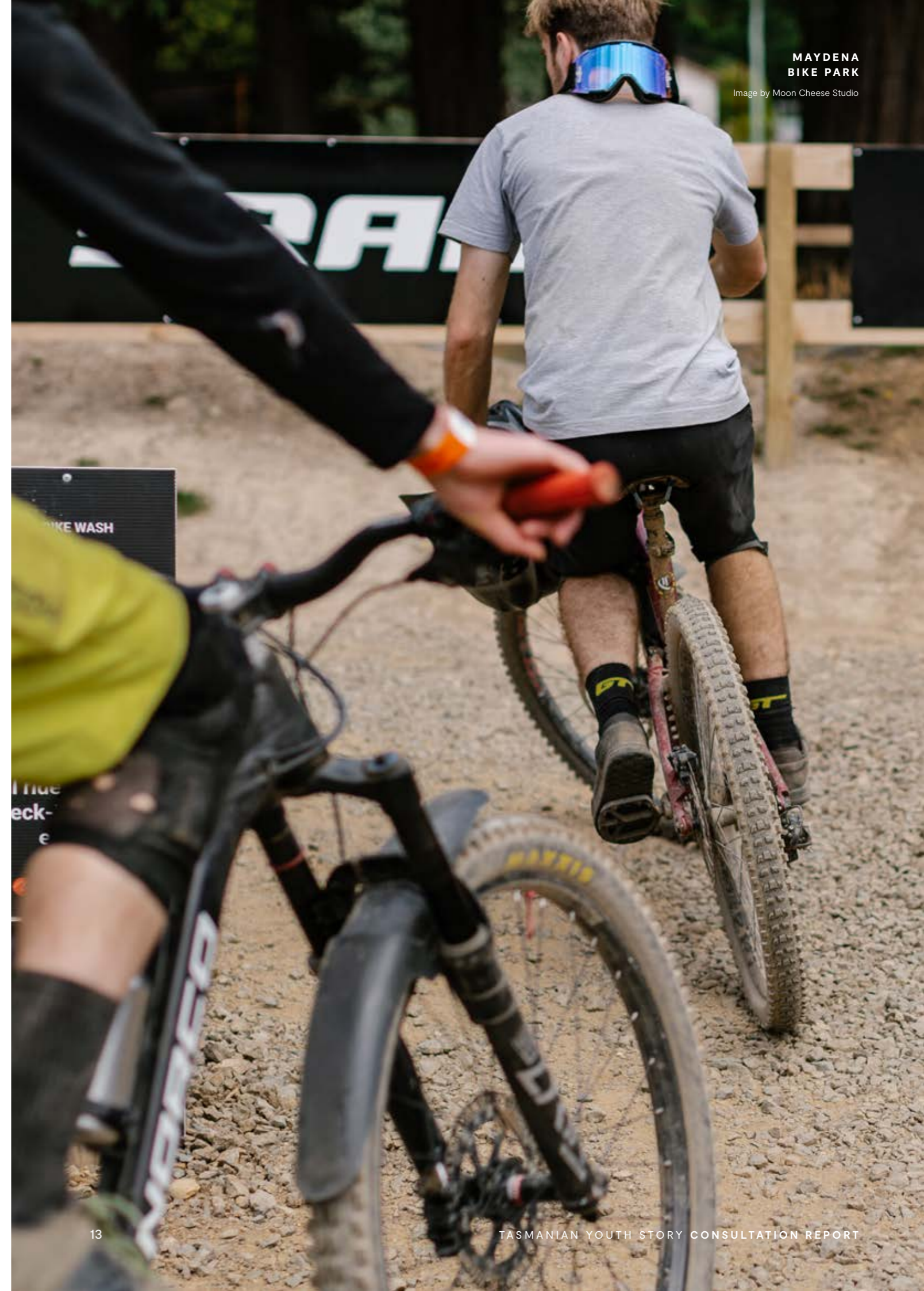
That the Tasmanian State Government and Local Governments work collaboratively with YNOT and young Tasmanians to:

- Establish and/or strengthen youth participation mechanisms and ensure they are clearly articulated and embedded in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy and programs relevant to young people. This could include youth advisory groups, youth councils or consultative groups.
- Review community engagement processes, including consultation and event design, and communication methods and strategies, to ensure that these are inclusive of young people.
- Develop capacity-building programs for young people to participate in policy discussions, strategic planning and decision making on issues impacting them, and to inform their engagement with State Government bodies and decision makers.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the Tasmanian State Government, Local Government, and community sector organisations create:

- Opportunities for young people to connect and collaborate with older Tasmanians to support social connectedness.
- Initiatives that support diversity, inclusion, cohesion and reconciliation in Tasmanian communities.





Meeting the needs of today

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the Tasmanian State Government, YNOT, community sector and industry work collaboratively to ensure the views of young Tasmanians inform the development of the Youth Jobs Strategy (the Strategy) and that:

- Strategic policy actions are identified in a comprehensive action plan, outlining immediate, medium- and long-term action to improve young people's transition from education to employment and/or further study.
- Investment is made to adequately resource and support the implementation of the Strategy.
- The Strategy aligns with other government reform agendas relevant to young people.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the Tasmanian Government works collaboratively with YNOT, young people and the community sector to:

- Develop policies and programs to support young Tasmanians seeking to become independent while reducing barriers to independence, through initiatives that:
 - Support the development of skills and resilience needed to live independently, including financial literacy and life skills.
 - Prioritise and support young people to get their driver's license.
 - Deliver expanded public and community transport options for non-drivers under 25 years of age.
 - Support young people to enter the housing market and live independently.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That the Tasmanian Government, works collaboratively with Local Governments, YNOT, young people and the community sector to:

- Increase safe spaces for young people to promote positive mental wellbeing and social connection with their peers.
- Deliver more mental health initiatives to build and maintain resilience and good wellbeing in young people.
- Build young people's connections and networks in their local communities.
- Provide social and recreational programs and events to bring local young people together with young people new to their areas.
- Develop a centralised, age-appropriate communications platform for young people that provides an overview of youth programs and services state-wide.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Brand Tasmania, in collaboration with young Tasmanians, to develop a "New to Tassie" resource for young newcomers to the State.

Telling young people's stories

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Brand Tasmania, in collaboration with YNOT and young Tasmanians, to create a Tasmanian Youth Stories communications campaign to share the stories of young Tasmanians' experiences and increase visibility of Tasmanian role models to inspire young Tasmanians.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Brand Tasmania to support local communities to deliver, in collaboration with young Tasmanians, brand activation events that celebrate the Tasmanian Youth Story.





Introduction

Young Tasmanians have an important role to play in the future of our island state, and many young Tasmanians have strong views on issues important to them. But young people often have limited opportunities to be heard on matters important to them or to be included as key stakeholders in decision-making processes.

This situation represents a missed opportunity, on several levels. Without effective communication, meaningful engagement and genuine co-design processes involving young people, many youth-related projects and Government initiatives have suffered from lower-than-hoped rates of participation and have resulted in outcomes that do not necessarily reflect the needs and opinions of young people. At the same time, decision-makers in government, business and Tasmanian communities have been deprived of young Tasmanians' creative perspectives, and of the opportunity to reimagine the design and delivery of services and social outcomes.

The Tasmanian Youth Story project represents a shift away from this outdated way of doing business. It has set out to capture the unique experiences of what it is like being a young person living in Tasmania – the good and the bad. The story it tells will help decision-makers better understand what young people want from Tasmania, making it a fairer and finer place for everyone.

This has offered young Tasmanians the opportunity to speak up about their feelings about Tasmania: their sources of pride, and of frustration; their successes, and their challenges; and what we all need to work on together to create a Tasmania where young people of today will be proud to live in twenty years' time. The findings from this project not only outline a vision for Tasmania's future, but provide valuable information and evidence for decisions and policy today. Using it, decision-makers will be better placed to ensure that programs reflect and respond to young Tasmanians' needs and desires in their transition to independence and into the pattern of success that we have seen here in Tasmania. And we hope that this project will inspire and empower young people across the state to actively share their experiences, and their interpretation of the Tasmanian Youth Story, with other Tasmanians.



Methodology

Research methodology was developed in partnership with young Tasmanians, Brand Tasmania, The20, YNOT and the Tasmanian Behavioural Lab. The consultation process consisted of a series of one-on-one interviews and regional group workshops, informed through online co-design workshops with young Tasmanians.

The project aimed to capture the unique experiences of young Tasmanians and understand what sets Tasmania apart as a place to live, work and play. Throughout the interview process, we asked young people to describe, what they think is special or uniquely Tasmanian; the important issues impacting their journey to adulthood; what factors of the island push them away or pull them

Working with young people – Co-design workshops

Twenty (20) young Tasmanians aged 18–25 years participated in the co-design process, providing input and feedback into the project outcomes, methodology, interpretation of results and final evaluation. Participants were remunerated with online e-gift vouchers in recognition of their time and contributions.

Co-design workshop participants identified five (5) focus areas they wanted acknowledged or addressed, which were incorporated into the project methodology:

1. Inform government policy on topics that impact young Tasmanians.
2. Empower and support young Tasmanians to speak up on topics important to them.

to stay; and their experiences engaging with community stakeholders and decision-makers. A statewide Roadshow followed the interviews, with consultation activities designed to validate the interview findings and add further insights of young Tasmanians' experiences, and capture ideas and solutions to address the issues in a Tasmanian way.

This report provides an overview of the consultation key findings. In total, 185 young Tasmanians aged 18–25 years participated through online co-design workshops, interviews and Tasmanian Youth Story Roadshow workshops (see: Participant Snapshot). Participants have been quoted verbatim, with minor grammatical edits for readability.

3. Explore the experiences of young Tasmanians as they enter adulthood and establish independence, and identify the factors that influence their success.
4. Explore the opportunities and challenges young Tasmanians experience in different geographical areas, and the disparities that impact young people's ability to be active participants in their lives and local communities.
5. Amplify young Tasmanians voices across communities and all levels of government to help Tasmanians understand the context in which young people currently live.

Starting with a conversation – Interviews

This was the first time YNOT has conducted a large-scale youth consultation using one-on-one, one-hour interviews. The approach built on methodology developed through Tasmanian Story research conducted by Brand Tasmania and The20, incorporating YNOT's experience in youth engagement and participation.

Young Tasmanians were invited to participate through an expression of interest process shared through social media and YNOT networks. Diversity and representation were considered during the selection process to ensure individuals were captured from different communities, backgrounds and life experiences.

Ninety-eight (98) interviews were conducted between August and October 2022 (See: Participant Snapshot).

Participants were supported to attend sessions in Hobart, Bridgewater, Launceston, Burnie, Devonport, Smithton, Deloraine and online. Research interviewers guided their conversations through 16 questions, targeted to encourage young people to share their personal experiences, ideas and opinions about living in Tasmania. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. Following the interview, participants were remunerated with an e-gift voucher to recognise their time and contributions.

Interviews were collated and analysed to identify common themes, narratives and values that underpin the Tasmanian Youth Story.

The Tasmanian Youth Story Roadshow – Regional group workshops

Interview findings were tested through regional group workshops, allowing young people and broader community to share their interpretations, experiences and perspectives on the Tasmanian Youth Story. YNOT partnered with Brand Tasmania and UTAS to deliver workshops utilising the Mobile Interactive Learning Environment (MILE) Truck as a portable space.

