



Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) Voices

Youth Consultation Report 2021





Contents:

Introduction	4
Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT)	6
Who attended?	7
Exploring the Issues in Focus	8
Racism and Discrimination	9
Education and Training	10
Employment	11
Mental Health	12
Transport	14
Where to from here?	15

Website: www.myt.org.au

Email: youth@mrctas.org.au

Instagram: [@multiculturalyouth_tas](https://www.instagram.com/multiculturalyouth_tas)

Introduction

A state-wide multicultural youth consultation was held at the Moonah Arts Centre in Southern Tasmania on July 16, 2021. The event was coordinated by the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania's Multicultural Youth program.

The consultation brought together young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds living in northern and southern Tasmania. It presented a unique and valuable opportunity for young people to discuss the key issues they face settling and living in Tasmania.

A key objective of the consultation was to amplify the voices of multicultural youth. The participants provided recommendations that they wished to be shared with service providers, local and state governments.

The consultation was co-designed with the Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) Youth Advisory Group (YAG). The MYT YAG identified key issues and themes for the consultation and facilitated discussions with participants, supported by MYT Peer Workers and the youth work team.

Young people from across the state nominated prominent issues affecting multicultural youth at different stages of their life and settlement. The chosen issues explored were: mental health, employment, discrimination (racism), transport and education and training.





Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT)

Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) is a program of **Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas)**. MYT provides targeted services and projects to support young people aged up to 25 years from multicultural backgrounds to reach their full potential and thrive as active members of the Tasmanian community.

MYT services include direct client work and sector development, working with mainstream youth, education and community services to ensure that the needs of multicultural youth are being met within these services. Participation in MYT services and programs, which focus on sport and recreation, education, employment, and wellbeing, provide an opportunity for young people to develop a strong sense of belonging and resilience.

Multicultural Youth in Tasmania

Multicultural youth make up 25% of Australia's total youth population. Young people aged 12-24 comprise a significant proportion of humanitarian entrants into Australia. These youth contribute to the rich cultural diversity of Australia's population. During the 2019-2020 financial year, 3424 young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds settled in Australia, making up 30% of all humanitarian arrivals (MYAN, 2020).

These young people were aged between 12 - 24, with 49% high school age (12 - 17) and 51% aged 18 - 24.

In 2019/2020 two per cent of all youth arrivals to Australia were welcomed to Tasmania. In addition, 9474 young people aged 12-24 were granted a permanent or provisional visa to settle in Australia. Tasmania saw 134 of these young people settle in the state.

Why is it important to hear the voices of Multicultural Youth?

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds make up approximately 12% of Tasmania's youth population (DSS, 2021). Given that multicultural youth form a significant portion of the Tasmanian population, it is important to understand how these young people are faring in Tasmania. The active participation of multicultural youth fosters a sense of belonging and is an essential aspect of an equitable society. Their energy and commitment to effect positive change is an important cornerstone of MYT.

Diversity and multiculturalism is something to be celebrated in Tasmanian society. Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds not only enrich Australia's population, but also bring fresh ideas and promote greater understanding and awareness of the issues they face.



Who attended?

The MYT Consultation was attended by 64 young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds between the ages of 12-24 years old living in Launceston and Hobart. The consultation group included young people from over nine different countries (figure 2) who had settled in Tasmania between 1-20 years ago (figure 1). Young people were contacted and invited to attend the consultation via their high schools, colleges and through the MYT social media platforms, Instagram, and Facebook. This was done to ensure that the consultation was attended by young people who were already connected with MYT, as well as those who were not. Free buses from Launceston were provided to allow Launceston participants the opportunity to attend the day-long consultation in Hobart.



