



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**



Beyond 2020 WA Youth Action Plan 2020-22

Table of contents

Artist's Profile	4
Minister's Message	4
Purpose.....	5
What you told us	5
Young people of WA.....	6
A voice for young people	6
What have we done?.....	7
What will the WA Government do next?	8
Reaching your potential	8
COVID-19.....	9
What we have done?.....	9
What will the WA Government do next?	10
Jobs 10	
COVID-19.....	11
What have we done?.....	11
What will the WA Government do next?	12
Climate Change	12
COVID-19.....	13
What have we done?.....	13
What will the WA Government do next?	14
Mental Health and Wellbeing	14
COVID-19.....	15
What have we done?.....	15
What's next.....	15
A secure place to live	16
COVID-19.....	16

What have we done?	17
What will the WA Government do next?	17
Help when it is needed most	17
COVID-19	18
What have we done?	18
What will the government do next?	18
At a quick glance	19
What have we done?	19
A voice for young people	19
Reaching your potential	19
Jobs 19	
Climate Change	19
Mental Health and Wellbeing	19
A secure place to call home	19
Help when it's needed most.....	20
What will the WA Government do next?	20
A voice for young people	20
Reaching your potential	20
Jobs 20	
Climate Change	20
Mental Health and Wellbeing	20
A secure place to live	20
Help when it's needed most.....	20
Department of Communities contact details	21
Endnotes	21

Artist's Profile

My name is Tyrown Waigana. I am a Wandandi Noongar (Aboriginal) and Ait Koedhal (Torres Strait Islander) multidisciplinary artist and designer.

My practice includes painting, illustration, sculpture, animation and graphic design. The content I create covers mean themes such as comedy, surreal aspects of life, fantasy, thoughts that can't be verbalised and indigenous art.

Minister's Message

My appointment as the Minister for Youth occurred just before the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of this pandemic has been far reaching, and it has had a disproportionate impact on young people. Young people have been affected by compounding issues such as job losses, insecure employment, social isolation, and limited access to digital technology. This has been a scary and traumatic experience for many and improving the wellbeing and support networks of young people is my priority as Minister.

It was a difficult time in our State's history, but what I saw during this period was young people and service providers stepping up, letting us know exactly how you were being affected, and the solutions we needed to invest in to make your lives easier. I am awed by the hard work and resilience of WA's young people, and the organisations and associations that support young people, as they navigated their way through the difficult times we have all faced in 2020.

I have been so heartened by how we faced this year – we did it by working together! As we now look Beyond 2020 and to the recovery of Western Australia (WA), I want to be sure we continue to listen to the voices of our young people about what they think the issues facing them are and the solutions that will work best for them.

The Beyond 2020 - WA Youth Action Plan draws on the work that was done during the emergency phase of COVID-19 and outlines how the State Government is directly supporting young Western Australians and the communities they live in, as we begin to recover from the pandemic and its consequences.

So let's get beyond 2020 and look to put into action a plan for the next two years to support young people in WA so they can continue to thrive!

Hon Dave Kelly MLA

Minister for Youth

Purpose

Young people in WA have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Social isolation, fewer opportunities to engage in community and job losses associated with the public health response was tough on everyone, especially on young people.

We heard from young people that there was a profound sense of hopelessness and anxiety; worry not only for the immediate health and wellbeing of both their loved ones and the community but worry about what the future holds.

Although it's been difficult, the pandemic also presents an opportunity for government to pull together and focus on the social issues that are most important to the State and our young people.

We know that even before COVID-19, WA youth were facing different obstacles to older Western Australians. The government had already begun to consult with young people and service providers to think about how to address the most pressing issues that they face. Our consultation highlighted the diversity of young people and the need to ensure that groups such as First Nations young people, youth with disability, members of the LGBTIQA+ community and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are represented and included in the implementation of any initiatives delivered for young Western Australians.