Fifteen (15) workshops were held state-wide between 14 and 25 November 2022, visiting Queenstown, Smithton, Burnie, Devonport, Deloraine, Newnham, George Town, Launceston, St Helens, New Norfolk, Huonville, Kingston, Sorell, Clarence and Hobart. Workshops were open to Tasmanians of all ages and facilitated two main activities, The Great Tasmanian Co-ordination Game and ideas wall. Participation was incentivised through light refreshments, merchandise giveaways and a competition prize draw totalling \$2,000 of gift vouchers.

A 15-minute multiple-choice competition termed 'The Great Tasmanian Co-ordination Game', sponsored by the UTAS Tasmanian Behavioural Lab, was developed to validate the interview findings using coordination game theory. Participants were then invited to contribute to the 'ideas wall' activities to capture further insights into the perceptions and experiences of young Tasmanians 18–25 years, and share their ideas and solutions to address issues impacting them.

400 people aged 12 years and over attended the Tasmanian Youth Story Roadshow, including 66 young Tasmanians aged 18–25 years. Findings were collated following the Roadshow and analysed for key themes, ideas and solutions.

Participant Snapshot



Who was involved?

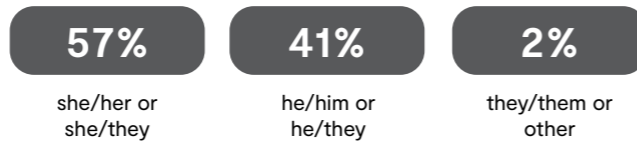
We spoke to **185** young Tasmanians **18-25** years through interviews, **3** online workshops and **15** Roadshow workshops.



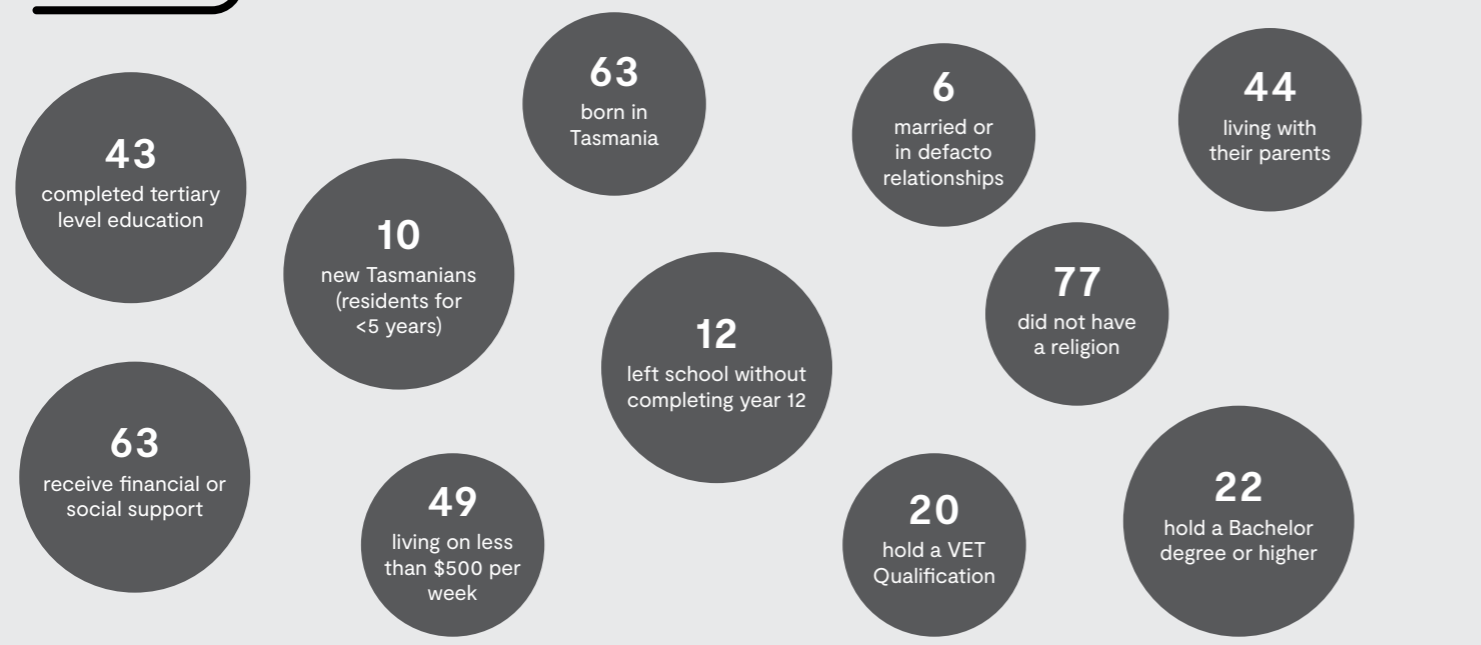
AGES



PRONOUNS

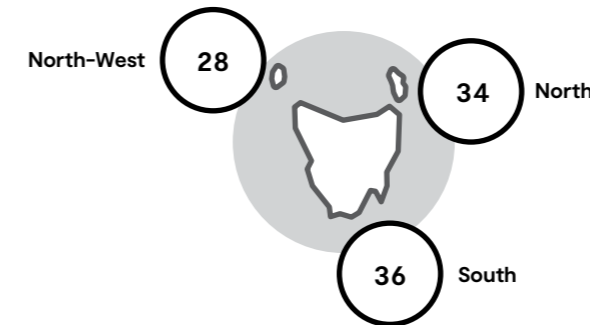


Other Insights

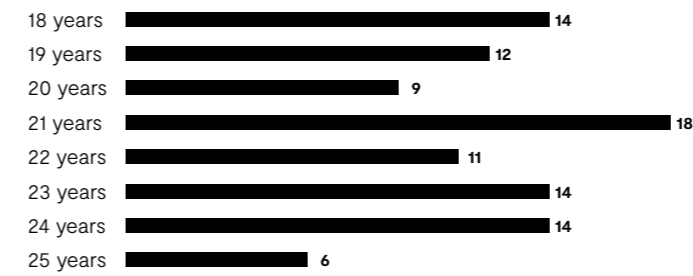


Who did we interview?

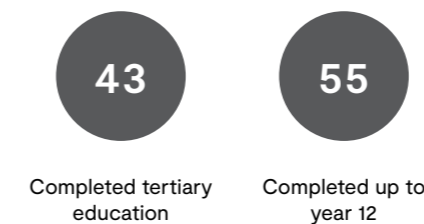
An overview of the demographics and socio-economic indicators collected from **98** young Tasmanians.



AGE

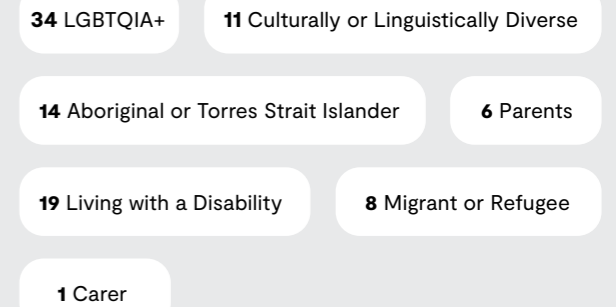


EDUCATION BACKGROUND

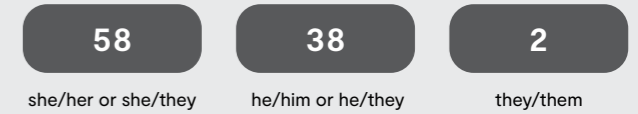


DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

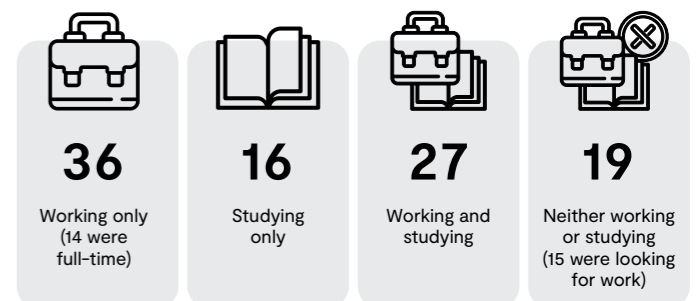
48 young Tasmanians identified coming from a diverse background, and included:



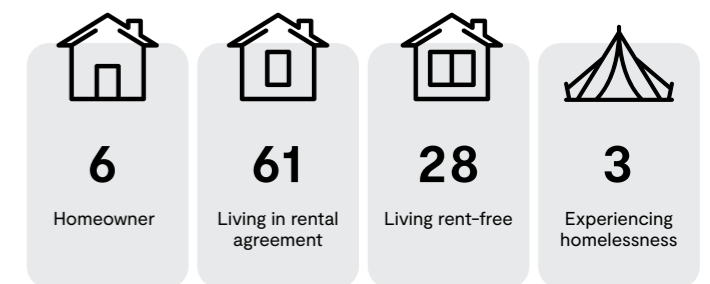
PRONOUNS



EMPLOYMENT STATUS



HOUSING SITUATION





The Story's Themes

We're proud.

Where previous generations were uneasy about their Tasmanian identity, we're proud to be Tasmanian, and to embrace all the things that make this place so special. When something is Tasmanian, we know it will be good, so we make sure everyone knows about it. We know Tasmania used to be looked down upon by the rest of the country, but we are happy that the world now sees just how special our little island is — even if we are sometimes left off maps.

We have a sense of place.

We love Tasmania's natural beauty and small towns. We know that this place is special, from our buildings and architecture, local art installations, events and produce, arts and culture, to our environment and wildlife. It feels like a place just for us. There aren't many places where you can drive for an hour in any direction and be in an entirely new world — from a beach to a mountain, in a farm or city, and rainforest or scrub. We feel connected to this place and find comfort when we see familiar landmarks that signal our home.

We're connected.

Tasmania is a place where we look each other in the eye and everyone knows everyone. Our communities unite and support us, and connect us to opportunities and help when we need it. We have an unspoken connection to each other because we know we've had similar experiences. But our communities can also inhibit us. When everyone knows everyone's business, it can be really hard to seek help or move past tough times.

We're often worried and frustrated.

We can feel frustrated with Tasmania as it currently stands. We worry about big issues impacting our lives and ability to thrive — whether we'll ever be able to afford a house, what kind of a world we'll face with climate change — and we struggle with daily challenges around transport, employment, healthcare and education. But we feel our voice is valued less than that of people who used to be young. We know that problems aren't always easy to solve, but we want to be heard and have our concerns and ideas taken seriously.

We want to see more acceptance of differences.

While Tasmanians love the fact that our island is different from the mainland, and lean into those qualities, people's attitudes towards difference within Tasmania can feel like a different story. Us young Tasmanians are more likely to be comfortable with new ideas and identities, but it can be hard to fit in if you are a bit outside the mould. We want to feel like we belong here, safe to express who we are, and welcomed into our communities, not rejected for being ourselves.

The Tasmanian Youth Story

People used to be embarrassed to say they were Tasmanian. But things have changed. Today's young Tasmanians may be the first to grow up proud of this place.

While previous generations of Tasmanians felt looked down upon and mocked by mainlanders as behind the times and backward, our State's many wonderful qualities are now being recognised and appreciated on a national and global scale. It makes us proud to see Tasmania's accomplishments recognised, even if we didn't personally achieve them.

But it's not just what others find special about this place. It's the personal things, even the secrets, that connect us to these islands and to each other. Our spots in the wilderness, our local hangouts, our laid-back way of life and, most of all, our distinctly Tasmanian experiences – we all know the first thing we do when we get our P's.

Our feeling of connection isn't just about the places and our experiences. It's also about the people and our communities. Tasmania is a place where it feels like everyone knows everyone, where we look each other in the eye and greet each other on the street. It's a place where an entire community will rally around and offer support during hard times.