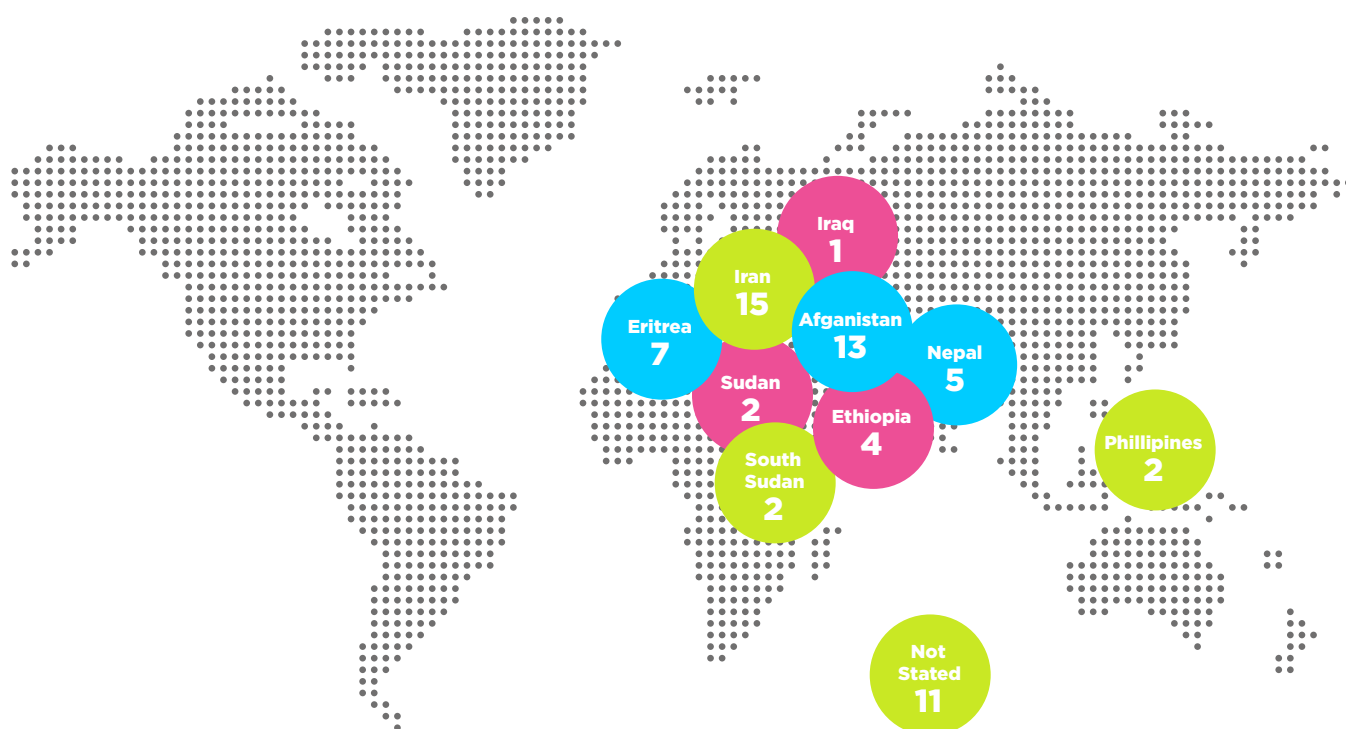
Length of time in Australia



No. of participants

15-20 years	<5
14-10 years	<10
5-10 year	<10
under 5 years	>30

Country of origin



Exploring the Issues in Focus

The five issues identified by the MYT YAG were mental health, employment, discrimination (racism), transport and education and training. Participants identified which issues they were most passionate about and were then assigned to discussion groups in these areas.

The five groups explored the impact of these respective issues and the barriers currently preventing positive change. Importantly, the groups also identified proposals and recommendations to improve the current situation for multicultural youth within each issue area.



Racism and Discrimination

Exploring the issue

Racism and discrimination were a strong theme throughout the consultation. In discussions, young people identified racism and discrimination as a recurrent issue intersecting with education and training, employment, mental health, and transport. They were able to articulate how instances of racism and discrimination affected their mental health, their access to education, employment options and their experiences using public transport.

