

**Wyndham District Youth Forums 2019***Compiled by Wyndham Youth Services*



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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In March and April 2019, Youth Services conducted four Youth Forums in Wyndham East, Wyndham Central, and Wyndham West districts, with an additional forum for 18-25 year old young people. Across the four forums 154 young people from 16 local secondary schools, alternative education providers, and from the general community came together to participate in a range of workshops lead by Youth Services staff and young people from Youth Services volunteer committees. The aim of the Youth Forums is to empower young people to express their views on key issues that impact them. The information collected will be used to shape and improve services, programs, activities and facilities for young people in Wyndham.

Forum participants could rank 12 themes in order of importance to them as individuals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Misrepresentation of Young People in the Media * Pitfalls of Online Gaming * School Disengagement * Gender in the 21st Century * What Unhealthy Relationships look like | * Your Neighbourhood and Community * Body Image * Young People and the Law * Pitfalls of Insta and Snapchat * Anger and Emotions * Volunteering * Social Media and Trolling |

Body Image ranked as the most important theme for young people in 2019 across all three districts, and the forum workshops were subsequently designed to ensure that all young people could participate in the Body Image discussion.

*Wyndham – All Districts*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Most important themes** | |
| 1 | Body Image |
| 2 | Unhealthy Relationships |
| 3 | Social Media and Trolling |
| 4 | Misrepresentation of Young People in the Media |
| 5 | Anger and Emotions |
| 6 | Gender in the 21st Century |
| 7 | Your Neighbourhood and Community |

Further breakdown of these issues by the three districts revealed some differences.

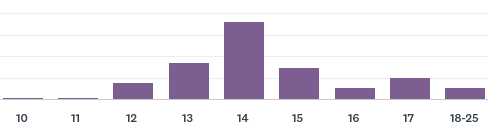
* Body Image rated as the number 1 theme across all three districts and ranked high on the list of issues in schools.
* The Wyndham Central district rated the lowest with concerns of anger and emotions, compared to the other districts.
* The Wyndham East district rated the highest with misrepresentation of young people in the media, while your neighbourhood and community was perceived to be less of an issue compared to other districts.
* The Wyndham West district equally rated the highest with misrepresentation of young people in the media, and unhealthy relationships, while social media and trolling rated as a low concern.

**INTRODUCTION**

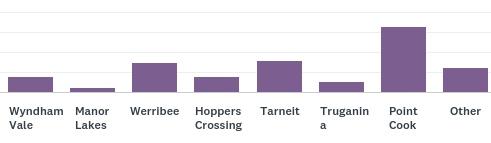
In alignment with [Wyndham City Council’s 2040 Vision](https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/about-council/your-council/plans-policies-strategies/wyndham-2040), the Youth Forum initiative is modelled on the same locally-focused, strengths-based and community-driven approach. As such, in March 2019 a youth forum was held in each of the districts of Wyndham East (Point Cook, William’s Landing, Truganina, Laverton North), Wyndham Central (Hoppers Crossing, Tarneit), and Wyndham West (Werribee, Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes), with an additional forum for 18-25 year old young people.

In total, 154 young people from 16 local secondary schools, alternative education providers, and from the general community attended the youth forums. As per the graphs below, participants ranged from 10 to 25 years old, with majority of participants from year 9 or middle years, representing all suburbs of Wyndham.

*Participants by age*



*Participant’s suburb of residence*



The forums enabled young people to provide feedback on key issues that directly impact them, and empowered young people as active citizens in their communities. The information collected will be used to inform the planning of services, programs, activities and facilities for young people in Wyndham.

This report shares the concerns and ideas generated by the young people at the forums with local government providers, support service agencies, community partners, schools, Wyndham’s residents and other young people.

**FORUM DESIGN**

To determine the best format for the forums and the design of topic workshops, we understood the need to have the voices of young people front and centre at each forum, paired with a format that could be replicated across all districts. This also required us to consider the need to include the 2040 Vision and how the Youth Forums fit into council planning, accurately record the ideas and opinions of participants, and the need to give each participant the opportunity to express their views on a range of relevant youth issues.

In planning the district youth forums, all secondary schools in Wyndham were invited to select students to attend. Each participant was asked to complete a survey upon registration, which asked them to rate the importance of 12 themes, identify the biggest issues in their school and suburb, and to share one thing they would change about the community. The results of this survey are reported on page 6, under *Themes That Concerned Young People*.