That is why we are focussing our efforts on strength-based approaches like the Empowered Youth Network for young Aboriginal leaders in the Kimberley; supporting the establishment of Australia's first LGBTIQA+ youth advocacy body; and, funding the ASPIRE program to support the health and wellbeing of girls and young people with disability in the Kalgoorlie area.

Beyond 2020 outlines how these actions, and other State Government investment will support young people through our recovery phase, and provide them with the opportunities they need to flourish in the future.

What you told us

Even before COVID-19 we have been talking to young people from across the State.

Whilst there were many messages of hope and optimism for the future, young people also told us what they were struggling with, what worried them most and their ideas for change.

The young people we spoke to said that youth unemployment is a big problem and it is really hard to land that first job. During the pandemic, many young people lost their jobs or were given less hours or forced to go part time. While youth employment has improved it has not yet recovered to pre COVID-19 levels.

Young people told us they are worried about getting support not only for their own mental health but also how to best help their friends who are struggling with increased social isolation, poor employment prospects and finding a safe place to live.

Many are stressed out by school and feel like they are graduating without the life skills they need to succeed as adults. On top of this, students (especially those in Year 11 and 12) have had a huge disruption to their education this year.

Transport is always an issue because they rely on it to get to school, work, see friends or to access support services. Those living in regional areas feel forgotten and without as many opportunities as those living in the city. Young people said they feel voiceless, patronised by older people and excluded from decisions that affect them.

They have told us that they worry for their future as they feel that governments across the world continue to ignore major policy issues that affect them, particularly climate change. They are frustrated that the biggest issue of their generation is continually swept aside to focus on short term policy and it will be left to them to deal with the consequences.

The message is clear – now more than ever, young people need the Government's support to help them get over this setback, reach their potential and make policy decisions that have their futures at front of mind.

Young people of WA

These are some statistics about the population of young people in WA.

- Young people make up 19.9% of WA's population (10-25) – that's 522,953 young people.¹
- The total number of young people is made up of:
 - 166,110 are 10-14 years old;
 - 154,217 are 15-19 years old; and
 - 202,626 are 20-25 years old.²
- 48.7% female and 51.3% male.³
- 11% of the Australian population identify as LGBTIQ+.⁴
- 21% live in regional/remote, 79% live in metro areas.⁵
- 6% of young people in WA are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.⁶
- 30% of young people in WA were born overseas⁷, and 22% speak a language other than English.⁸
- 2% of young people in WA (9,557) live with disability.⁹

A voice for young people

We know that young people often feel voiceless.

From decision-making at school to the wider political arena, young people want to be heard, especially when decisions are made that affect them the most. Many say it's unclear exactly how they can get involved in change-making, and when they have tried to speak up, they have felt patronised and dismissed.

We know that young people actively participate in their communities and that what they say has value. We consulted with young Western Australians through the COVID-19 Youth Taskforce and listened to the Ministerial Youth Roundtable to understand how the pandemic was affecting their lives.

The State Government is committed to ensuring that their voices are amplified and heard across all levels of Government, especially where decisions are being made about their lives.

We need to empower our young people to stand up, but we also need to be prepared to listen to what they have to say.

- Young people prefer to participate in arenas and on issues where they feel they can make a contribution.¹⁰
- Young people are more likely than older people to sign petitions, boycott products, attend demonstrations and participate in political activities over the internet.¹¹

These were quotes provided by young people:

- ‘We don’t know how to get involved in politics e.g. how to get involved with political parties or contacting local Members of Parliament.’
- ‘Groups run by young people need more access to funding or support for applying.’
- ‘We need more ways to provide feedback to decision-makers. For example, establishing youth advisory groups for local governments, having a way for young people to give input into youth programs and how they are run, student councils having more input and schools actually listening to them.’

What have we done?