While young people identified experiences of racism in all issues discussed on the day, accounts of racism and discrimination at school and/or college were discussed most frequently. For some, avoiding this treatment was a key factor in school disengagement and low attendance. Participants shared how experiences of racism at school, including persistent racist comments and derogatory nicknames, led to feelings of resentment towards their school and peers.

Participants also identified some of the more significant impacts that racism has on their wellbeing and sense of belonging, both at school and in the community. To young people, racism meant being treated differently and, therefore, could result in young people underestimating their own abilities. Youth articulated that authority figures may be dismissive when issues of racism are raised, pointing to a culture of avoidance that causes feelings of anxiety, isolation, and invalidation. When experiencing racism or bullying, young people may also have feelings of guilt if they are unable to 'stand up' to the perpetrator.

“Other students show bombing videos to each other and laugh at me.”

“They call you refugee, go back to your country.”

Recommendations

Addressing racism is a complex issue and requires a whole-community response. Young people attributed experiences of racism, particularly in schools, to a lack of education among their peers, teachers, and the broader community. Therefore, multicultural youth felt that more education and awareness around what racism is and the wide-reaching impact it has on young people would work to reduce racism in schools, colleges, TAFE and at work.

Following this, their key recommendations were:

- To offer anti-racism and anti-bias training to the broader community.
- To ensure school leadership and other authority figures show support and speak out against racism and discrimination.
- The inclusion of safe spaces for young people of colour within schools and colleges.
- To educate other students and teachers, and bring in mandatory cultural awareness and anti-racism training in schools. This includes primary school, high school, and college.



Education and Training

Exploring the issue

In this group, young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds discussed some of the major challenges they faced regarding education and training. Discussion focused on young people's experiences within Tasmania's high school and college system, as well as the Tasmanian Adult and Youth Migrant Education Program (AMEP).

Access to education beyond English language acquisition was a key challenge, and young people were concerned that they were not able to study a range of different subjects while they were learning English. They also noted a lack of language support at schools, including limited access to interpreters in cases of 'disciplinary action' and, for young people who were unable to attend AMEP classes, a lack of access to alternative English Language support.

Experiences of racism and discrimination while at school and college were a key concern. This included stereotyping and inadequate responses to racially motivated bullying. Youth also identified a lack of cultural awareness in schools and among teachers.

"I felt speechless without an interpreter – I tried sign language"

"Schools do not listen to you when there is a fight. They usually pick the other side to the story."

"If you don't fit it to the AMEP system, you don't get to learn."



Recommendations

Young people in the education and training discussion group identified clear recommendations for improving the issues highlighted above. These were:

- Ensuring instances of racism, discrimination and stereotyping are more adequately addressed. This includes cultural awareness and anti-racism training for students and teachers at schools. Youth also recommended improved responses to incidents of racism in schools.
- Youth also advocated for improvements in the support offered by schools. This includes an extension of English as an Additional Language (EAL) support so students can gain higher levels of confidence and ability. Increased language support for all school subjects while learning English was also recommended. For young adults aged over 18 who have experienced a disrupted high school education, it was recommended that a range of adult learning classes be offered to provide a chance to catch up on lost education opportunities. Youth also recommended more support for 'first language' classes to prevent young people from losing their first language.

Employment

Exploring the Issue

Employment was discussed in the context of access to opportunities, the experience of recruitment processes, as well as experiences looking for work in both Hobart and Launceston. Access to employment opportunities was a key issue for young people who were concerned about their future job security. Cultural and language barriers were central to these discussions around securing a job. In particular, a lack of knowledge and understanding of recruitment was a concern, as well as the discrimination faced by young people from diverse backgrounds. Instances of discrimination were experienced both on the job and in recruitment processes.