The format of each forum consisted of students being divided up into small groups where they focused on various community and welfare topics. The survey themes and workshop topics were chosen based on:

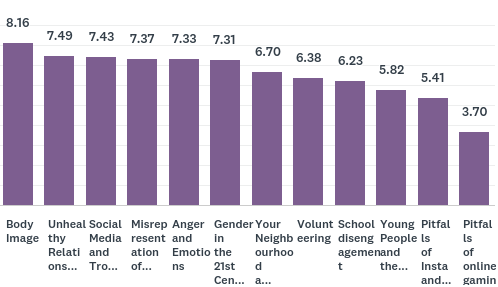
* The common themes identified from forums in previous years
* New and emerging themes reported by Wyndham’s Youth Services staff
* The rating and importance placed on topics as collected through registration form surveys in 2018
* Their alignment with the four themes of the Wyndham 2040 vision, being:
  + People and Community
  + Places and Spaces
  + Earning and Learning
  + Leadership and Participation

At the conclusion of the forums, participants completed a reflection activity on what they had learned from the forum, re-iterate changes they could make, and general forum feedback (see pages 7-8), as well as an evaluation (see pages 7-8).

**THEMES THAT CONCERNED YOUNG PEOPLE**

Participants were asked to rate 12 themes in order of their importance and relevance to the young person. Across Wyndham the highest rated theme was Body Image, followed by Unhealthy Relationships, Social Media and Trolling, Misrepresentation of Young People in the Media, Anger and Emotions, Gender in the 21st Century, and Your Neighbourhood and Community (see table below).

*Rating of importance of themes (all districts)*



Participants were asked what they perceived to be the biggest issue at their school and in their suburb. These were open-ended questions enabling participants to write any answer. Upon analysis, answers were placed into 11 general categories for each question (see tables below). Across all districts the top three concerns that participants had about their school were bullying, their relationship with their school, and concern about school facilities. The top three concerns that participants had about their suburb were crime, safety, and discrimination.

*What is the biggest issue at your school? (All districts)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **EXAMPLES** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Bullying | Bullying, rumours, verbal and physical fighting, judgemental peers, cyberbullying, gossiping, trolling on social media | 47% |
| Relationship with school | Misrepresentation of capabilities of genders, lack of encouragement and help from school, school disengagement, quality of curriculum, poor teacher and student communication, lack of sex education | 21% |
| Facilities in school | Lack of UV protection / shaded areas, old facilities, outdated sporting facilities, extreme internet restrictions, lack of recycling facilities, littering, lack of air conditioners, lack of space, distance and location of school | 13% |
| Discrimination | Racism, unfair treatment of students in schools, lack of awareness and tolerance of cultures, racist jokes, student voices are undervalued | 11% |
| Mental health | Unhealthy relationships, friendship problems, students lacking confidence, anger, peer pressure and body image, judgement causing anxiety, stress from school expectations and homework | 8% |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **EXAMPLES** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Crime | Drugs, breaking and entering, bashings, theft | 33% |
| Safety | Gangs, hooning, lack of police presence, feeling unsafe to go out alone, drunk people, overcrowded schools, going out at night | 19% |
| Discrimination | Discrimination against young people in the media, misrepresentation of young people in the media, racism in the community, homeless people being discriminated | 17% |
| Transport | Congested roads, poor public transport options | 15% |
| Connection to community | Lack of belonging, no sense of community | 8% |
| Vandalism and littering | Graffiti, littering, rubbish | 8% |

*What is the biggest issue in your suburb? (All districts)*

Participants were given the opportunity to share one thing they would change about their school or local community. Responses have been recorded for each of the districts, on pages 9-14.

Some of the results from the reflection activity conducted at the end of each forum are as follows:

*Today I learned...*

* “the issues happening in the community right now are more significant than we think”
* “we are all affected by social media and unhealthy relationships”
* “to see things from a different perspective and to listen to the ideas and opinions of others my age”
* “about some of the inequalities faced by people of different school communities”
* “how to manage aggression and emotions”
* “about inequalities faced by people of different school communities”
* “there are so many things we can all work on together”
* “about different perspectives from a range of people and how I can consider them when wanting to improve my school and community”
* “that other students from other schools share the same issues and beliefs regarding the topics we discussed”
* “that there are so many ways that I can connect with my community”
* “that Wyndham City does care about youth and they listen to what we have to say”
* “there are a lot of issues prevalent in my community, and while they may not affect me directly, I still have the responsibility to engage in discussing them and to contribute to positive change”