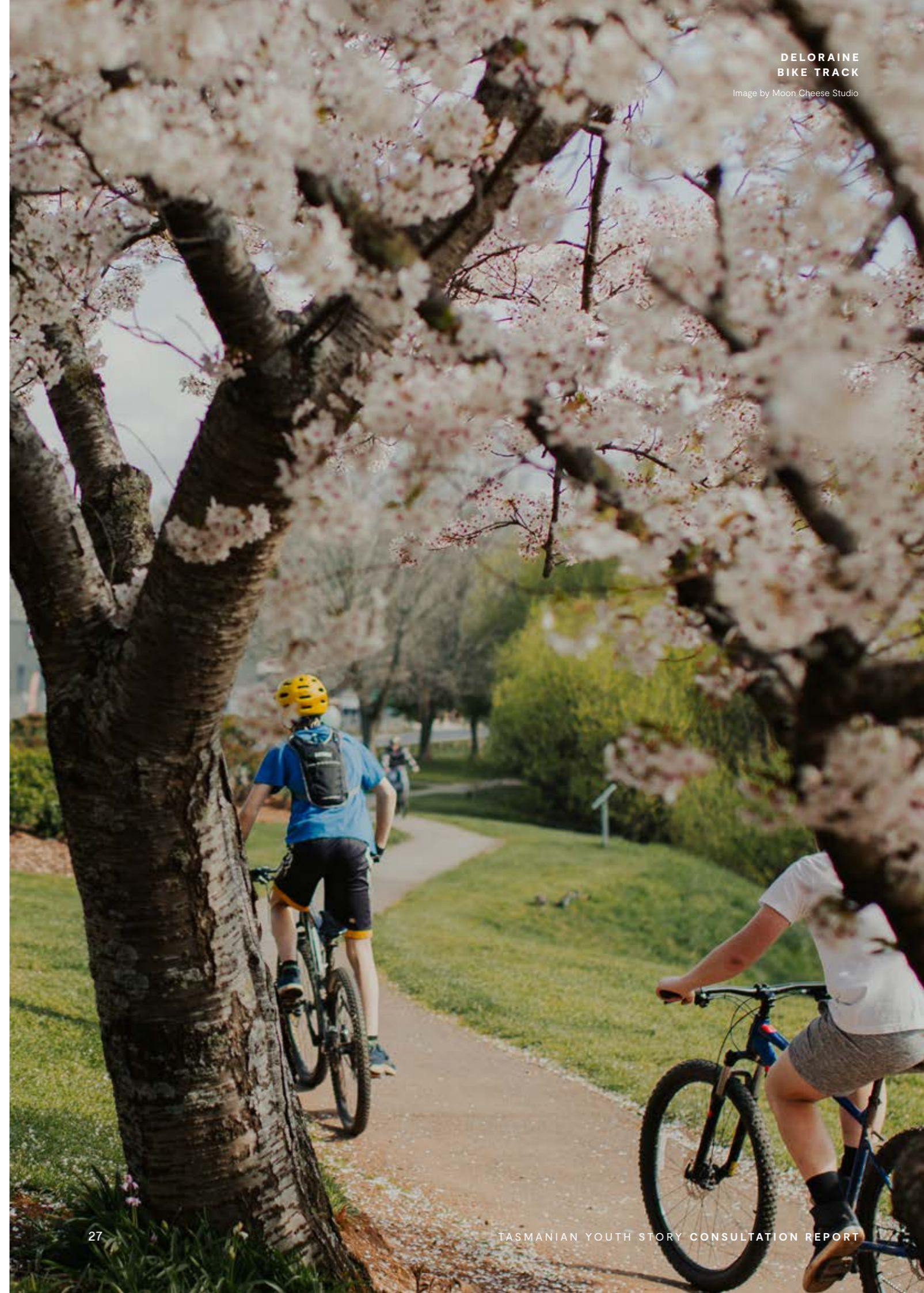
But that doesn't mean being a young Tasmanian is easy. There is a lot working against us, hindering our chances at becoming independent and thriving. The issues with housing, employment, mental health and the cost of living aren't unique to us, but they're made more challenging here by Tasmania's geographic location, sparse population, and transport challenges.

Frustrated Tasmanians in previous generations would simply leave for good. Our generation doesn't feel that way. We're curious about the opportunities beyond our shores, but we feel connected to this place and want to know that we can also have a future here.

People think we want everything handed to us. But that's not true. We can work hard, be creative and inventive. We are an untapped asset, and not just because we're young. It's because we care deeply for this place and our shared future.

We want to help solve Tasmania's problems. We understand what our communities are facing, feel the impact of missteps, and yearn to be part of the future opportunity.

In the Tasmania we want, we welcome change, we are accepted for who we are and our differences are our strengths. Welcome us into the conversation and let us help build the best version of Tasmania.



Consultation Findings

What’s it like being a young person in Tasmania?

This was the question posed to the young Tasmanians who participated in this project. Their answers – personal, detailed, thoughtful, insightful, often passionate – shed light on the unique experiences of young people living in Tasmania – the good and the bad.

This is what they said.

We’re Tasmanian, and proud of it.

The young Tasmanians we spoke with were clear: they feel that Tasmania is distinctive within Australia, and they feel that this distinctiveness makes Tasmania incredibly special.

“I’m really proud to tell people I’m Tasmanian.”

– 23 (he/him) South

“Tasmania has always been my home and I’m immensely proud of that. To live, work, study and explore in such a beautiful part of the world is a privilege and an honour.”

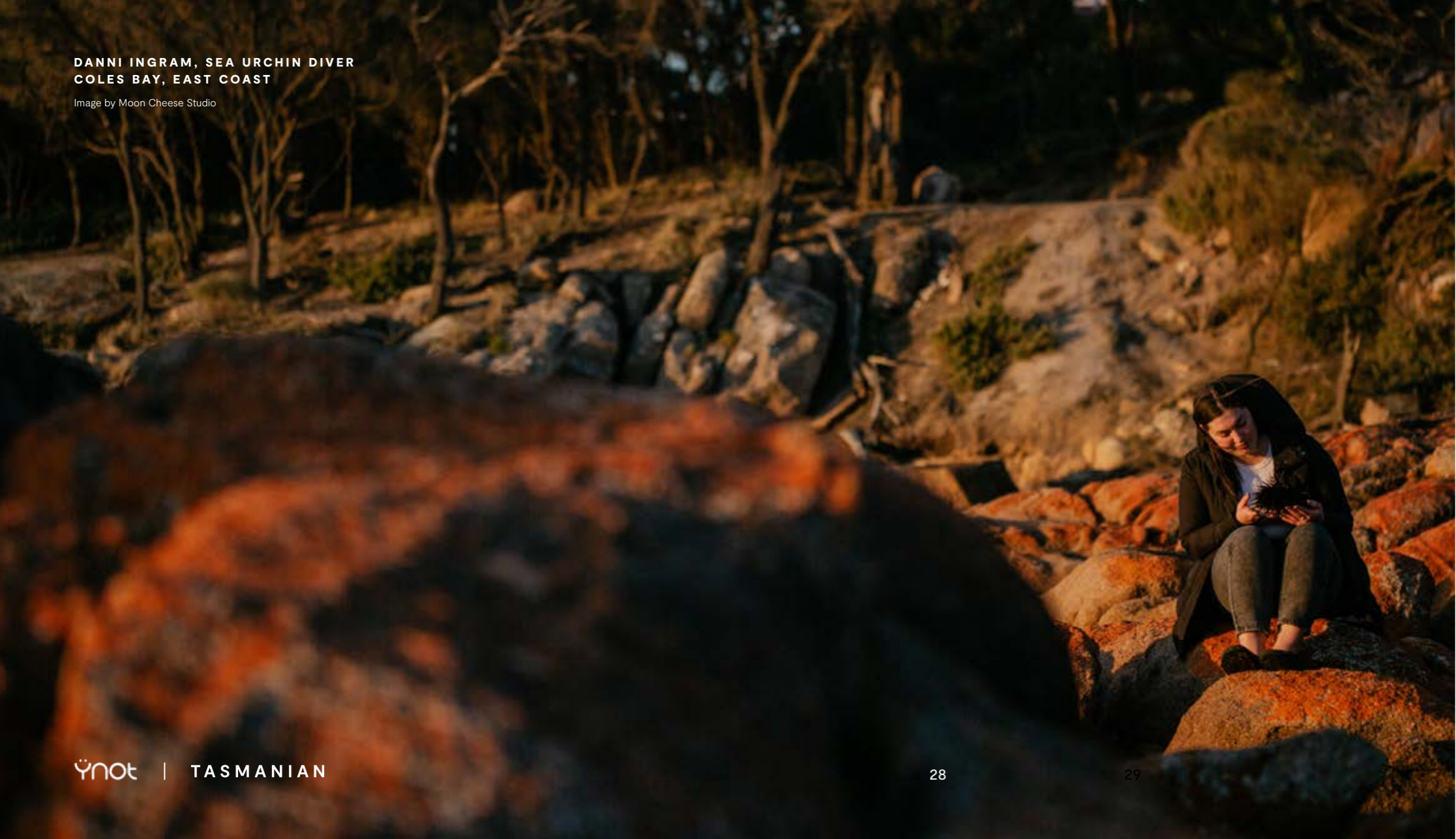
– 23 (she/her) South

“I don’t want people to be ashamed of being from Tasmania. It’s important to even just privately be proud of who you are, where you come, what’s made you who you are. I wouldn’t be who I was if I hadn’t grown up here.”

– 18 (she/they) North

“I never regret not going to the mainland. I love this place. I will always be Tasmanian. I am an unofficial ambassador.”

– 24 (he/him) North-West



DANNI INGRAM, SEA URCHIN DIVER
COLES BAY, EAST COAST

Image by Moon Cheese Studio

It's the natural beauty.

Almost everyone mentioned Tasmania's wild and unspoiled natural landscapes with pride. They loved the state's mountains, from the easily accessible kunanyi/Mt Wellington to the ranges of Tasmania's wilderness areas; they loved the beaches; they loved the lakes and rivers; they loved the clean air and clean water. They loved the parks, from easily accessible local parks to iconic national parks to their own secret places hidden in the wilderness. They loved the forests and the native wildlife, with a number of participants saying that they have wildlife rescue numbers saved in their phonebooks.

These things, many said, are not just special in an Australian context: they are world-class. And far from feeling claustrophobic, they loved the fact that all this variety is within easy striking range. Many of them would regularly get out into nature through bushwalking and camping; others said that it was enough to admire from a car window. But all spoke of a strong and abiding feeling of connection to the Tasmanian landscape and natural environment. Some also said that they were proud that so many Tasmanians do care about the natural environment and want to preserve it, saying that they had not encountered the same level of awareness and commitment elsewhere.

"I love that the [Tasmanian] environment has it all... Within three hours I can be on the other side of the state... We can go up the mountain, we can go to the beach, we can go to Ben Lomond and actually ski in the winter. I love the versatility... I don't ever want to leave..."

– 23 (she/they) South

"I'm proud to be from Tasmania. It's a lot colder, it has better scenery – [the mainland states] don't have the diverse range down here, lovely beaches then dense rainforest, so much different stuff in a little island. I feel lucky to be here."

