

2022

Regional Youth Taskforce Yearbook



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Good government must build upon the values and insights of a diverse cross section of the society it serves. Young people represent the emerging future of communities and our world and for this reason alone it is imperative these views and perspectives are given a seat at the table as the decisions are made that will charter our future.

-Luke Austin



Minister's foreword

It has been a privilege as the Minister for Regional Youth to welcome and work alongside this year's exceptional Regional Youth Taskforce.

I am grateful that these 18 young people put their hands up to represent their communities, each bringing different insights and experiences with the intent of making regional communities a place young people want to live, work, study and thrive. They are each extraordinary young people and I have been thrilled to watch them build confidence, contribute and flourish over the last year.

The 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce has taken great pride in reflecting on the experiences of young people living in regional NSW, offering their feedback and bringing solutions to all parts of Government and organisations representing the broader community.

The Taskforce met officially four times over 2022, with numerous additional online catch-ups and training sessions to help build their knowledge and capacity to continue as young leaders of their communities into the future.

Here are just some of the 2022 Taskforce's achievements:

- Advocated for LGBTQIA+ youth awareness, including meeting with WorldPride to ensure that there are opportunities for regional youth to be involved in the event in 2023
- Supported the continuation of the Regional Youth Radio program, including dedicated funding for Aboriginal youth radio and podcast programs to improve cultural connections
- Provided feedback on mental health resources and engaged with stakeholders including Youth Action and Ask Izzy to ensure access and information is appropriate and available
- Assisted Lifeline to understand the needs of regional youth and they are now working on a program to support more regional youth to become crisis support trained

- Helped NSW Health with the design of a vaping toolkit for schools
- Worked with the Aboriginal Outcomes team within the Department of Regional NSW, providing the impetus for collaborating with Careers NSW and the Department of Education to improve access and opportunities for Aboriginal youth employment.
- Supported several of the Office for Regional Youth's programs including the Regional School Alumni Program and worked with the Youth Community Coordinators throughout regional NSW to better connect young people

The achievements do not end here, with the advice and feedback provided by the 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce continuing to assist decision makers across Government. I look forward to seeing more of their ideas and recommendations come to fruition and I'm excited to see what comes next for the members of the 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce.

Signed,

The Hon. Ben Franklin (MLC)

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for the Arts,
Minister for Regional Youth, Minister for Tourism

The role of the Regional Youth Taskforce is to provide policy and operational advice to the Minister for Regional Youth on regional youth issues.

Key functions of the Taskforce:

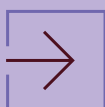
Identifying & advising

on regional youth matters and providing expertise and knowledge of the environment and context.



Providing input

to and comment on the development of the Action Plan.



Providing advice

on areas for state-wide reform.



Providing comment

on policy initiatives proposed by the Minister and sharing information and contacts to inform development and implementation.



Advocating

for regional youth issues and championing the Regional Youth Framework and the resulting initiatives.



Keeping informed

of the implementation of key local initiatives and their success stories.



Consideration

of any other matter as nominated by the Minister.