*In the future I hope that...*

* “young people will be portrayed in a more positive light”
* “young people will be recognised for the good that they contribute to the community”
* “body image will not be such a negative issue in our lives”
* “we become more accepting of ourselves and the people around us, and I hope that we learn to love one another”
* “today’s issues will be addressed and acted upon in order to create a better community”
* “everyone can be treated equally at school, and all students are welcoming”
* “society’s ideal body type will be eliminated”

*One thing I can do to improve my school or community is...*

* “make small changes to my everyday behaviour and to compliment people more, because I now know that my peers do not feel like they are ever complimented”
* “to help in creating a less judgemental environment”
* “I can definitely be more inclusive of different cultures”
* “make sure that everyone feels comfortable in expressing their feelings and opinions”
* “I can help my peers who might be feeling left out or excluded”
* “I can spread positivity and help out more by looking out for my peers, and I can reject negativity”
* “my school can be educated in new areas, such as gender, sexuality, race and religion”
* “I can suggest to my school that we have a break out area for students to freely open up about their emotions and feelings”
* “we can stick up for people who are getting bullied a be an up-stander instead of a bystander”
* “we can talk to teachers about unisex toilets”
* “respect everyone as we are all humans, and everyone can be encouraged instead of put down”
* “I can help make sure that all genders feel like they can trust me so that they feel safe and comfortable”

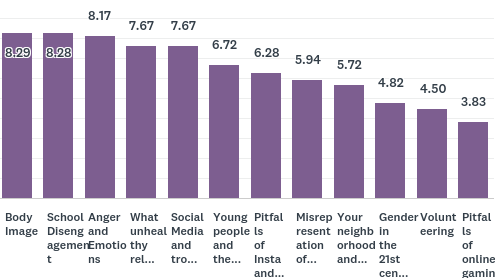
*Other Youth Forum feedback...*

* “thank you for listening to our ideas, I’m excited about seeing changes from our ideas!”
* “we all got a chance to speak our minds today, free of judgement”
* “it would be a great idea to allow students to make up some of the questions”
* “I found this forum to be a great way to encourage discussion in a diverse group of students, good job and thank you to Youth Services!”
* “thank you for listening, I feel that we have all been heard”
* “I really hope that the community applies what we have discussed today”
* “thank you so much for today, it was an honour being able to give my opinion”

**REPORT BY LOCATION**

**FORUM 1: WYNDHAM CENTRAL (Hoppers Crossing, Tarneit)**

*Themes rated by importance*



*What is the biggest issue in your school?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Bullying | 34% |
| School Disengagement | 27% |
| Discrimination | 25% |
| School Facilities | 9% |
| Racism | 1% |
| Gender Inequality | 1% |
| Body Image | 1% |
| Unhealthy Relationships | 1% |
| Social Media and trolling | 1% |

*What is the biggest issue in your suburb?*

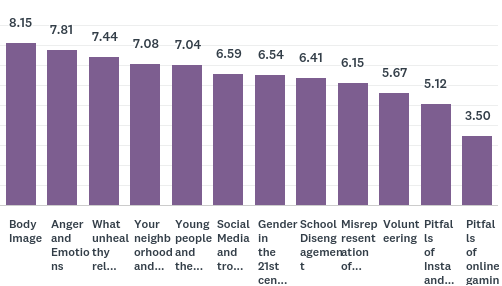
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| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Crime | 41% |
| Roads and Traffic | 23% |
| Gangs | 18% |
| Sense of community | 12% |
| Misrepresentation of CALD young people in the media | 6% |

*If you could change one thing about your school or community, what would it be?*

* “bullying and those that get away with it”
* “the way bullying is policed both in my school and in the community”
* “to encourage all genders to work together instead of separating them all the time in schools”
* “for my school to be better at being inclusive for all students”
* “to encourage people to put aside their differences so we can all get along and not fight or bully one another”

**FORUM 2: WYNDHAM EAST (Point Cook, Truganina, William’s Landing, Laverton North)**

*Themes rated by importance*



*What is the biggest issue in your school?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Transport, traffic to and from school | 45% |
| Bullying | 25% |
| Lack of inclusiveness | 21% |
| Safety | 2% |
| Lack of festivals and community events | 2% |
| Discrimination | 2% |
| Homelessness | 1% |
| No area for students to break out | 1% |
| Lack of sporting opportunities | 1% |