- Established the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council (MYAC).
- Engaged with young people in the government’s response to the impact of the pandemic on WA youth through the Youth Ministerial Roundtable.
- Supported the Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA) as the peak body of youth sector.
- Fostered young people’s leadership skills and their participation on issues that matter to them by continuing to support various youth leadership programs such as Youth Parliament, Miss NAIDOC, Changing Your World Youth Conference, YACtivate, Cadets WA, Leeuwin Ocean Adventures, and many others.
- Ensured young achievers continue to be encouraged and recognised by supporting the WA Youth Awards.
- Funded the Youth Disability Advocacy Network which is run by young people for young people with disabilities.
- Provided \$1.3 million to establish an Empowered Youth Network for young Aboriginal leaders in the Kimberley.
- Supported Youth Week WA initiatives such as the KickstART Festival to foster young people in the arts and the Youth Week WA Ambassadors (who also sit on the

Ministerial Youth Advisory Council) to work with young people to develop events across the State.

What will the WA Government do next?

- Ensure members of the MYAC are remunerated for the important work they do. The MYAC is made up of 12 young people aged under 25 who advise the Minister for Youth on matters relating to young people.
- Support the establishment of the Nation's first LGBTIQ+ youth advocacy body to speak up for the rights of this vulnerable group.
- Provide Getting Employment Right grants to empower young people with knowledge of their employment rights and educate employers about their obligations in order to combat wage theft in WA.
- Work with all levels of Government to engage with young people directly to ensure their voices are amplified and they assist in the designs of programs and influence the decisions that will affect their lives.

Reaching your potential

Education is vital because it has the power to disrupt inequality. Having a quality education equips young people to reach their potential.

Technology is reshaping the world at ever faster rates. We need to make sure we are preparing young people for a future that will look very different to now. We can't see the future, but we can be forward-thinking.

While the jobs of tomorrow are hard to predict, we do know that Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills will be essential for the majority of them, with an estimated 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations needing STEM skills.

Rather than be worried about the pace of change, we want our young people to be ready to take advantage of the job opportunities created through technological innovation.

By offering fee free TAFE courses and reducing the fees of over 180 priority courses by 72 per cent, the State Government is ensuring young people in WA are trained for local jobs.

These are some statistics about young people being involved in education:

- Women make up only 16% of STEM-qualified Australians.¹²
- Enrolments in the most challenging mathematics subject (Mathematics Specialist) has declined in WA and nationally.¹³
- Public school students in WA do not have internet access at home.¹⁴

These were quotes provided by young people:

- 'There are no safe spaces at school where we can take a breather and feel safe talking to someone.'

- ‘We feel unprepared and lost at the end of school for things like how to manage money, tax, vote, apply for jobs, deal with difficult social situations, mindfulness, etc. Schools should teach more life skills.’
- ‘We are not positive about the future. Don’t know if the jobs we train for will be there when we finish uni. Worried about student loans.’
- ‘Regional students give up on studying at university because the cost of living in Perth are too high and Centrelink is hard to get/not enough to meet the cost of living.’

COVID-19

Western Australian public schools remained opened for students throughout the 2020 school year. Schools supported students that were unable to attend school for medical reasons by providing work packages. For students who did not have access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources to learn at home, schools were able to lend ICT resources or provide hard copy work packages. Additional teachers were also employed to deliver learning remotely to medically vulnerable students.

We know this was a school year like no other and young people, particularly those in their final years of schooling, were concerned about how the disruptions would affect them. To support students, a number of measures were implemented, including; extra online school psychology service for students and parents, cancellation of NAPLAN and additional staff in the regions to help re-engage at risk students. The Government also partnered with the Telethon Kids Institute on the DETECT study for COVID-19, which included a psychological component, measuring the effect of the pandemic on student wellbeing.

What we have done?