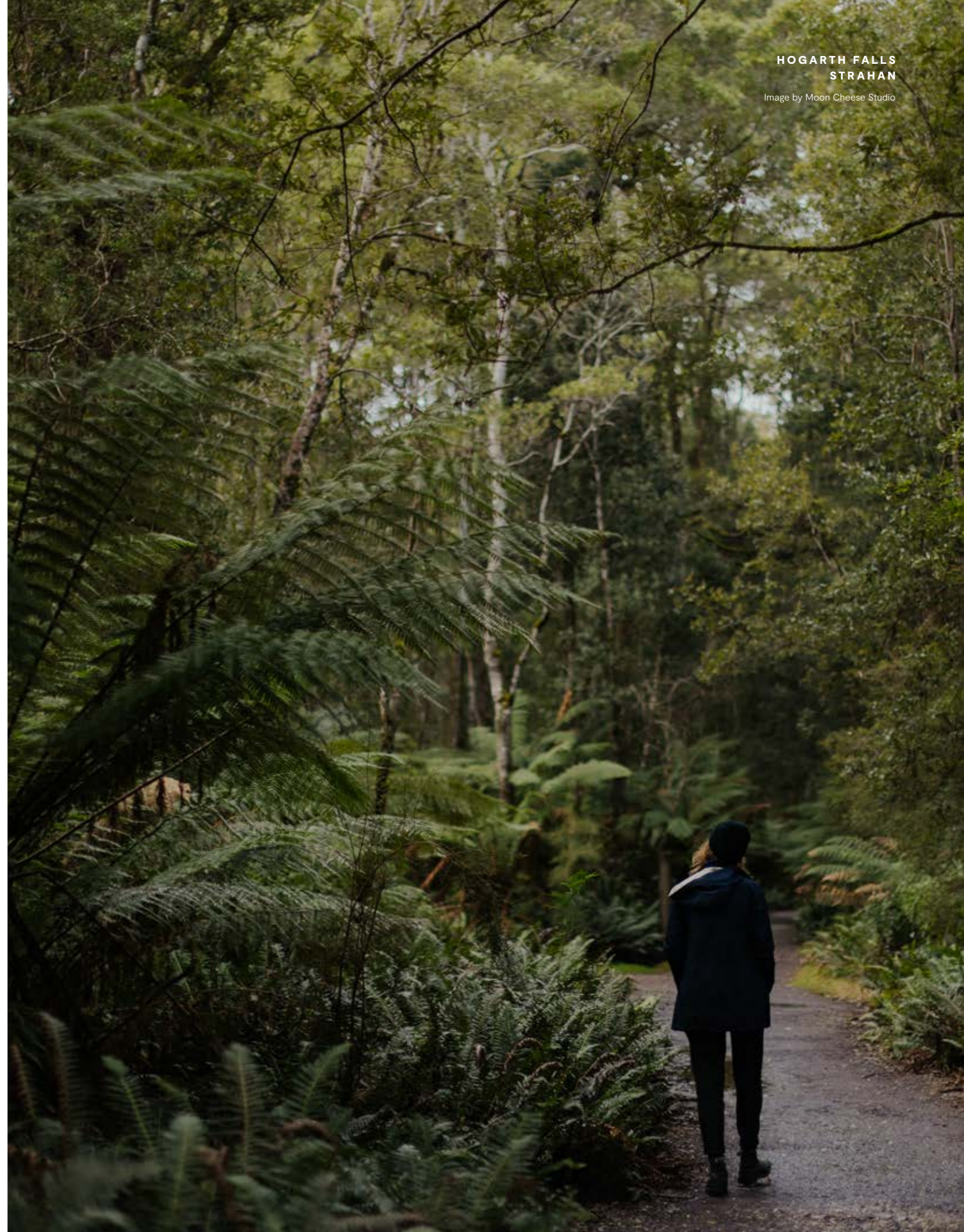
– 24 (he/him) South

It's the pace of life.

Young Tasmanians were proud of the fact that the pace of life in Tasmania is slower than elsewhere. Many participants spoke with pleasure about the fact that they weren't spending their time rushing around, or waiting in traffic, or racing to the top of the career ladder. They felt that the more relaxed pace gave them time to spend time in nature and with friends, to explore their creative sides, to connect with their communities through shared activities such as sport or through volunteering, or just to tune out. Many explicitly compared this calmer pace with the more frenetic pace of mainland life, which – many said – not only causes stress, but interferes with genuine human connection.

"I went to Melbourne once and... they were just rushing through. They were in a hurry and had no consideration for what's around them. There, it's constant rush hour."

– 19 (she/her) South



It's the people, and the communities they create.

Tasmania is a place where people still matter to each other. Participants described Tasmanians as connected; supportive; empathetic; community-minded; more cooperative, less competitive; helpful; kind. Here, participants said, people still prefer to sit down face-to-face to create genuine connections. It's these qualities that make Tasmania's people as memorable as its landscapes. And the communities that these kinds of people create are ones that sustain people in tough times as well as good, offering support and encouragement as well as practical help. A number of participants in fact suggested that they would be almost as sorry to leave their local community as they would be to leave Tasmania itself.

"People are more genuine here. They look you in the eye and (mostly) look after each other. On the mainland, people aren't as polite or kind. It's all about yourself up there."

– 24 (she/her) South

"I feel like, yeah, what makes Tasmania "Tasmania" is definitely the people. There's a sense of community here. It's an exciting thing to have. It feels like if anyone was in need, people would help you out. You feel safe."

– 18 (she/they) North



HARVEST MARKET
LAUNCESTON

Image by Nick Hanson



SALAMANCA MARKET
NIPALUNA / HOBART

Image by Jess Oakenfull

However, many young people, even those who felt strong ties to their communities, noted that Tasmania's close-knit social environment can be both a blessing and a curse. Tight knit communities, they said, are great – if you fit in. If you are known and liked by the community, they will help you. If you come from a family with a bad reputation, if you are of a marginalised identity, if you have a scandal – it can be hard to get help in hard times. Similarly, while social connections can make it easier to find employment, if you don't have those connections, cronyism can make it very hard to break into the job market.

"That kind of deep connection to Tasmania, it's both good and bad. The bad I suppose comes from preconceived notions of your family. I'm mostly insulated from it at the moment [because I now live in Hobart and] my family is primarily centered around the northwest coast – but there's definitely preconceived notions of "Oh, you're a [last name]," which is partially why I sometimes go by my mother's maiden name. There are a lot of expectations about who you are and what you'll behave like."

– 25 (he/they) South

It's the human heritage.

Many participants said that they love the visual reminders of Tasmania's European history – the heritage architecture, the agricultural landscapes. For a number of participants, these visible markers of heritage reflected their own multigenerational connection to Tasmania; for others, they reflect an aesthetic that they felt is increasingly lost elsewhere. But at the same time, more and more young Tasmanians of all backgrounds want to learn more about the island's Aboriginal heritage, and to see this heritage celebrated in the way that they felt it deserves.

"I really feel so connected to this island. My family's been here for generations... like since colonial convict times. So I just feel like it is my home."

– 21 (he/they) South

"My generation was probably the first to learn about palawa history... This is our opportunity to learn from a non-settler perspective."

– 20 (he/him) South

It's the cultural scene.

Participants noted that Tasmania is becoming a more culturally vibrant place for young people as well as Tasmanians as a whole, with more things to do in more places across the year. Participants expressed special fondness for places and events which they feel have a distinctively Tasmanian character – MONA and the "weird, fun, quirky, cool" Dark MoFo in particular, which they described as pushing a different and more interesting Tasmanian agenda. By the same token, some participants said that they regretted the demise of the Falls Festival, which had been a big part of their lives.

"I do like Dark MoFo – because we are hibernate-y people, having mid-winter feast and mid-winter big events to bring people out of that is super important for our mental health and our collective sense of community during this time. I like seeing the city come alive, when usually at 9pm it's just dead. I find a lot of importance in large scale public art and festivals that can bring people together in collective experiences of joy and catharsis and processing."

– 21 (she/her) South



PRINCE'S SQUARE
LAUNCESTON

Image by Nick Hanson

Tasmanian first.

All these things made most of the young Tasmanians we spoke with proud to call themselves Tasmanian first.

“Just being able to say I’m a Tasmanian makes me proud.”

– 18 (she/her) North-West

“I’d introduce myself as a Tasmanian, even though most people wouldn’t know what that is. I’m proud to be from Tasmania – It’s a small place and there’s not many people... not that many people are from here. It’s bit different.”

– 18 (she/they) North

“I say I’m from Tasmania. Because we are still Australian, but we are just a little island under Australia, it’s a different place. I am proud of being Tasmanian!”

– 18 (she/her) North

“Being Tasmanian matters. I feel like quite recently I’ve been proud to be Tasmanian, especially when it comes to how we’ve managed COVID. When I was younger I was like “urgh, I just live on an island state, whatever.” But when I’m talking to people internationally, I feel proud of the community – being able to talk to someone wherever you want, people being open and helping you out. We know that we are bogan-y in some senses, but compared to the US, it’s less superficial... It’s a little country in its own way. There is still a connection to Australia that I feel proud of. [But I’m] prouder to be Tasmanian in a lot of ways. The closeness of it. It’s helped me out – reconnecting myself with long-lost cousins, and connecting myself to different groups of people and elevating myself, confidently or creatively.”

– 23 (she/her) North-West



NIPALUNA / HOBART WATERFRONT
Image by Jess Oakenfull

When discussing their pride for Tasmania, some pointed out the value of the external perspectives on the state that have come from increased domestic and international exposure in recent years. Some said that positive feedback from outside the state has confirmed what they already knew – that Tasmania is a great place to be. While others, on the other hand, said that outside praise has helped them look at Tasmania through new, more appreciative eyes.

“I’m proud of Tasmania’s ability to compete with other states despite how small we are. The external validation helps, especially where I work. People are constantly saying how beautiful Tassie is, the external feedback reiterates how special it is here. We take it all for granted sometimes.”

– 21 (she/her) West Coast

Tasmanian heroes.

Young people's pride in Tasmania has been boosted by Tasmanians who have made it on the local, national and world stages. Among these, young Tasmanians are most inspired by people who are hard workers, who have given back to their community, and who have shown determination in the face of challenges. Indeed, many wished that they could hear more about inspiring Tasmanians, rather than the ubiquitous national and international social influencers.

Participants were particularly inspired by people who have proven that you can do it here, on your own terms: for example, Hannah Gadsby, the founders of Savage Interactive, the Jack Jumpers, and the creators of Derby Trails. All of these people, participants said, have shown that Tasmanians can create genuinely new opportunities in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and smooth the path for others in the process.

“[On Hannah Gadsby] Someone like me – autistic – from a place like me has gone and made that kind of splash, made that kind of a difference. She is a massive inspiration.”

– 18 (she/her) North

“[Savage Interactive have proven] that you can do it here. Yes, it would have been easier for them to do it somewhere else, but by doing it here they've been able to not just make a go of it, but do things like improve internet speeds for other people.”

– 23 (he/they) South

People who have brought about, and who are still fighting for, social and environmental change:

for example, Grace Tame, Rodney Croome, and a range of local environmental activists. Participants admired these people's dedication and perseverance in fighting for causes larger than themselves.

“Grace Tame is a real inspiration for me. I feel really proud of her... No one would have questioned her teacher without her taking a stance. She stuck it out for so long, so resilient, so many people would have given up... I think maybe she knew it was time for a change. And it's happened to so many people, maybe she felt a responsibility not just for her but for everyone. The whole #Letherspeak movement makes me feel really proud and inspired.”

– 22 (she/her) South

Local heroes: local government youth and community officers (for example, Jodie Saville of Circular Head), leading local businesspeople (for example, dairy farmer Vicki Lilloco), and community leaders (for example, Naked Farmer Australian Ambassador Rebecca Frankcombe). These people support as well as inspire the Tasmanians who come into contact with them.