*What is the biggest issue in your suburb?*

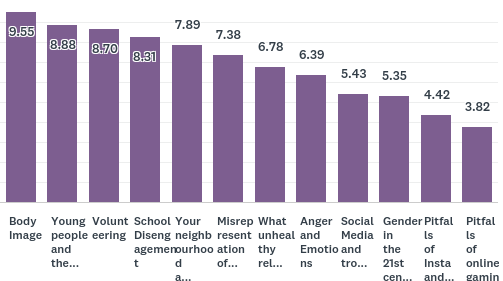
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Roads and Traffic | 40% |
| Crime | 25% |
| Sense of Community | 15% |
| Litter (including drug and alcohol paraphernalia and dog faeces) | 11% |
| Safety | 5% |
| Lack of police presence | 1% |
| Overcrowding in schools | 1% |
| Homelessness | 1% |
| Bullying | 1% |

*If you could change one thing about your school or community, what would it be?*

* “I would want to change the amount of bullying and cyberbullying in my school and other schools in my community”
* “I would like to change the way ‘snitches’ are treated at my school; people do stand up to bullies and tell on them, but then what happens to the snitch makes it not worth it”
* “I would love my school to have a teacher-free, student-only area for us to be able to relax and feel comfortable”
* “we all need to become more involved in our community and get to know one another better”

**FORUM 3: WYNDHAM WEST (Werribee, Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes)**

*Themes rated by importance*



*What is the biggest issue in your school?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Bullying | 35% |
| Lack of encouragement | 23% |
| Disengagement | 12% |
| Littering | 12% |
| School Facilities | 9% |
| Racism | 6% |
| Mental Health | 3% |

*What is the biggest issue in your suburb?*

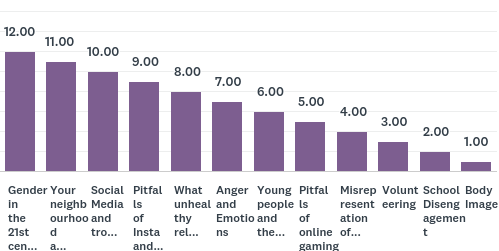
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **% OF RESPONSES** |
| Crime (including drug use) | 44% |
| Littering | 24% |
| Public transportation and Roads | 14% |
| Young people and the law | 9% |
| Community Facilities | 3% |
| Safety | 3% |
| Racism | 3% |

*If you could change one thing about your school or community, what would it be?*

* “for police to be fair and understanding with young people, and to be able to bond and build relationships with them”
* “to treat people equally and forget about bullying, racism and discrimination”
* “for the community to become closer with more regular community activities”
* “for our local area and environment to be clean, neat and tidy”
* “to have stricter rubbish disposal rules and for them to be enforced”

**FORUM 4: 18-25 (Wyndham-wide)**

*Themes rated by importance*



*If you could change one thing about your school or community, what would it be?*

* “for people who are more advantaged to use their power to be more responsible and help others in their community”
* “support and love others in my community”
* “to raise awareness about employment seeking and diversity”
* “I am now looking to join a volunteering service so I can help in improving my community”
* “listen to all people in the community”

*In the future I hope that…*

* “young people with disabilities are given equal opportunities”
* “people become more inclusive and diplomatic”
* “more young people gain the courage to be more open about talking about our issues and having our voices heard”
* “places of employment start respecting young people and stop underpaying them”

For additional information collected at this forum, see page 22.

Note: pre-forum registration forms were not completed by the 18-25 cohort.

**REPORT BY TOPIC**

**BODY IMAGE**

Body Image was the most important theme that emerged from the three districts and was run as a workshop for all students to participate in at all forums. The young people identified that body image is an aspect that affected multiple areas of their lives.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *What do you think of when you think of ‘body image’?* | |
| * Physical appearance * Comparing oneself * Media / Instagram / magazines * Being self-conscious / insecurities / self doubt * What other people make you think about yourself * Expectations of how to look * Pressure from family and friends | * What your culture expects * People not liking themselves * Fat-shaming * Eating disorders * Sports * Expectations of males to be muscular * Stereotypes for females |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *What areas of your life is body image an issue?* | |
| * Social media * Culture * Family * School * Instagram * Shopping | * Photos * Dancing * Sports * When wearing clothes * Going to the beach * When participating in hobbies |