A lack of social capital and knowledge also posed a challenge to job seekers. Young people identified that limited connections in the industry they wanted to work in made finding meaningful employment difficult. Many had little or no experience in applying for jobs, and were unaware of how to write a resume/CV or a cover letter. Young people highlighted that there were often high expenses associated with obtaining a driver license, though a license was often required to get a job.

Multicultural youth also called attention to the impact a lack of employment had on their social and emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, and self-worth. Without access to employment:

- Life feels harder.
- Youth feel hopeless and feel a need to move to the mainland.
- Youth downplay their potential and are told to take the lowest-paid jobs.
- There are feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- There is an increased risk of depression and anxiety/hopelessness.

“If you can’t find a job, it gets hard, and you have to move to the mainland”

Recommendations

Overall, multicultural youth felt they had a lot to offer but were overlooked or underestimated by employers. They identified a range of recommendations to address barriers to employment:

- A major recommendation was around reducing workplace discrimination and racism. This includes anti-racism and discrimination education for employers and employees. Clear anti-discrimination policies should be present in the workplace.
- Youth also identified the need for greater awareness around work rights to address inappropriate behaviour and to ensure equal treatment and more fairness in recruitment processes.
- Education, both for employers and multicultural youth, was a significant point. Youth suggested that employment workshops and more peer support networks should be made available, and there should be improved access to training for work while multicultural youth are still learning English. Youth also suggests that education be provided to employers on the benefits of hiring young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. This would help to overcome workplace discrimination.

Mental Health

Exploring the Issue

Mental health was a significant concern for young people from migrant and refugee communities. In this discussion group, youth identified the causes of youth mental health issues as well as barriers inhibiting access to support. In particular, a lack of employment and education opportunities contributed to mental health issues, generating feelings of isolation, loneliness, a sense of grief and a loss of identity. Multicultural youth also identified that social isolation and lack of a sense of belonging increased their risk of mental health issues. Mental health issues contributed to self-harm and suicide attempts in their communities.

Multicultural youth highlighted that language and cultural barriers to accessing mental health support could lead to a reluctance to engage with health care workers and could have an adverse influence on how migrant and refugee communities reported their symptoms. In addition, healthcare workers from General Practitioners (GP's) to mainstream mental health services were often unaware of how to work with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Youth also reported a lack of diversity in mental health services and there were concerns about the difficulty in seeing a practitioner from a similar or the same cultural background.

Multicultural youth identified additional barriers to help-seeking in relation to stigma around mental health due to low levels of mental health literacy in their own communities. These included; not knowing where to get support, fears of being judged, and not being able to talk about their mental health issues in front of their family and friends. Past trauma experiences and a lack of validation were also discussed.

Importantly, young people also identified that settlement issues and living in between two cultures could have an impact on mental health when navigating:

- Gender roles.
- Intergenerational conflict.
- Mental health stigma.
- Family conflicts.
- Parents with high expectations, causing pressure and anxiety.

- Romantic relationship
- Self-harm.

“Our communities tend to ‘bottle up’ feeling issues or problems.”

“When I get racism, I don’t feel like going to school”

Recommendations

To help overcome these barriers, young people made a series of recommendations. They identified two areas where recommendations could be implemented: sector and community.





Sector recommendations

Sector recommendations had a focus on greater cultural awareness training, diversity within mainstream mental health services, including GP's and increased access to resources. This included:

- Mandated cultural awareness and trauma training for all health care staff, including training on how to use phone interpreters. They recommended healthcare practitioners be encouraged to use a more conversational approach when assisting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- Greater awareness and recognition of somatic symptoms related to trauma.
- Youth also identified a need for parent workshops around youth mental health. Suggestions were made for in-language communication and resources about mental health and available support. Greater diversity in mental health care workers was also recommended.

Community recommendations

Recommendations for the community focused on the support that could be offered to young people from diverse backgrounds who may be experiencing a mental health issue. It was recommended that the community let young people know that help is available and actively show their support.