“Jodie Saville, youth and community officer at Circular Head Council: So passionate about working with young people, inspiring others to make change in the community, encouraging others, she inspires me to get involved in the community.”

– 23 (he/him) North-West

Notably, young people we spoke with who were not born in Tasmania were also for the most part keen to identify as Tasmanian. And young people who were born here were happy to say that anyone can be a Tasmanian – with the right attitude. Pride in Tasmania, participants said, is an essential part of a Tasmanian identity – as well, a few joked, as are puffer jackets and a willingness to wear shorts in winter.

Many of the young Tasmanians we spoke with were happy to put their Tasmanian pride into action by supporting local businesses and spruiking local products to others. Young people spoke of their pleasure in buying locally grown food, of their fondness for local brands ranging from honey and cheeses to footwear, and of their loyalty to local businesses – even, one participant observed, when they were in competition.

“[A Tasmanian to me is] anyone who lives here and is proud to live here... Tasmania is happy to welcome people who are happy to be here. Tasmania likes to be respected. If you're nice to us, we'll be nice to you.”

– 23 (she/her) South

“Here our tourism businesses work closely together. People assume you're against each other but you're not. People come in and say how bad the coffee is at other places. It's hurtful to us because it's still our town, it's not very nice when you hear your friends at another place getting mouthed off about.”

– 21 (she/her) West Coast

MERIEM DAOU, HUMANITARIAN MARATHON RUNNER
KUNANYI / MOUNT WELLINGTON

Image by Jess Oakenfull



We increasingly feel that Tasmania can be a place of opportunity.

Many young people felt that, in contrast to the experience of previous generations, young Tasmanians no longer see leaving the state to pursue employment and education opportunities as inevitable. Many felt that:

There are new kinds of job opportunities in the state.

Participants pointed out the growth in entry-level jobs across the state, particularly in tourism, hospitality, and construction, but also in other areas such as the creative, marine and Antarctic industries. They also noted the presence of specific new firms, such as Savage Interactive.

There are more opportunities for young people to explore entrepreneurial instincts.

A number of participants had set up small business ventures, ranging from part-time to fulltime, usually selling products of their own design or making. Some participants noted that community word-of-mouth support has been a vital part of their success.

There are more opportunities out there than may meet the eye.

Some participants said that personal connections had been crucial in guiding them towards opportunities that had not been advertised publicly, or even in creating fresh opportunities for them to fill.

“It was a lot easier than I thought it would be. It honestly just started with one of my family members, and then they had a friend who needed someone, and then the word sort of got around. I haven’t ever advertised and I’m fully booked out. I think being a small community probably has helped.”

– 19 (she/her) South

“You get the connections here, because it’s so small. Whereas on the mainland, it’s so big. Here, people know each other and share contacts, and that helps to build people’s networks.”

– 22 (she/her) North

Many also felt that Tasmania offered opportunity not just to thrive professionally, but also to lead a well-rounded life, with time to spend in nature, in community involvement, giving rein to their creative side, or with friends and family. And Tasmania’s small size, some said, can give young people unusual opportunities to make direct contact with politicians and policymakers.

“There is more opportunity living in Tasmania. For example, if you’re into dance, at Brent Street in Sydney you need to be the best of the best, but here everyone gets an opportunity no matter what.”

– 18 (she/her) North

“Because [Hobart] is like a small town, I can know more local people. I have more opportunity to join events, discuss something in city council or state government, to see a high-level person... [If you live in] large cities, you don’t have that opportunity. For example, the Lord Mayor and I always see each other because I do the volunteering at Salamanca market and some other volunteer programs with city council.”

– 25 (he/him) South

Meanwhile, some also observed that young people with diverse identities, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality, often no longer feel that they need to leave the state to escape discrimination.

Participants noted that Hobart in particular, and also Launceston, are seen by many young people as places that are increasingly embracing diversity, making it less necessary for young people to move to the mainland to find acceptance. But a few also said that things are shifting slowly in Tasmania’s rural and regional communities as well.

“[This region] is more conservative, in both good and bad ways. The homophobic rhetoric... put a lot of people off the state. But compared to 2-3 years ago, there is more celebration of pride now. It’s been good to have small things rather than drastic change. As the generations go on, there is more open-mindedness to those sorts of ideas rather than keeping those things ‘hush hush’ and saving them for Launceston and Hobart.”

– 23 (she/her) North-West



EVANDALE MARKET

Image by Nick Hanson

But we're often worried and stymied.

Despite these many positives, young people emphasised that life as a young person in Tasmania still poses substantial challenges that can cause many young Tasmanians significant worry and frustration. As will be discussed below, these worries and frustrations can weigh heavily on young people's overall mental health, particularly when support is not easily available for many.

Among young people's worries are some big issues that affect young Australians and young people globally. However, these concerns often have a distinctively Tasmanian twist.

ISSUES WITH HOUSING

Young Tasmanians know that house prices and rents have gone up all over Australia. But they're also well-enough informed to know that Tasmania's housing is particularly unaffordable. Some had experienced insecure housing; some were living in over-crowded rentals; some had accepted tenancy agreements in poorly-maintained properties just to keep a roof over their heads; some said that they simply couldn't afford to move out of the family home.

The few participants who had purchased a property had done so in regional areas before prices shot up during the pandemic and/or had received financial support from their families – by contributing directly to or helping them save for a house deposit. Sadly, many others were giving up on the idea of ever owning a home. Several indeed said that housing costs and increasing cost of living pressures would drive them to look for cheaper places to live on the mainland.

“I was homeless briefly during my honours year, and I do not want to do that again. Couch surfing is extremely stressful, and now it's even greater risk than it was back then. At least back then I was just waiting to find a rental. Now I might not be able to get another rental. So [my partner and I] instead bought a camper. Because at least this way, if we become homeless, we can live on my sister's property. We are very careful with our finances, and we're still facing this issue.”

– 24 (she/they) South

“The rental crisis affects everyone across society, but it disproportionately affects young people.”

– 24 (she/they) North

MAKING ENDS MEET

As some participants pointed out, while the rising cost of living is a national issue, Tasmania's lower wages and particularly unaffordable housing leave young Tasmanians feeling especially squeezed.

Many participants, particularly those not living with their parents, spoke with worry about the challenges that they face in juggling the expenses of daily living – food, utilities, transport. Some said that they rationed food; others, that they tried to go without heating to save on power bills.

Young people on short-term contracts, in casual employment, on scholarships, or receiving government benefits faced significant financial hardship. These challenges are not helped by the fact that many young Tasmanians, according to participants, lack financial literacy and life skills to live independently – skills that are hard to acquire if your parents haven't taught you and you don't know how to find the right programs or services to help.

“I feel really connected to this place, but my connection doesn't feel like it has stable footings. I'm not sure if I'm going to get priced out of living here, the cost of living is not keeping up with wages in Tasmania.”

– 21 (she/her) South





CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Again, these are not uniquely Tasmanian issues. But as our participants noted, many young Tasmanians feel particularly strongly connected to the environment. Some participants suggested that their anxiety is exacerbated by a perceived disconnect between the acknowledged need for action on climate change and to halt environmental damage and loss of biodiversity on the one hand, and continued unsustainable practices on the other. Others pointed out that access to the natural world is in itself crucial to their mental health.

“Climate change effects are going to disadvantage us more as we have more years of being in the world. My dad was quite dismissive of it and sometimes makes comments like “I’m not going to be around,” how can you not be aware of and be connected to the future generations?”

– 21 (she/her) South

“If I’m stressed, I walk in the bush. You can’t do that everywhere. I want to be able to take my kids and grandkids out to the places I love. I don’t want them to be destroyed. And it’s happening in my lifetime.”

– 22 (he/him) South

DISCRIMINATION, BULLYING, STIGMATISATION AND MARGINALISATION

Despite gradually changing attitudes, many young people in Tasmania – including young people of Aboriginal and non-European origin, with diverse gender and sexual identities, and with disability – still face daily battles for acceptable treatment, let alone acceptance. These issues continue to be more prevalent in communities outside of Hobart and Launceston, but can crop up anywhere and have a significant impact on young people’s mental health and wellbeing as well as their social and educational engagement. Notably, young people who felt cut off from their communities due to racism, homophobia, transphobia or ableism were much less likely to express feelings of pride in being Tasmanian.

“On the West Coast, being queer was a big insult. It was a big shock coming to Hobart, particularly uni, when I heard people using the term queer as -- just that’s what you were and you have pride in that. So I did enjoy the move!”

– 24 (she/they) South

“I have autism. So it’s devastating for me when I’m trying my best and you get treated like you’re lazy because it takes you a little bit longer to pick up on things and other people.”

– 21 (he/him) North

Beyond these broad issues, some aspects of life are just harder than they need to be – again, in some cases due to distinctively Tasmanian factors. Combined, these challenges can stymie young Tasmanians’ efforts to get ahead.

**MURCHISON HIGHWAY
WEST COAST**

Image by Moon Cheese Studio

JOB MARKET BARRIERS

Despite the overall optimism of many young people about Tasmania’s growing economic opportunities, participants emphasised that the transition from education to work can be a difficult one for many young Tasmanians. Many participants said that career and pathway planning is still inadequate in many Tasmanian schools, particularly outside of Hobart and Launceston. With limited supports to explore and plan employment pathways, and perceived mismatches between educational pathways and industries, participants felt it is difficult for young Tasmanians to get a sense of career possibilities in the State, let alone in regional areas.

“It took me three, almost four years to be given a shot at a job in Launceston because I didn’t know anyone. You get no interviews, no callbacks, no nothing. I was an unknown entity, and people didn’t want to take the chance. And that is a story I hear repeated very frequently from people who have moved here. If you’ve been brought up here and you have those family contacts, you have a Tasmanian identity established. But coming in from the outside, it’s really hard to break into the informal sector. And you spend a lot of time being miserable and poor. But you get in eventually, and once you do, you make really loyal friends, really loyal employers and that reflects really positively on the rest of your career. It’s just hard to break into that first.”