*How can you feel more positive about body image?*

* Focus on your strengths and love yourself
* Talk to someone about what you’re going through
* Remind yourself that being different is ok
* Use encouragement with your friends and peers and give compliments
* Don’t focus on others; focus on yourself
* Take a break from people who put you down
* Surround yourself with encouraging people

*How can you and your peers empower others about body image?*

* Reassure friends of their qualities
* Voice positive comments instead of just thinking them
* Stand up for peers and confront bullies
* We can all learn about why people are different and develop a better awareness
* Check in with friends and peers more regularly to see how they’re going
* Encourage peers to be themselves and celebrate them when they have the courage to do so

*How can we change body image expectations?*

* Start using hashtags ‘#photoshopped’ or ‘#filterapplied’ so others know the image has been altered
* Start posting more unedited photos of real life and celebrate one another’s posts
* Show a wide variety of shapes and sizes on TV and social media
* Focus on body health instead of body image
* Celebrate how we are all unique
* Be kinder, smile at strangers, bring up those around us so we all feel better about ourselves

**ANGER AND EMOTIONS**

There were three key topics that were identified as causing disengagement among young people: school, mental health, and relationships. For each of these topics, young people broke down the causes of the issues, and suggested how they could be addressed.

*Emotions commonly felt by young people*

* Anger
* Anxiety
* Stress
* Insecurity
* Fear
* Depression
* Nervousness
* Embarrassment
* Lethargy

*How do you currently deal with your emotions when you feel like this?*

* Bottle up my emotions because I don’t know what else to do
* I sometimes react physically
* Overthinking which usually leads to panic attacks
* I worry that if I talk to someone about the way I’m feeling that they won’t want to listen
* I self harm, and I know a lot of my peers do too
* I often turn something small into something much bigger

*How you could deal with your anger or emotions better in future?*

* Seek support from friends
* Find a creative outlet
* Remove myself from the situation or person
* Learn how to ‘cool down’
* Do something that makes me happy
* Cry it out
* Find someone I trust to talk to
* Do something physical to shake it off eg. go for a walk

*Suggestions were collected from students for specific ways to cope when they are feeling angry or overwhelmed. These suggestions included:*

* Run / exercise
* Walk out of the room
* Cry
* Stomp your feet
* Boxing class
* Call someone
* Think of your friends
* Forgive and forget
* Use a diary
* Sing
* Eat healthy food
* Rethink the situation
* Have access to more counselling and support

**YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY**

When discussing this topic, it was apparent that young people could not easily distinguish between their neighbourhood and their community.

*What does neighbourhood mean to you?*

* The place where I live
* A happy and clean environment
* Streets near you
* A place where everyone gets along
* Your suburb
* Somewhere you grow up in

*How do you engage with people in your neighbourhood?*

* Activities at the local park
* Going to friend’s houses
* Waving and smiling to others
* Introducing yourself if you’re new to the area
* Asking to pass ball back over fence
* Joining local groups (eg. Sports)
* Garage sales
* Bin days

*Are there barriers to engaging with people in your neighbourhood?*

* Not sharing the same religion
* Anti-social behaviour
* Perception of safety
* Being shy or too nervous to interact
* Feeling scared of an unfamiliar face
* Afraid of people’s reactions and behaviours

*What does community mean to you?*

* Friends and family
* Plazas and shopping centres
* Community centres
* Multicultural events and gatherings
* Stadiums and sporting facilities
* Your estate

*How can you engage better with your neighbourhood and community?*

* Go outdoors more often
* Be more welcoming
* Get out of our comfort zones
* Help clean up our local environment
* Attend community gatherings
* Share our experiences with others
* Start volunteering
* Attend community services offered to young people
* Start pot luck dinners with neighbours
* Join a book club

*How can you be better supported in your neighbourhood and community?*

* Parks dedicated to youth and not just kids
* More bus stops
* More events at places other than community centres
* Better lighting in public in the evening
* Provide more activities
* Advertise gatherings more widely
* Help to conquer social anxiety

**WHAT DO UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS LOOK LIKE**

Young people were able to clearly articulate differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships and were confident in recognising more discreet forms of unhealthy relationships.