- The State Government invested in additional resources in the Student Engagement Plan, which provided targeted support for schools to re-engage students not attending school.
- \$103.4 million to expand the Lower Fees, Local Skills program and deliver free short courses – including slashing TAFE fees by up to 72% for 180 high priority courses.
- Completed an urgent review of skills, training and workforce development in response to COVID-19’s impact on the workforce which made a number of recommendations to reduce the impact on youth, including the introduction of free short courses and low fee training, and strategies to support apprentices and trainees.
- Scrapped fees for more than 3,000 displaced apprentices and trainees due to COVID-19 for 6 months.
- Prepared our young people for jobs of the future in STEM by launching the Take 2 STEM campaign and the “Future skills, future jobs” strategy, implement the Resources Challenge: Automation pilot, fund the Digital and Technology Skills program, and provide scholarships for STEM university students to collaborate with WA businesses on innovative technology projects.

- Launched the Work Placement Register to help students undertaking VET to secure work placements in Government agencies.
- Provided \$35,000 in grants to four youth engagement initiatives.
- Continued to provide Youth Engagement Grants to encourage local councils and community organisations to come up with creative youth engagement initiatives. Past grants include the Manjimup So My Fest Youth Festival, Beverley Youth Precinct, and Reach1 Teach1 in Wiluna.
- Supported the health and wellbeing of girls and young people with disability in the Kalgoorlie area by continuing to fund the ASPIRE program.

What will the WA Government do next?

- Implement the \$229.2 million Rebuilding our TAFEs program. This includes \$167.3 million to upgrade TAFEs at campuses across the state – the largest TAFE capital works program in WA history.
- Continue to roll out the \$492 million Building Schools package, including \$319 million of new funding for upgrades and refurbishments at 63 public schools in WA.
- Release the Digital Inclusion Blueprint which aims to give all Western Australians the skills and tools to access and engage with digital technology.

Jobs

Finding a job is an essential step on the path to becoming an independent adult and establishing your sense of place in the world. Young people are worried about not only finding a job, but finding one that is secure and makes full use of their skills.

Even before COVID-19 hit our shores, the stats were concerning; with high levels of youth unemployment and a high percentage of those employed in casual and insecure jobs.

Being unemployed isn't just a financial problem. Spending countless hours applying for jobs without success can really mess with your head and make you question your self-worth.

We can always do more to give young people opportunities to grow, explore their potential and contribute to society.

Fee free TAFE courses will help young people get jobs in the industries of the future.

These were quotes provided by young people:

- 'Employers want young people with experience, but it is very difficult to gain relevant experience without a job.'
- 'The nature of work is changing and we need to talk about what types of jobs there will be in the future.'

COVID-19

We know COVID-19 has had more impact on the employment situation of young people than for any other age group. YACWA's COVID-19 Youth Survey found "financial and employment situation" was a top concern for young people and a whopping 44 per cent of respondents said they had suffered a loss of income since the pandemic started.

Keeping our borders closed and controlled, allowed businesses to stay open and continue to employ our young people, and initiatives such as the Small Business Grants, Employer Incentive Scheme and payroll tax relief has helped further.

While there is still work to be done, there are more local jobs in WA than there was before COVID-19 and youth unemployment has dropped from 17 per cent at the height of COVID-19 to 14.7 per cent in November 2020.

These are some statistics about how COVID-19 impacted jobs for young people:

- Youth unemployment in WA in November was 14.7%, down from a high of 17% during COVID-19.¹⁵
- The % of workers below 25 years of age in casual positions has increased from 48.2% in 2001 to 54.1% in 2017.¹⁶
- Young people today are estimated to have 17 different jobs in their lifetime over 5 separate careers.¹⁷

What have we done?

- Created opportunities for Western Australians in the games industry to connect with key players and build business networks through the International Access Pass program.
- Delivered the Pre-traineeships Program Pilot which provides potential new trainees with industrybased skills and experience.
- Introduced free short courses and reduced the fees of 180 high priority courses by up to 72% for local students as part of the Lower fees, local skills policy.
- Created jobs in the construction industry by implementing the \$150 million Housing Investment Package and \$319 million Social Housing Economic Recovery Package.
- Opened new Jobs & Skills Centres in Armadale and Midland to provide one-stop shops for free career, training and employment assistance.
- Continued to deliver the Transition to Work program which provides intensive, pre-employment support to young people who have difficulty finding a job after leaving school.
- Introduced an Employer Incentive Scheme to provide eligible employers assistance with the cost of taking on an apprentice or trainee.
- Launched the Youth Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020-25 to increase the representation of youth in the public sector to 5.8% and support inclusive work environments.