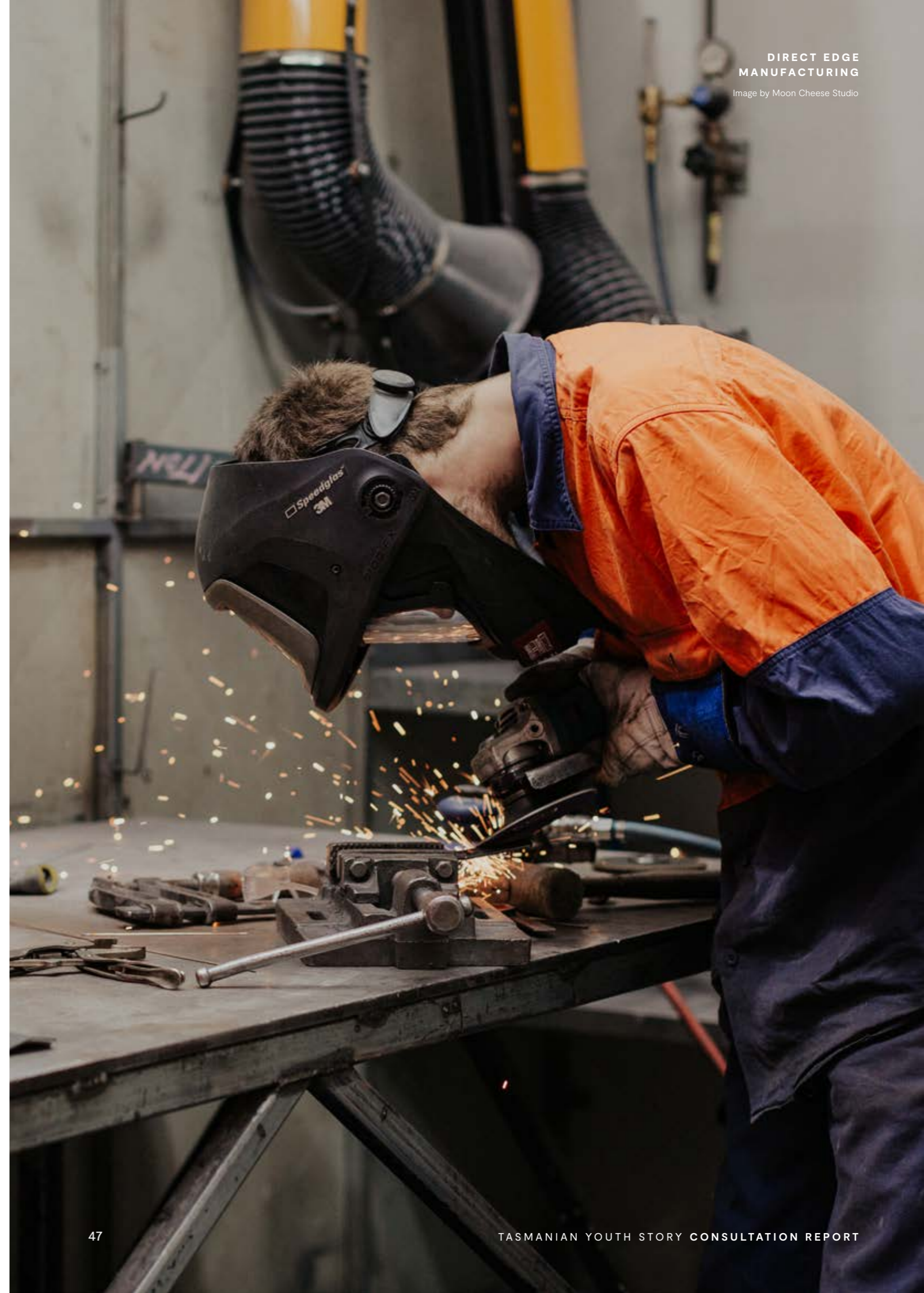
– 24 (she/they) North

Entry-level jobs in the private sector: Tasmania’s word-of-mouth, “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know” culture can turn into a barrier for people who lack personal connections or are connected to the wrong family or crowd. In a situation where you can’t get experience until you have experience, this can make it extraordinarily difficult to get that first job.

Work placements, traineeships and apprenticeships: Many careers require initial work placements of up to six months of full-time unpaid work – a commitment that students without the financial backing of parents or personal savings can struggle to afford. Wages paid to trainees and apprenticeships similarly are often lower than a full wage rate, leaving it hard to make ends meet.

Skill mismatches: Some participants complained that there are significant mismatches between the skills offered in Tasmanian TAFE and university courses of study and the entry-level expectations of Tasmanian industries.

Mismatches between young people’s needs and interests, and education offerings: Many participants who were attending UTAS complained that the university’s move to online learning has left them feeling disconnected and frustrated, and wondered why university costs continue to increase with more subjects being moved online. Some also felt that UTAS course offerings were not keeping up with young Tasmanians’ interests, for instance in creative fields.





NIPALUNA / HOBART
WATERFRONT
Image by Jess Oakenfull

LACK OF TRANSPORT

Transport affordability and accessibility poses a constant challenge for many young Tasmanians. While transport concerns were universal, they were especially felt by young people living outside Hobart and Launceston, where getting around requires a stronger reliance on personal vehicles. Minimum driving age, long waiting times for few driver mentoring programs and the high cost of purchasing and running a vehicle leave young Tasmanians substantially dependent on public transport – services that do not appear to young people to have been designed with them in mind. Meanwhile, rising rents are increasingly pushing young people out into peri-urban or rural areas where public transport is even less available and longer distances push up fuel expenses.

As participants emphasised, young people who can't drive often struggle to access education, training opportunities, jobs, or health and other services. But just as importantly, they are cut off from many of the things that make Tasmania special to young people – beaches, bushwalks, time with friends, and a sense of freedom. Adding insult to injury, many jobs require a driving license, whether or not it's required to perform the work – a tacit acknowledgement by many employers of the inadequacy of public transport options and the impact transport can have on young people's reliability.

“You can go to the beach at Stanley or something like that when it's nice, but you have to have a license and stuff for that. So makes it a bit tricky for people that don't have the license.”

– 24 (she/her) North-West

UNDER-STIMULATION

Many participants noted that particularly outside Hobart and Launceston, there are often few affordable, accessible youth-oriented social and recreational activities consistently available, making it hard to socialise and meet new people outside of pubs and bars. As one rural participant put it, “If you're not that into wildlife, there's not that much to do.” Young people felt that this deficit extended from everyday opportunities to special occasions such as festivals, and from formal activities to simply safe spaces where young people can get together in an alcohol- and drug-free environment to socialise and entertain themselves. Some said that they watched the deficit grow in their lifetimes, for example regretting the demise of the Falls Festival, which had been a big part of their lives. The situation is particularly hard on young people who have moved to or within Tasmania, who can find it hard to break into existing friendship groups.

Boredom, a number of participants observed, is a wasted opportunity, is bad for young people's mental health, and often lies behind substance use and anti-social behaviours.

DISPARITIES

In all of these areas, young people identified significant disparities between the experiences of different groups of young Tasmanians, particularly visible in:

Different socio-economic backgrounds. Young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds, participants observed, not only have better access to a wide range of educational opportunities, career paths, and services and fewer cost-of-living pressures, but also have more freedom to take advantage of Tasmania's natural beauty and cultural events. A few participants even pointed out that wealthier communities in Tasmania have greater economic and social resources with which to support and be kind to each other.

Rural versus urban areas. Young people living outside the major population centres (particularly Hobart) have fewer educational and employment opportunities, fewer public transport options, and fewer social activities available to them. Participants also noted that rural and regional Tasmanian communities are also more likely to harbour intolerance towards diversity and towards new ways of thinking. At the same time, participants who had strong ties to their rural and regional communities lamented the difficult choice between staying where they felt connected and supported, or breaking those ties and moving to larger towns or cities in order to access opportunities.

“If there's nothing to do, then you'll do drugs.”

– 24 (she/her) South

“They're [the Government] asking what can we do to inspire more Tasmanians to become scientists, and I thought back to being on the West Coast ... It's really frustrating because Tasmania has such potential. And we have this amazing hub for science, and we have all these wonderful people. And yet, if you live rurally, you don't have the same resources as if you lived in the city, nowhere near the same in terms of seeking education or seeking a job.”

– 24 (she/they) South

And we're frustrated with being shut out.

Most young Tasmanians were well aware that many, if not most, of the worries and challenges that they face are public policy issues. Participants were frustrated with intergenerational barriers to action and that young people's voices are not being heard, or are even being silenced, by older Tasmanians who do not share their concerns. Participants' comments reflected their frustration at the lack of young people's involvement in:

- Strategic planning to identify government priorities for action to ensure that they reflect young people's priorities – for example, climate change and housing.
- Agenda-setting for government and non-government consultations to ensure that topics are relevant to young people and that they identify young people's issues of concern – for example, the impact of short-stay accommodation on local housing markets.
- Design of consultations to ensure that questions are relevant to young people and that a genuinely diverse range of young people are aware and able to participate.
- Planning of services to make sure that they take the full range of young people's needs into account – for example, public transport services.
- Planning and running of community activities to ensure that young people enjoy them equally – for example, local festivals.
- Monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs to ensure their effectiveness for young people – for example, the rollout of mental health supports.
- Local government processes, with strong disparities in youth engagement opportunities between different councils. Notably, participants linked the perceived lack of interest in young people to lower trust in councils and weaker links to their local community.

“Unless you're really passionate about politics it's hard to be involved, hard for those who are creative or want to explore, or work with our generation. I'd like to have more younger voices being heard and in those positions of higher power, governmental power, and heads of education and art. Allowing a more equal voice to be heard between generations to be heard, rather than making it a one-way thing – a more neutral understanding of where we both can have needs met.”

– 23 (she/her) North-West



In all of these areas, participants expressed frustration that their voices as young people were treated as less informed, relevant, or balanced than other voices. Young people felt this approach is counterproductive, leading not only to less effective policies and programs, but also pushing young people towards either apathy or negative spirals of conflictual activism.

“Young people – as much as we'd like to say we have an impact on what goes on, we don't at the moment. Middle aged people are in politics and making decisions that are right for them but not for the next generation. Climate change, mental health – it wasn't a thing for them growing up, so they don't see it as important.”

– 24 (she/her) South

Some participants also pointed out that new anti-protest laws are further shutting down already marginalised young people's voices, leaving young people feeling despairing.

“Climate change is happening really fast. And I never protest because I don't want to get in trouble with the police. I want young people to be able to speak our mind, have a say and be heard.”

– 18 (she/her) North



These issues are taking a toll on our mental health.

These worries and frustrations are harming young people’s mental wellbeing and making it hard to be resilient in tough times. Mental health concerns are further compounded by external factors like adverse childhood experiences, experience of child protection services, learning difficulties, cyberbullying, body issues, alcohol and drugs, gambling, sexual health and relationships. Indeed, when talking about what it’s like to be a young person living in Tasmania, mental health concerns were the issue the most frequently mentioned.

“I’ve worked at headspace. They need so many psychologists here. COVID, rent, housing market, climate change, you know, all that stuff weighs down on mental health. And so more people are needing psychologists, and in a small state there’s only so many.”

– 22 (she/they) South

Greatly exacerbating young people’s concerns is the difficulty they experience in receiving mental health support. Participants spoke of the lack of programs for young people statewide, long waitlists for existing programs, low rates of bulk-billing and upfront payments before Medicare rebates are applied, and mismatches between service delivery and young people’s needs.

“I just feel like there needs to be more access for young people. I was going through a really rough time, and I went to headspace. They rang me to say, look, the waitlist is really long. And I went to the doctor and we made out a mental health plan, but nothing really came of it -- no referrals or actions, I didn’t get calls from anybody. And you’ve really, really got to chase it up. People don’t check on you or follow up, even if you are in a crisis situation.”

– 23 (he/him) North-West

One participant, for instance, noted that the only youth mental health service had set up shop directly opposite a college, ignoring the fact that many young people do not want their peers to know they are accessing the service due to stigma around mental health. Several participants said that getting mental health support in Tasmania is a challenge when you are unwell, noting transport barriers, service accessibility and the lack of follow-up supports as key concerns.

Getting access to mental health services is another issue that is significantly more difficult in rural and regional Tasmanian communities, where services and practitioners are even thinner on the ground. Furthermore, mental health services in rural and regional areas often throw up additional barriers to seeking help: privacy can be difficult to maintain in smaller communities, and the reliance of medical services on high-turnover locums means that people need to constantly restate their history – something that is particularly difficult for people experiencing mental ill-health or who have experienced past trauma.

“With headspace in the North-West, it can take a month to get an appointment to get assessed, and then 6 months for a counsellor. [There are] so many wait lists, it’s a continuous loop. It makes me feel shit.”

– 18 (she/her) North-West

**DERWENT VALLEY
IN AUTUMN**

Image by Fred & Hannah

What kind of Tasmania do we want to see in twenty years?

Young Tasmanians were happy to speak about the kind of Tasmania that they hoped to see in twenty years' time – a question, a few suggested, where young people's input is crucial but had not been sought.