*What are signs of a healthy relationship?*

* Trust
* Communication
* Support
* Honesty
* Loyalty
* Reliability
* Listening
* Compromising
* Encouragement
* Privacy
* Forgiveness

*What are signs of an unhealthy relationship?*

* Poor communication
* Anger
* Abuse
* Fighting
* Sadness
* Manipulation
* Judgement
* Aggression
* Controlling
* Self-harm
* Obsessive behaviour
* Teasing
* Catfishing
* Pressuring
* Clinginess
* Inconsistency
* Neglect

*What are invisible/hard to detect forms of unhealthy relationships?*

* Private arguments
* Verbal abuse
* Entitlement
* Depression
* Anxiety
* Being overprotective
* Clinginess
* Controlling behaviour

*How might we be able to tell if a friend is in an unhealthy relationship?*

Young people were able to clearly list obscure changes in behaviour that might indicate that their peers are in unhealthy relationships, including changes to speech, mood, school grades dropping, moodiness, being distant, not wanting to discuss the relationship and ‘not being themselves’.

*What can we do for our friends if they are in an unhealthy relationship?*

* Talk to them
* Offer to help them
* Help them find solutions
* Encourage communication
* Report the person for abuse
* Speak to families/siblings involved

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND TROLLING**

Young people had a lot to contribute to the topic of social media and trolling, adding revenge porn to the topic as a current issue that is affecting them in their schools. Over 80% of young people disclosed that they had experienced their private information being shared online without their consent, including photos and videos.

*What forms of social media do you currently use?*

* Instagram
* Snapchat
* Facebook
* Twitter
* Youtube
* Reddit
* Instant Messenger
* Discord

*What experiences have you had with trolling?*

* Making fake accounts and tricking people
* Catfishing
* Annoying people online because you’re safe behind a screen
* Private information being spread online
* Hate / mean messages
* Name calling

*What do you think an online troll wants?*

* To get attention
* To obtain information about someone
* To make the victim feel hurt
* To put the victim down
* To make the victim scared of them
* To bring others down to make themselves feel better

*Revenge Porn and Catfishing*

The topic of revenge porn came up in all four forums. Young people reported that it included the non-consensual sharing of; screenshots depicting sexting, sexual images, and videos of sexual acts. Young people also reported that they had regularly experienced catfishing that then lead to revenge porn. For example, a student may start sexting a victim to get them to respond, and then the perpetrator screenshots and shares the sexting online. Young people disclosed that they are constantly fearful of who is being legitimate and can be trusted, and who may possibly be catfishing to expose them.

*How can you protect your personal information and photos from being shared online without your consent?*

* Keep your accounts private; don’t share passwords and login details
* Don’t post things that you don’t want shared

*If your information has been shared online without your consent, what can you do?*

Most of the young people were unaware of how the law can support them in the event that online trolling, catfishing or revenge porn happens to them. Some young people suggested that all they could do would be to ignore it or pretend it isn’t hurting them or affecting them, which clearly shows a gap in terms of how young people are supported with their online accounts. A select few young people knew that people can be reported to social media platforms, schools, and police if the information sharing is serious enough.

**MISREPRESENTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA**

Young people were passionate about how they were poorly represented in the media, and the entire age span from 12 through to 25 felt that they were affected by this misrepresentation.

*What do you think when you hear stories about young people in the media?*

* That they are reported as generalisation
* The media stereotyped young people
* That they were almost always negative stories
* That they are an exaggeration

*How do you think the media makes adults feel when they see reports of young people?*

* Worried
* Unsafe
* Distrustful of their community
* Paranoid
* Scared
* Over protective
* Angry
* Disgusted
* Arrogant towards young people

*How do these stories make you feel?*

Young people said that they felt like they were ‘lumped in together’ with a few young people in the community who were doing the wrong thing. They said that these negative stories affected their relationships with adults in their personal lives and the wider community, including their teachers.

*What news stories would you like to see reported on about young people?*

* Achievements
* Volunteering stories
* Helping the community
* Positive changes to the community
* Young people as news reporters
* Young people on discussion panels

*What are positive things that young people do in Wyndham?*

Young people listed many protests that they have participated in, including Women’s Rights, Equal Rights, Climate Change and Same Sex Marriage laws. They said that participating in these protests should be shown as positive, as they are trying to improve our community and country, but instead the media frequently focussed on a small handful of protestors who were violent or abusive.