- Introduced a network of NDIS specialist training centres at local TAFEs, enabling young people, including people with a disability, to gain the hands-on experience needed to get jobs in the care sector.
- Implemented a new NDIS Job Matching Service through the Jobs and Skills Centres to ensure skilled people are connected to the fastest growing sector in WA.
- Launched the new Bricklaying Job Ready Program to deliver a pipeline of qualified bricklayers - participants are offered bricklaying apprenticeships with industry partners.

What will the WA Government do next?

- Create new job opportunities for young people in tourism, hospitality and
- agriculture including a new Apprenticeship and Traineeship Re-engagement Incentive, \$14.4 million to support the tourism industry and jobs, and launch the Wander Out Yonder campaign and the Primary Industries Regional Travel and Accommodation Support Scheme.
- Help sustain jobs in the arts by supporting the AWESOME Festival, providing a \$76 million Culture and the Arts recovery package, provide grants to the Arts 15k-plus and Contemporary Music Fund, and continue to fund the Arts in Residency Program.
- Support people with disability to find employment by developing a job matching website and encourage young people to work in the disability support sector with the Youth Workforce Attraction Project.
- Explore further opportunities to create more jobs and ensure young people get the training they need to get a job in WA.

Climate Change

Climate change is a major issue which impacts the lives and futures of young people – they overwhelmingly want strong action to address climate change.

Many young people are doing their bit by making changes in their own lives to reduce their carbon footprint, and by advocating for change with their friends, family and at all levels of Government.

The State Government is acting on this issue – with the recently released Western Australian Climate Policy setting the State on a path to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Transitioning to a low-carbon future creates a unique opportunity to develop low-carbon jobs and new industries. With the right training and support, young people will be well placed to take advantage of green jobs now and in the near future.

Consultation on the State Government's 'Climate Change in Western Australia – Issues paper' indicates overwhelming support for climate action. Feedback on the issues paper shows that Western Australians are keenly aware of the challenges climate change poses for our environment, economy and community and are ready to be part of the global low-carbon transition and share in the benefits of greener jobs and new industries.

National leadership and economy-wide policy is critical to delivering our international commitments under the Paris Agreement. The State Government is not waiting for national action, however, and is taking steps to lay the foundations of the low-carbon transition, build the industries of the future and adjust to unavoidable climate change.

These were quotes provided by young people:

- 'I think climate change is scary. Why don't we have more car free days to reduce emissions?'
- 'There should be more promotion of climate change as an issue. We shouldn't be afraid to teach young people about serious issues.'

These are some statistics about what young people think of climate change:

- More than 95% of young people feel that climate change is a serious issue.¹⁸
- Australia-wide, 34.2% of young people listed the environment as their top concern in 2019.¹⁹
- Emotions shared by young people in Australia on climate change include: anxious, overwhelmed, frustrated, guilty, grief and hope.²⁰

COVID-19

COVID-19 has shown us that governments can and should act on advice from the experts. WA's response to this unprecedented global health emergency has been world leading. The State Government listened to the health experts, declared a state of emergency, and made a number of hard decisions to keep Western Australians safe, including our hard border policy.

With climate change, we are doing the same – we know that listening to and acting on advice from experts is the only way we are going to be able to act decisively and avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

What have we done?

- In 2019 the aspiration of net zero emissions for WA by 2050 was announced with a commitment to working with all sectors of the economy to achieve that goal.
- Banned lightweight plastic bags in WA.
- Beeliar wetlands preserved for future generations.
- Released the 'Climate change in Western Australia – issues paper' for consultation.
- Released WA Plan for Plastics – a roadmap to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics.
- \$19 million investment into the Clean Energy Future Fund.
- Launched the WasteSorted E-Waste Grants program to reduce the amount of e-waste ending up in landfill through increased waste collection and recycling.
- \$25.6 million to the Plan for Our Parks initiative, which aims to create five million hectares of new national parks, marine parks and conservation reserves across WA.