"It's really important we do the things that we can to make things driven by younger people, getting them more involved, hearing them out and taking it into consideration. And not just as a side nod – taking it on board. Sitting down, hearing it out, understanding the concerns and taking them on board. Now is the time to do anything about everything. Now or never."

– 24 (she/her) South

Young Tasmanians wanted:

A TASMANIA THAT HASN'T LOST WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL

Perhaps unsurprisingly in an era of global change, many expressed anxiety about things that they love and that sustain them slipping away. Participants said that they understood, and often embraced, that population growth and economic change would bring changes to Tasmania over the next twenty years. But almost universally, they wanted the things that they value now – wild and unspoiled natural beauty, heritage landscapes and structures, a calmer pace of life, human and community connection – to be retained in a Tasmania of the future.

"I don't want to see the culture of having all these national parks and trees and nature and wildlife everywhere go away. I feel like when people think of cities and people think of development, there's massive tall skyscrapers made of metal. Whereas I feel like it's important to move forward in tandem with nature, with the communities that already exist... I don't want the feel of Tasmania to disappear, as great as it would be to be able to access all the services you can go and access in Sydney. I feel like if everything becomes urbanised and we leave farmers or a citizen center behind, it's not going to be Tassie anymore. It's going to be like we took a portion of mainland Australia and then copy-pasted onto Tassie."

– 18 (she/they) North

"I hope we don't go too big. I don't want to end up like Melbourne or Sydney. A bit bigger would be fine. But I hope the history and the old school buildings are still here. It is something different compared to every other city."

– 24 (he/him) South

"Tassie has this real sense of independence and uniqueness about it. It doesn't matter what the rest of Australia is doing, and we need to look at who we are and where we have been."

– 19 (she/her) South

In wanting to hold on to what makes Tasmania distinctive, young people are in fact continuing a Tasmanian tradition of preserving the qualities that make the state special. Tasmania, they said, is already lucky to have people who wanted to see its uniqueness preserved; now we should continue to resist pressures to become just like everywhere else.

"A lot of people I think want progress, but it's also good because I think we hold on to history pretty well here. Like we don't, you know, knock down the whole city and rebuild. We've kept a lot of history around Hobart, which is something I like, and I guess Tasmania as a whole as well."

– 22 (he/they) South

"The biggest thing for me that I would like to see maintained and pushed further and improved upon as much as possible moving forward is the environmental aspect because we are so, so unbelievably lucky here to have what we have. People really care about preserving what we have here. Elsewhere you don't get that same level of awareness."

– 24 (she/they) North



EVANDALE MARKET

Image by Nick Hanson



A TASMANIA WITH OPPORTUNITY AND SECURITY FOR ALL

Whether it means attracting and keeping niche industries to retain young high achievers, better support for young people to access entry-level jobs, more support for creative industries and entrepreneurs, or better employment opportunities for people living with disability, participants wanted a Tasmania that doesn't leave anyone behind, and where young people don't feel they have to leave to lead a satisfying and secure life.

Some participants particularly hoped that diverse opportunities can be fostered across the state, rather than being concentrated in Hobart or Launceston. Some felt that meshing this objective with the objective of preserving Tasmania's natural values will mean finding ways of transitioning forestry, mining, aquaculture and agriculture into a greener future in ways that protect livelihoods while also protecting the environment. Some also mentioned the need to ensure that Tasmania's private sector word-of-mouth hiring culture does not act as a barrier to young people needing employment. Meanwhile, access to secure affordable housing will be crucial to keeping young Tasmanians in the state.

"I hope everyone's given an equal chance, you know, with education and even socioeconomically. Mainly just that everyone can have a fair go here. There are a lot of people living in poverty in Tasmania at the moment because of the housing crisis, you know, rising inflation. They just can't find a home and it's really sad."

– 18 (she/her) North

A MORE OPEN AND DIVERSE TASMANIA

Young people hoped that Tasmanians, particularly in rural and regional communities, will become more accepting and accommodating of differences over time. A more open and diverse Tasmania, participants said, will encourage people from diverse communities to stay connected to their regions and bring employment and mental health benefits across the board.

"I've had a lot of friends that have moved to Hobart because they had real issues being accepted locally for being LGBT. I'd like to see a more accepting and diverse community in different parts of the state other than Hobart and things that make a more diverse crowd comfortable and excited to be in Tasmania as well."

– 20 (she/her) South

"I would love to see more education and awareness around autism. I'd love to be able to get up and go to work every morning and not be judged. No matter where I go. Doesn't matter what company. I don't want to be judged at all to have a disability."

– 21 (he/him) North

**TAS PRIDE PARADE
HOBART**

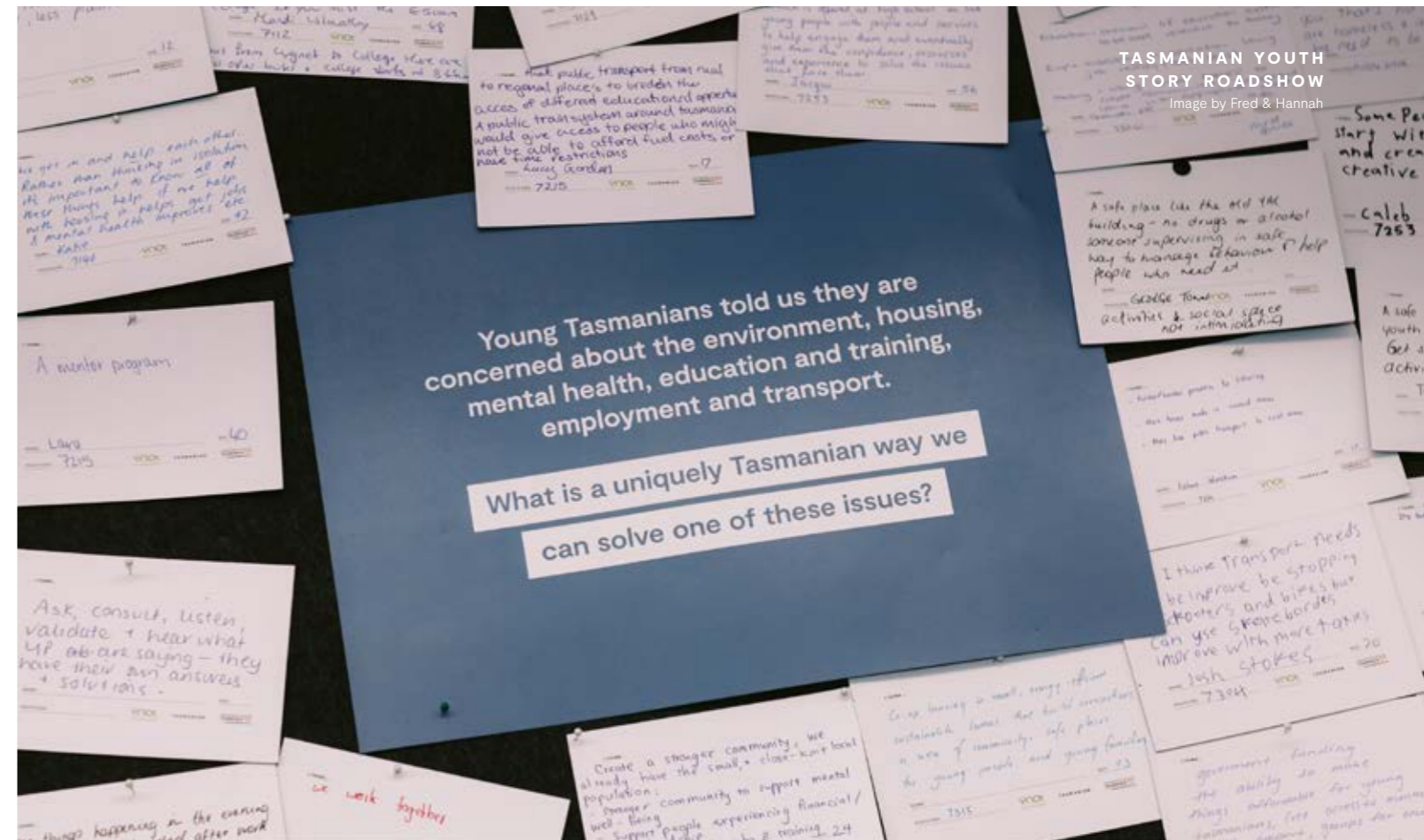
Image by Inside the Frame

A TASMANIA THAT CELEBRATES ITS ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

The comments of participants highlight increasing respect among young Tasmanians for Tasmania’s Aboriginal heritage and history and suggest that for many, Aboriginal heritage is an important part of the island’s sense of place. Young people expressed a desire to learn about Aboriginal history and heritage in schools, to see Aboriginal place names used in the state, and to learn from and support Tasmania’s Aboriginal communities. Some indeed suggested that Aboriginal knowledge will be important in helping Tasmanians connect to their natural environment and protect it from a menacing future.

“I’d like to hope that we’re even more in tune with nature and preserving it. And in keeping our natural places natural and untouched, that we’re more in tune with Indigenous people and more in tune with how they would treat it.”

– 24 (she/her) North



TASMANIAN YOUTH STORY ROADSHOW
Image by Fred & Hannah



NAIDOC WEEK 2022
LIMILINATURI / DEVONPORT
Image by Moon Cheese Studio

A TASMANIA WHERE ALL VOICES ARE WELCOME IN SHAPING THE STATE

Young people felt that the current marginalisation of young Tasmanians’ voices in public policymaking and the ‘us versus them’ mindset that this can breed not only leads to frustration, but to bad policy outcomes now and into the future. Rather than forcing young people into activism, some participants saw an opportunity for planning and governance processes to bring together the state’s full range of voices in order to unify communities and create constructive solutions with young Tasmanians’ visions for the future in mind.

“I think there’s a lot of expectation on young people to fix the mistakes that have been made in the past. And no one seems to think about whether we want to spend our lives doing that. I don’t want to spend my life as an activist. I want to enjoy, you know, some of the perks of modern society. I don’t want to have to be protesting 24/7 just so the planet can keep turning.”

– 23 (she/they) North

What will help get us there?

The future Tasmania that young people envision will not happen on its own. Participants identified a number of steps that Tasmania's state and local governments, industries, and communities can take to help ensure that a future Tasmania has the characteristics that young people of today hope for.

Meaningful involvement of young Tasmanians in government and industry strategic planning, decision-making and leadership.

Young people have clear visions and specific solutions to create the Tasmania that they would like to see in twenty years. They want strategic planning and policies to create green and uncongested urban spaces; affordable, accessible transport options beyond the private car, and affordable housing, with more medium-density housing to accommodate population growth without sprawl and fewer houses lost to short-stay accommodation. They want programs that help young people transition to independence and employment in the state. They want resources and activities that help young people connect to their communities to have an equal shot in Tasmania's word-of-mouth hiring culture.

But without direct involvement in planning and decision-making processes, it will be difficult for young people to advocate for these solutions. At the same time, young people are a resource: involving them in strategic planning processes can bring fresh perspectives into policy discussions, as well as providing the opportunity to test solutions against young people's needs. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that young people are meaningfully welcomed into planning and decisionmaking processes, and that they have the skills to be able to meaningfully participate.

First, participants said, young people need a guaranteed seat at the table. Establishing and strengthening formal youth participation mechanisms, particularly in Tasmanian local and state governments, will ensure that young Tasmanians have the opportunity to shape the future in which they will have to live, as well as advising on ways to engage and communicate with young people in community.