Young people also identified the importance of encouraging more people to seek support for their mental health through referrals to healthcare practitioners.

Transport

Exploring the Issue

Transport was a multifaceted issue and discussions focused on both the barriers to transport access, as well as their experiences whilst using transport.

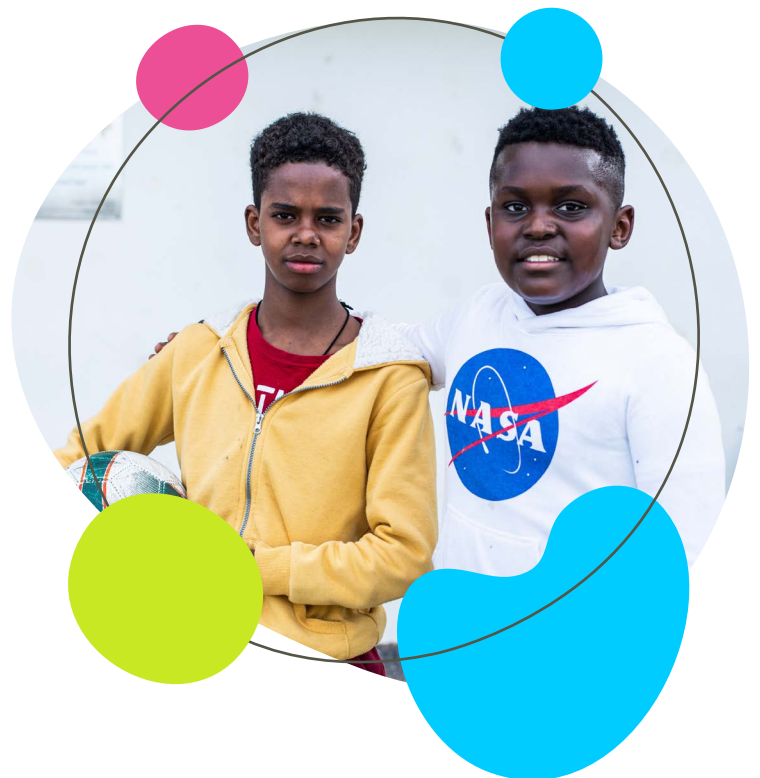
Barriers to accessing public transport included cost, inaccessible and hard-to-read timetables, and a lack of late-night transport services. In particular, limited public transport options was seen to be a key challenge impacting multicultural youth in Tasmania. The lack of public transport options and the long, often expensive process to obtain a driver's license were identified as contributing factors to social isolation and a lack of employment.

Safety while on public transport, primarily buses, was another concern. Multicultural youth also experienced racism and discrimination while using public transport.

“I had to sleep in the restaurant
(I work in) because there are no late buses”

Recommendations

Key recommendations were made around the availability of buses and cheaper transport options. To reduce instances of racism and discrimination, youth recommended education be provided to all workers and drivers, including on the importance of equity of access. It was also recommended an improved response to complaints of inappropriate behaviour. Greater diversity in drivers was also suggested.



Where to from here?



MYT and the YAG will use this report as an advocacy tool to improve the settlement outcomes of multicultural youth in Tasmania. The report will ensure their voices and recommendations are used to enact positive change. The YAG will work with MYAN Australia and MYT to share this report with government and non-government agencies to inform policy and service design.

The report will also guide and inform the development of new programs at MYT and MRC Tas. MYT will continue to work with the YAG and Peer Workers to ensure the voices of multicultural youth remain central to the MTY program and are amplified in all future programs and advocacy.



ABN: 63 028 115 942

reception@mrctas.org.au | www.mrctas.org.au

Hobart: Level 2, 1A Anfield Street,
Glenorchy TAS 7010 | 03 6221 0999

Launceston: 27 Paterson Street,
Launceston TAS 7250 | 03 6724 2820

Postal: PO Box 259 Glenorchy TAS 7010