- Launched Containers for Change which has seen over 10 million containers returned so far.
- The Energy Transformation Strategy, launched to improve the way we integrate large and small-scale renewables for low cost, low emissions energy.
- Released the Western Australian Climate Policy, which sets us on the path to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- Set out the State Electric Vehicle Strategy for Western Australia to facilitate a low-emissions transport sector, while also supporting development of a renewable hydrogen industry, future battery industries and a robust carbon farming industry in the State.

What will the WA Government do next?

- Continue the roll out of WA's Plan for Plastics with a State-wide phase-out of plastic plates, stirrers, straws, thick plastic bags, polystyrene food containers and helium balloon releases by 2023.
- Climate WA Health Inquiry established to review the health system's capacity to respond to the effects of climate change and make recommendations for improvement.
- Continue to advocate for national action to reduce carbon pollution. National leadership and economy-wide policy is essential to delivering on our international commitments under the Paris Agreement and future agreements.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Too many young people are losing hope. We heard from many young people that mental health is a top issue of concern. We heard the stigma of mental health has been improving and young people feel able to talk more openly about it, but that doesn't necessarily mean the adults in their lives who are best placed to help them are open and receptive to hearing.

We know how important it is to feel connected to friends and peers. Young people want to feel equipped to help their friends when they are struggling. They want safe spaces where they can be themselves, have fun and find informal support if needed.

Bullying has not gone away. We know we need to think about young people's online wellbeing and the link between sexuality and mental health. Those living in regional areas have a harder time accessing help or finding fun things to do.

These were quotes provided by young people:

- 'There isn't much help for LGBTIQ+ mental health.'
- 'Mental health and suicide should be treated with just as much seriousness as general first aid. Students should be taught about mental health and suicide prevention but so should parents.'

- ‘Towns are well equipped to respond to large scale incidents like bushfire relief but not for individual post-trauma support, especially for those affected by suicide.’
- ‘Bullying happens online and face-to-face.’
- ‘Don’t know how to help our friends with mental health issues.’

These are some statistics about mental health and wellbeing among young people:

- 88% of respondents to YACWA’s COVID-19 survey said they were concerned about their mental health.²¹
- Aboriginal students and those in regional and remote areas are more likely to have a strong sense of belonging in their community.²²
- 47% Almost half of young people in WA participate in volunteer work.²³

COVID-19

We are really worried about all the different ways the pandemic will impact on young people’s mental health and wellbeing, now and into the future. Isolating ourselves from our friends and support networks helped keep the virus at bay, but it wasn’t good for our state of mind. It became harder to get help – wait times blew out for seeing psychologists and counsellors and support services had to scale back due to social distancing requirements. And not having a secure place to live or a stable job makes everything so much harder to deal with. We are really worried all this might lead to more young people struggling with their mental health or losing hope.

What have we done?

- Launched the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Emergency Telehealth Service to support children and young people experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Provided almost \$14.5 million to government and non-government organisations for the provision of a range of mental health support services.
- Supported the Youth Partnership Project to deliver better outcomes for young people.
- Continued to fund counselling services such as Kids Helpline and Youth Focus for young people and their families.
- Provided almost \$1.7 million in funding to various youth counselling programs.
- Partnered with the Telethon Kids Institute to undertake the DETECT study in WA schools which includes a survey on student wellbeing.

What’s next

- Spend \$17.76 million to build new youth support and community centres across the State and continue to fund existing sites to help young people build life skills and participate in recreational activities.
- Invest \$300 million in sport and community infrastructure including grassroots clubs and community facilities across metro and regional areas.