Taskforce Members



Abbie Kelly

Far West
13 years old



Ben Healey

Illawara Shoalhaven
23 years old



Brooke Williams

Central West and Orana
24 years old



Caitlin Blanch

New England and North West
17 years old



Gianrico Wynn

Central West and Orana
18 years old



Kane Stewart

Riverina Murray
20 years old



Luke Austin

North Coast
21 years old



Mikal Tesfamariam

North Coast
18 years old



Rohan Cowley

New England and North West
21 years old



Timothy Dotter

South East and Tablelands
20 years old



Tyson Purchase

Central Coast
13 years old



Willow Robinson

Central Coast
17 years old



Campbell Quintrell

Far West
18 years old



**Chelsea Burgess
Hannon**

Riverina Murray, 18 years old



Coco Rose

Hunter
18 years old



Georgie Moustoukis

Illawara Shoalhaven
18 years old



Molly Brabham

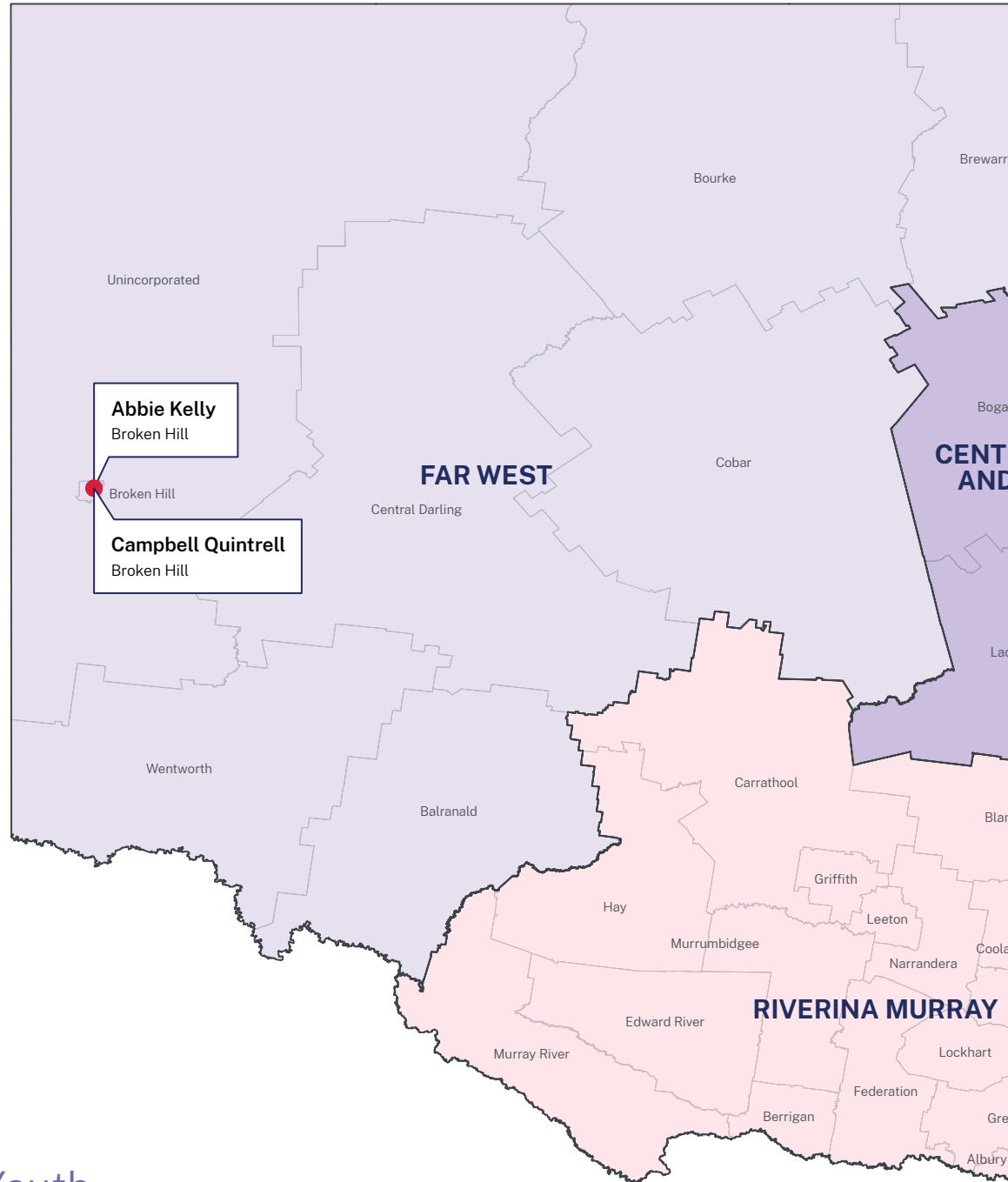
South East and Tablelands
18 years old



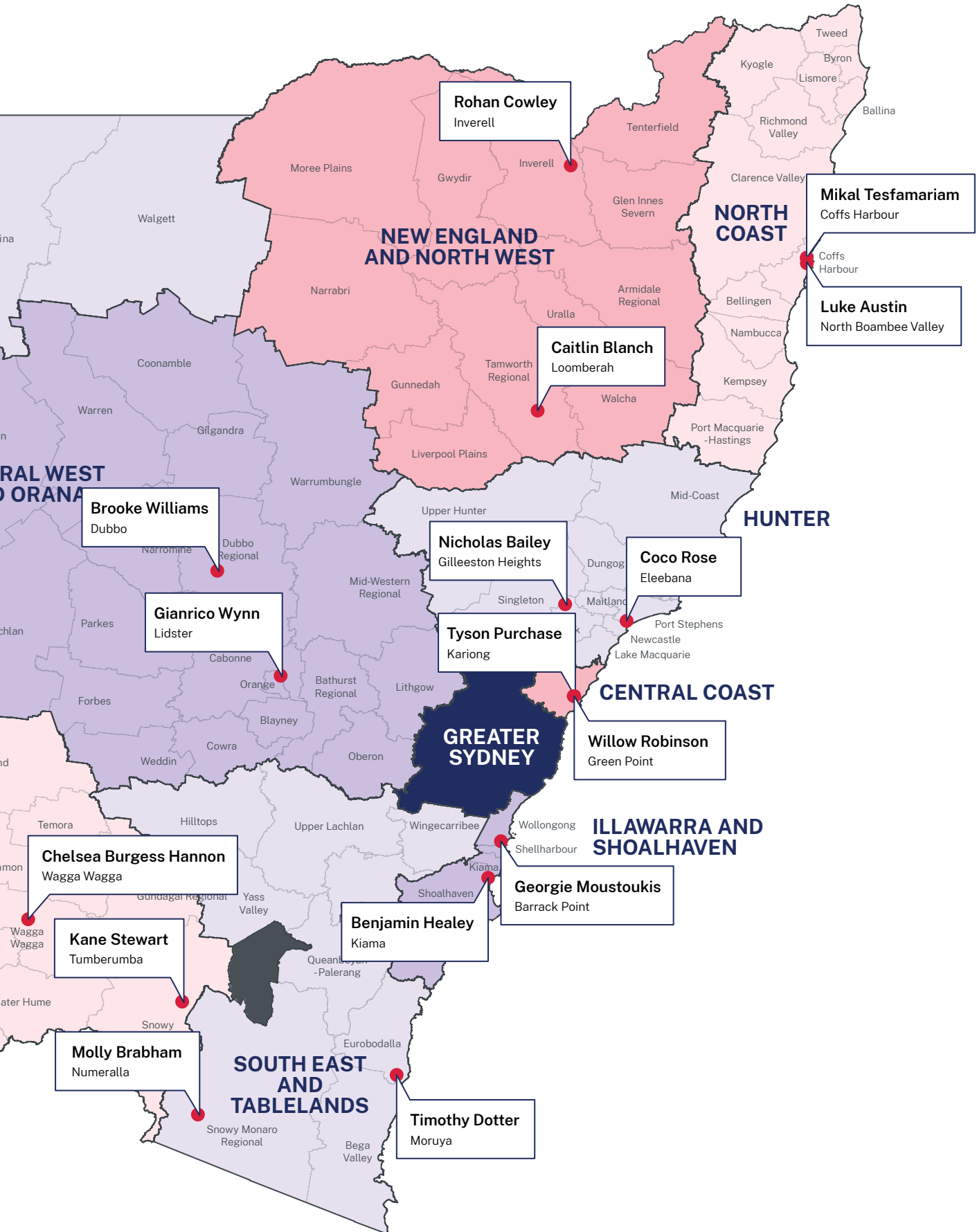
Nicholas Bailey

Hunter
23 years old

Member Locations



2022 Regional Youth Taskforce member locations

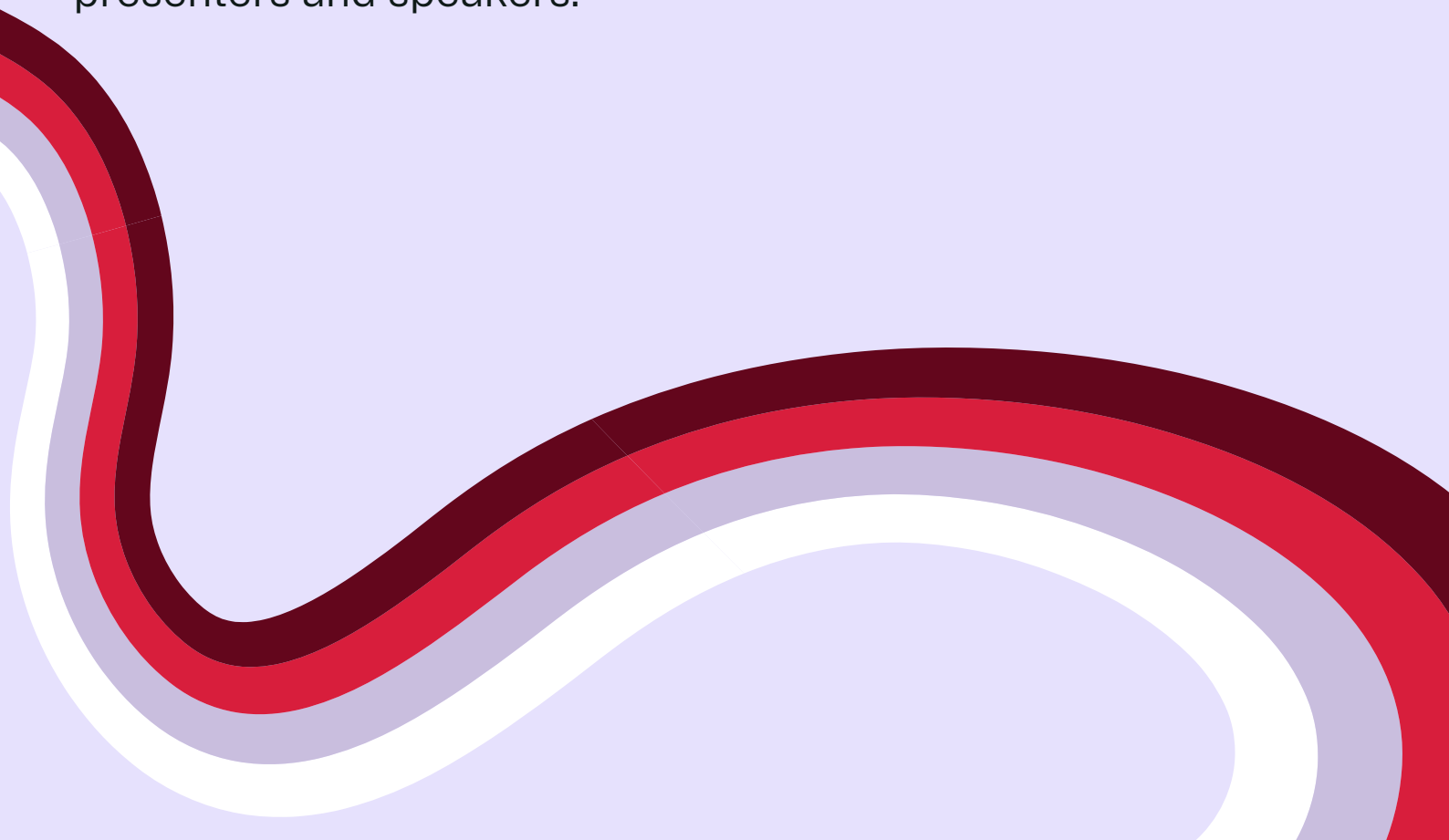






Taskforce Meetings

Four Taskforce meetings were held in 2022 to discuss the four pillars of the Regional Youth Framework: 'Work Ready', 'Wellbeing', 'Connectivity' and 'Community'. Members were also consulted several times outside of meetings