* Help their friends
* Respect younger year levels
* Fundraisers
* Dog walking
* Collecting rubbish
* Donating clothes

*How can we encourage more unbiased reporting in the media?*

* Change the way reporting currently takes place, by involving youth reporters and youth writers.
* Do more good things in the community
* Use social media to assist in reporting both sides
* Contact local radio shows and local newspapers for good news articles

**YOUNG PEOPLE AND GENDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

*What is gender equality?*

* When all genders are treated the same
* Same pay
* No discrimination
* Respects
* Equal marriage laws
* Equal playing field for all

*Has your school changed rules regarding gender?*

* Uniform; girls will soon be allowed to wear pants
* School camps; males and female camps were normally segregated and were now going to be combined
* Several unisex toilets had been introduced

*What gender inequality exists at your school?*

* Even though both genders can wear pants as part of the school uniform, the pants are different colours for males and females, so there is still a distinction and a definite choice that must be made
* Female uniform is more costly and has more rules associated with it regarding how it may be worn
* School tests and exams still require students to select out of ‘male’ and ‘female’
* Females are preferred by teachers, and males are seen as ‘disruptive’, even when they’re not doing anything
* Males miss out on opportunities at school as teachers can sometimes see them as ‘trouble makers’
* Elective subject options are specific to gender; eg for sport elective, males are offered basketball and females are offered netball
* Males at schools are expected to do heavy lifting and physical work
* Language at schools is still very gendered; eg ‘don’t hit her, she’s a girl’ or ‘can I have two boys to help me lift this?’
* Females are pushed to do certain subjects and are not actively encouraged in sports or sciences
* All attendees agreed that male students at their schools were left behind academically due to gender inequality

*What can your school do to improve gender equality?*

* Unisex toilets
* Unisex uniforms
* Freedom to choose uniform
* More education for teachers and peers
* Less gendered language

*How can we ensure that students feel safe with their choice of uniform or toilet?*

* Continue to work on reducing bullying
* Offer support groups in schools
* Offer education on gender, respect and equality
* Ensure that all teachers are on board with changes
* Get rid of gender completely from schools so that it’s no longer an issue
* Incorporate education about gender in school’s curriculum
* Offer programs for parents and guardians to educate them on gender

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM 18-25 FORUM**

At the 18-25 forum, participants were given the option to discuss topics in addition to the 7 pre-determined topics. Two topics were added; environment and global warming, and employment.

*ENVIRONMENT AND GLOBAL WARMING*

* Encourage schools and universities to adopt environmentally friendly options in their canteens and cafés, such as biodegradable containers, straws and utensils
* Young people should encourage their community to use compost bins instead of placing food scraps in landfill. Participants expressed that they felt these should be provided by Wyndham City, as other councils offer residents compost bins and worm farms
* Recycling stations should be offered at all community centres, libraries and public places
* The community should be educated on how to recycle properly, as additional recycling options should be offered to residents

*EMPLOYMENT*

* Young people with disabilities face multiple barriers when trying to find suitable employment
* Local employment in Wyndham is still strongly based on appearance, and young people with piercings, tattoos, of a certain race, gender or religion find it difficult to find suitable employment

**HOW THE FINDINGS WILL BE USED**

The information and feedback recorded from the District Youth Forums will be distributed and used in accordance with the following process:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Youth Forum Findings Report |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Distributed to:   * Wyndham Council departments * Community support agencies * Education providers * Professional networks |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Youth Forum findings feed into:   * Service planning and delivery * Programs and events * Wyndham Youth Plan * Life Course Framework |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Youth Committees run by Wyndham Youth Services   * Youth Task Force * Wyndham East Prime Force Leadership Committee * Wyndham West Youth Committee * Friday Night Events Committee * FReeZA Paradox Committee   To develop community projects and events in response to feedback |  | Professional networks and working groups:   * Senior Youth Alliance * Youth Mental Health Service Network * Wyndham Workers with Young People Network * Learning City Portfolio |  | Combined Wyndham Student Representative Council (WSRC)  To collectively develop a school-based project in response to one issue or theme highlighted at the Youth Forum. The WSRC program runs from April to October. |

A copy of the Findings Report and additional information is available on the Wyndham Youth Services website at <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/youth-services>

For more information regarding the District Youth Forums 2018, please contact Bianca Mancuso, Youth Participation and Leadership Officer at Wyndham Youth Services on (03) 8375 2346 or email [bianca.mancuso@wyndham.vic.gov.au](mailto:bianca.mancuso@wyndham.vic.gov.au)