- Support the establishment of the Nation's first LGBTIQ+ youth advocacy body to speak up for the rights of this vulnerable group
- Provide \$10 million in funding for Aboriginal youth wellbeing programs as part of the WA Recovery Plan.
- Build a new \$25 million 16-bed youth mental health and alcohol and other drug homelessness service.
- Release the Young People Priority Framework which will provide an overview of the current mental health services, identify gaps and make recommendations for key actions into the future.

A secure place to live

It is the right of every West Australian to have a stable place to call home. Before the pandemic, it was already hard to find an affordable place to rent. On top of that, young people can face discrimination from landlords due to their age when applying for rentals and are often passed over because of a lack of rental history.

Buying a house has become a pipe dream for many young people, or at least a dream that will take so much longer than it took older generations.

Of the people identifying as homeless, including those couch surfing in WA, more than 20 per cent are young people. The figure may be even higher for people who identify as LGBTIQ+. At the same time youth crisis accommodation is stretched to the limits and isn't always accommodating to gender diversity.

Young people face an uphill battle just to access what many people take for granted.

These are some statistics about housing issues experienced by young people:

- 55% of renters under 35 report experiencing discrimination of some kind when looking for a place to rent.²⁴
- 22% of trans and gender diverse youth have experienced accommodation issues and homelessness.²⁵
- The number of young people living with parents increased from 58% to 66% between 2003 to 2016.²⁶

These were quotes provided by young people:

- 'Housing costs in regional centres like Mandurah, Bunbury or Perth are too high for young people to afford.'
- 'Not having a rental history means many young people don't get a fair go.'

COVID-19

Since the pandemic there has been a drop in the number of rental homes available in Perth. This means young people looking for a rental are facing an even harder time than they were before.

Youth crisis accommodation is as stretched as it ever was. Travel restrictions and social distancing meant homelessness services were harder to reach, especially in regional areas. The economic fallout of COVID-19 is likely to see more people becoming homeless into the future. Public housing waitlists are longer because people are not moving out of them at the same rate as before.

It is more important than ever to prioritise the housing needs of our young people.

What have we done?

- Helped young people purchase their first home with 200 additional Keystart shared equity homes and extension of increased income limits, introduction of the Building Bonus and add housing stock by supporting new apartment projects in Bayswater and Maylands.
- Funded the Housing First Homelessness Initiative.
- Continued to fund supported accommodation for young people such as Foyer Oxford and Y-SHAC.
- Continued to deliver the Housing and Homelessness and Social Housing Economic Recovery Packages.

What will the WA Government do next?

- Build two Common Ground facilities and develop a Homelessness Services Database.
- Support young people to stay in rentals as WA exits the eviction moratorium by expanding the rental relief grants scheme.
- Support the establishment of a new LGBTIQ+ youth advocacy body who can speak up for the rights of LGBTIQ+ young people.
- Keep pursuing outcomes under the Government's "All paths lead to a home" strategy and the WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030.

Help when it is needed most

Asking for help is hard but finding it can be even harder. There are a lot of different youth support services out there, but it can be confusing trying to figure out what they all are and what is the right one for your situation. There is usually eligibility criteria to understand and other hoops to jump through – it can be daunting to pick up the phone. You might need to wait a long while for a spot to become available, sometimes there are costs involved, or long distances to travel. You might need to try more than one place to find the right fit.

For a young person in crisis it can be overwhelming and we need to make it easier to find help.

These are some statistics about young people accessing support services:

- Young adults were four times more likely to ask for help from government or non-government organisations during COVID.

- Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people report telephone hotlines as their top source of help whereas non-Aboriginal young people report friends as their top source of help.
- 71.4% of students know where to get mental health support in school, 63.0% know where to get support online, 51.5% said they know where to get support in their local area.

These were quotes provided by young people:

- We don't know about youth programs or where to find them. Services can be patronising or not take us seriously.²⁷
- While we do look for information online, we are more likely to ask our friends or use social media.²⁸
- Services need to be consistent to gain young people's trust. It is easy to "hit a wall" then stop trying to access a service.²⁹

COVID-19

With support services already stretched and hard to navigate, the pandemic only made things worse. Social distancing restrictions imposed by the government, whilst necessary to curb the virus, meant many youth services had to close temporarily or scale back. Many services adapted by moving online or by phone which suited some young people but also excluded others.