Beyond formal representation, young people want their voices to be included in initiatives that inform decision-making and support good governance. Participants suggested that Tasmanian local and state governments need better mechanisms to communicate participation opportunities and outcomes to young people, as well as to ensure that consultations are designed in a way that makes it easy for young people to participate. Participation, young people emphasised, extends beyond simply adding an opinion: it also means involvement in the planning and running of consultations and events.

Finally, young people need capacity-building to help them move into decision-making and leadership roles. Some young people would like to be more involved in shaping the state's future, but didn't really know how to do so; while others are turned off from even thinking of themselves as potential decision makers due to an inability to imagine how this could happen. At the same time, decisionmakers also often need to learn how to effectively engage with young people.

“Well planned-out and designed cities, infrastructure. I'd love to see everyone driving renewable energy vehicles. Love to see us continue to produce clean energy and exporting that. Maintaining our clean air...really, sustainable development that fits with Tasmania's culture and what Tasmanians want to say. Continue our differentiation from some of the other main mainland cities. I'd hate for us to just chuck up massive high rises, and for Tasmania to lose the sense of place that it's had.”

– 23 (he/they) South





More opportunities for intergenerational collaboration.

Many participants expressed the wish for better mutual understanding between Tasmania’s generations. Older Tasmanians cannot always fully appreciate the challenges that younger people face; but by the same token, younger people can learn a great deal from older people’s experiences. With more opportunities for intergenerational contact and collaboration, participants said, both sides may come to understand and appreciate each other more, and start to work towards shared goals. Programs and initiatives should focus on social and community engagement, for instance through arts and culture activities, and building capacity of young people to be active participants in their lives, such as employment or career supports, life skills and financial literacy.

“I think older people just need to listen to us. They had different experiences growing up, so they need to try and understand what it’s like for us.”

– 19 (she/they) North

Support for diversity, inclusion, cohesion and reconciliation.

In this and previous consultations (see Tasmanian Youth Forum 2022 ‘I am ME’), young Tasmanians have praised and called for safe opportunities for young people from different identities to meet, exchange stories, and raise awareness around diversity, inclusion and reconciliation, particularly in rural and regional areas of the state. These can include community events, one-off programs, and regular community groups. Young people in this consultation also expressed a particular hope for more opportunities to support and learn from Tasmania’s Aboriginal communities.

“If I can leave a message, it will be to just talk to people, make a conversation. Discussions create understanding.”

– 22 (he/they) South

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the Tasmanian State Government and Local Governments work collaboratively with YNOT and young Tasmanians to:

- Establish and/or strengthen youth participation mechanisms and ensure they are clearly articulated and embedded in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy and programs relevant to young people. This could include youth advisory groups, youth councils or consultative groups.
- Review community engagement processes, including consultation and event design, and communication methods and strategies, to ensure that these are inclusive of young people.
- Develop capacity-building programs for young people to participate in policy discussions, strategic planning and decision making on issues impacting them, and to inform their engagement with State Government bodies and decision makers.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the Tasmanian State Government, Local Government, and community sector organisations create:

- Opportunities for young people to connect and collaborate with older Tasmanians to support social connectedness.
- Initiatives that support diversity, inclusion, cohesion and reconciliation in Tasmanian communities.

DERWENT RIVER FERRY

Image by Jess Oakenfull



What do we need in the meantime?

In addition to the need for strategic involvement in longer-term planning, many young Tasmanians have current needs that stand in the way of their taking advantage of all that Tasmania has to offer. Key steps to meet these – all of which should be developed in collaboration with Tasmanian young people – include:

More services and programs to support young people’s mental wellbeing and resilience.

Young people identified the need for more services and programs in Tasmania to help young people navigate the mental health impacts of change and challenges. Many young people struggle to talk about mental health issues, particularly young men. Meanwhile, workplaces and schools are not adequately prepared to handle mental health issues. Young people want to stay well, not just get well.

Programs should support young people to develop the skills and tools needed to maintain mental wellbeing, while also focusing on reducing stigmas around mental health issues and building the capacity of young people to respond to the mental health needs of their peers, family and friends. Young Tasmanians need more open conversations about mental health, more opportunities to reach out for support, more timely support, and a whole-of-community approach to reducing stigma.

Meanwhile, supporting mental wellbeing should be an inherent part of education and workplace practice. In creating mental health supports, designers should consider initiatives that leverage many young people’s deep connection to the natural environment, for instance bushwalks, bike rides, or trips to the beach.

More safe spaces for social connection.

Young Tasmanians lack safe spaces where they can socialise and relax with likeminded peers in environments that do not involve drugs or alcohol. Young people say that such spaces not only can reduce social isolation and loneliness among young people, but also can help communities by keeping young people safe and off the streets and connecting them with youth workers who can refer them to appropriate services or supports. Safe spaces should be free, accessible evenings and on weekends, and encourage positive behaviours and support wellbeing. In creating safe spaces, designers should again consider initiatives that leverage many young people’s deep connection to the natural environment.

“If you’re not into sports, then it’s really hard to find stuff to do, like recreational activities and stuff like that. And I think that’s why a lot of young people get into trouble or turned to, you know, like drugs and alcohol and stuff like that. Because they’re bored, and there’s like... nothing to keep them occupied really around here. So I think having more like recreational spaces, I don’t know... something along those lines... I don’t know exactly what it would look like. But yeah, something that young people can do after school, that keeps them occupied, and somewhere they can hang out. More stuff like that would be really awesome.”

– 24 (she/her) North-West

A whole-of-government commitment to smoothing the path for young people seeking to move into independence.

As noted by participants, between a lack of housing options, transport challenges, problems identifying career choices and breaking into the job market, a lack of life skills for independence, and cost of living pressures, many young Tasmanians face significant and complex barriers to being able to thrive independently or take advantage of Tasmania’s pleasures and opportunities. A whole-of-government and community approach is needed to address these needs, since issues impacting young people often fall between various government portfolios, levels of government or in program and system design. Initiatives should focus on building young people’s capacity to live independently as well as the structural supports – housing, transport – required for young people to achieve this goal.

More opportunities for young people to build local connections and networks.

Participants identified local connections and networks as crucial to getting access to many employment and career-advancement opportunities. Young people need both opportunities to make connections and the skills to be able to take advantage of opportunities – as well as, in many cases, the transport to get there.

More support to help young newcomers integrate into Tasmanian communities.

It can be a challenge for young people who have recently moved to Tasmania to make friends or crack local social codes. Many of the Tasmanian social norms brought to light by this consultation – young Tasmanians’ emphasis on community spirit, supporting others, getting in touch with nature – are not ones that all young Australians share, or that may be immediately obvious to a newcomer.

A “New to Tassie” resource, and programs designed to bring local young people together with young people new to the area, might make fitting in a little easier, as well as help locals access new social and recreational opportunities. Meanwhile, both newcomers and young people already living in Tasmania would benefit from resources designed to inform young people of local activities and of statewide services and programs for young people.

“It’s quite hard to make friends down here when you’re from somewhere else, because everyone seems to have their own little people that they’re comfortable around. So I found it quite hard to make friends when I first moved down here, and I sort of just made friends with the people that I was working with.”

– 23 (he/him) North-West

“If you were new to Tassie, you’d really need to network, get to know people and be community based, rather than relying on strangers to come in. Here you really have to go out and get into the community, rather than just going by your everyday, doing the same thing, doing things for yourself. You need to put yourself out there and do things for others, it’s the only way you’ll be happy and succeed here.”

– 20 (he/him) North

More stories to inspire young Tasmanians.

Young people take vicarious pride in the achievements of their fellow Tasmanians, and many want to hear about what it was like for those people growing up in Tasmania; their experiences and how they overcame adversity; and how they connect to Tasmania. Meanwhile, many participants told interviewers for this consultation that they found the process of sharing their stories – not just their achievements, but how they got through hard times – validating, stimulating and motivating.

A campaign to collect and share – via social media, podcasts, workshops or events – stories about inspirational Tasmanians as well as young people’s real-life stories can inspire young people and boost “Tassie pride” while giving young Tasmanians useful pointers and ideas to apply to their own situations.

Meanwhile, the Tasmanian Youth Story is one that young Tasmanians need to hear. Given that young people in Tasmania are hungry for recreational and social opportunities, Youth Story promotion events have the potential to create an enjoyable as well as inspiring experience for young people, particularly if they draw on event ideas put forward by young people during the Roadshow.



TASMANIAN YOUTH STORY ROADSHOW

Image by Nick Hanson

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the Tasmanian State Government, YNOT, community sector and industry work collaboratively to ensure the views of young Tasmanians inform the development of the Youth Jobs Strategy (the Strategy) and that:

- Strategic policy actions are identified in a comprehensive action plan, outlining immediate, medium- and long-term action to improve young people’s transition from education to employment and/or further study.
- Investment is made to adequately resource and support the implementation of the Strategy.
- The Strategy aligns with other government reform agendas relevant to young people.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the Tasmanian Government works collaboratively with YNOT, young people and the community sector to:

- Develop policies and programs to support young Tasmanians seeking to become independent while reducing barriers to independence, through initiatives that:
 - Support the development of skills and resilience needed to live independently, including financial literacy and life skills.
 - Prioritise and support young people to get their driver’s license.
 - Deliver expanded public and community transport options for non-drivers under 25 years of age.
 - Support young people to enter the housing market and live independently.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That the Tasmanian Government, works collaboratively with Local Governments, YNOT, young people and the community sector to:

- Increase safe spaces for young people to promote positive mental wellbeing and social connection with their peers.
- Deliver more mental health initiatives to build and maintain resilience and good wellbeing in young people.
- Build young people’s connections and networks in their local communities.
- Provide social and recreational programs and events to bring local young people together with young people new to their areas.
- Develop a centralised, age-appropriate communications platform for young people that provides an overview of youth programs and services state-wide.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Brand Tasmania, in collaboration with young Tasmanians, to develop a “New to Tassie” resource for young newcomers to the State.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Brand Tasmania, in collaboration with YNOT and young Tasmanians, to create a Tasmanian Youth Stories communications campaign to share the stories of young Tasmanians’ experiences and increase visibility of Tasmanian role models to inspire young Tasmanians.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Brand Tasmania to support local communities to deliver, in collaboration with young Tasmanians, brand activation events that celebrate the Tasmanian Youth Story.

Conclusion

The pride in Tasmania that young people have expressed in this consultation clearly transcends most of the concerns and problems that they have identified, and bodes well for their long-term connection to the state. Many may leave at some point in their lives; but most see themselves as coming back eventually, whether to raise families or to retire. And those that stay are likely to remain champions for Tasmania and its people.

But Tasmania can't afford to take its young people for granted. It now remains to us to rise to the task of welcoming young voices into the process of creating the state that young Tasmanians want to see in twenty years. Young Tasmanians are observing, and will remember, the choices made now by decision-makers and older Tasmanians. How we approach the challenge of creating a future Tasmania that young Tasmanians of today want to live in will determine if this island can retain its greatest untapped asset.

“I think there’s a shared love of this place, even though we have all these problems.”

– 21 (she/her) South

“I think I’d call Tasmania idyllic, even with all the issues.”

– 23 (she/they) North

“I’m hopeful for young people in Tasmania. Absolutely. The ones who stay are the ones who really love it here, are the ones who are tied here. And when you love a place you will only ever work to make it better. You’re not going to go around telling people to hold the place. We’re not going to go to boring. You’re going to work in industries that sing the praises of the state. You’re going to go out of your way to build better communities for yourself within the state. Just improve everything that is around you. Everything that has equal opportunity and that you are capable of touching.”

– 24 (she/they) North



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– 24 (SHE/THEY) NORTH

**TASMANIAN YOUTH STORY 2022-23
CONSULTATION REPORT**



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TASMANIAN

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