You might not have reliable access to a phone or internet - maybe because you live in a regional area without digital infrastructure or you simply can't afford it. This shouldn't mean you miss out on counselling or being able to book a doctor's appointment or sort out your Centrelink.

We need to make it easier for young people who are struggling to get the help they need when they need it.

What have we done?

- Funded the Youth Digital Inclusion Project to provide refurbished devices like smartphones, tablets and laptops with mobile data to vulnerable young people so they can connect to services.
- Funded the development of a live dashboard update on the Youth Services Directory to make it easier for young people to find up-to-date information on important services.
- Boosted funding by \$6.8 million for financial counselling services across the state, including support for more than 40 FTE jobs.

What will the government do next?

- Create a Digital Inclusion strategy in Western Australia: A Blueprint for a Digitally-Inclusive State.

- Provide funding for the new WACONNECT Data Exchange, WA's whole-of-sector community services directory.
- Launch the new One Stop Shop initiative for mental health support.

At a quick glance

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a crisis unlike anything we've experienced before, and it means young people are facing even bigger challenges to reaching their goals. The WA government is supporting a range of new and existing initiatives across the State to ensure the young people in WA have the help and opportunities they need to flourish, now and into the future.

What have we done?

A voice for young people

Gave young people a voice by establishing and funding avenues like the Youth Ministerial Roundtable, Youth Disability Advocacy Network, Empowered Youth Network and other programs.

Reaching your potential

Made education and training more accessible by offering fee free TAFE courses, reducing fees to a further 180 TAFE courses by 72 per cent and by delivering STEM campaigns and programs to increase inclusion.

Jobs

Focussed attention on getting young people jobs through initiatives such as pre-traineeships program pilot, Jobs and Skills Centres

Climate Change

Reduced our waste and created a plan to reduce net zero emissions for WA by 2050.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Launched an emergency mental health teleservice, continuing to fund critical services like the Kids Helpline and provided more than \$14 million to fund a range of mental health services.

A secure place to call home

Supported young people across the housing continuum with new homelessness facilities and access to home ownership through the Building Bonus, First Home Owners Grant and Shared Equity loans.

Help when it's needed most

Funded the provision of refurbished devices to vulnerable young people to keep them connected and funding live updates to the Youth Services Directory to make it easier to find out what services are available to young people.

What will the WA Government do next?

A voice for young people

Act on what we hear from young people, for example through funding the establishment of a new LGBTIQ+ advocacy body and providing Getting Employment Right grants to educate employers and empower young people.

Reaching your potential

Investing more than \$229 million in upgrades and new facilities for TAFEs, providing free short courses and maintaining lower fees for thousands of students.

Jobs

Creating new opportunities through investments in tourism, hospitality and agriculture, and supporting inclusion through initiatives like the Youth Workforce attraction project and NDIS training centre. Explore further opportunities to create more jobs and ensure young people get the training they need to get a job in WA.

Climate Change

The State Government is acting now to transition to a low carbon future that will also create new clean jobs and industries for young people and will continue to advocate for national action to reduce carbon pollution to deliver our international commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Over \$17 million to build new youth support and community centres, investing in young people's ongoing wellbeing through delivering \$300 million in sport and community infrastructure and \$266.7 million in Aboriginal youth. Delivering a mental health, alcohol and other drugs homelessness service.

A secure place to live

Support young people to maintain rental accommodation, and fund the LGBTIQ+ advocacy body that will speak up for the rights of young LGBTIQ+ people who may face housing discrimination.

Help when it's needed most

Funding \$6.8 million for financial counselling across WA, launching the new one-stop-shop initiative for mental health support and funding WACONnect, a whole of sector community services directory.

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Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Telephone: 13 14 50

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.

Endnotes

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