by community organisations, businesses, not-for-profits, and other government agencies. Meetings included the guidance and expertise of the Advocate for Children and Young People, Zoë Robinson, and a range of invited presenters and speakers.



Framework on a page

Vision

All regional young people have opportunities for meaningful work, accessible health care and education; and feel part of vibrant and inclusive communities.

Guiding Principles

Support <> Resilience <> Fairness <> Get ready <> Youth voice <> Culture, identity and inclusiveness

Key Pillars

1. Work ready

Prepared for regional jobs of the future

Priorities

- 1.1 Young people have better access to great education and training opportunities
- 1.2 Young people have improved skills and knowledge to navigate the pathways into careers
- 1.3 Young people have clearer options to take them from school to training, work and further education opportunities
- 1.4 Disadvantaged or at-risk young people are better supported to learn and achieve
- 1.5 Young people have increased understanding of the workforce

2. Wellbeing

Mentally and physically healthy

Priorities

- 2.1 Young people and their families are supported to improve wellbeing
- 2.2 Increasing young people's understanding of their health needs and navigate the health system
- 2.3 Young people have access to culturally and youth-appropriate services
- 2.4 Increasing the number of young people who can get help, wherever and however they choose to seek it

3. Connectivity

Able to access services and opportunities easily

Priorities

- 3.1 Young people have increased access to safe private transport
- 3.2 Young people have increased access to safe public transport to the places they need to go
- 3.3 Young people are able to access services without traveling long distances
- 3.4 Young people have the skills to navigate and use information and systems

4. Community

Connected and valued by their community

Priorities

- 4.1 Young people are provided the opportunity to shape their communities
- 4.2 Young people have increased access to a variety of youth-appropriate activities
- 4.3 Young people feel safe in, connected to, and valued by their communities and connected to their culture

Strategic Alignment

20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW <> Regional Development Framework
 Department-specific youth strategies <> Local youth strategies

Diversity in Regional NSW

Aboriginal young people <> Vulnerable and disadvantaged <> Young people with disability <> LGBTQIA+
 Young people from a refugee background <> Culturally and linguistically diverse <> Young carers

Taskforce Meeting One

9 and 10 April 2022 in Dubbo

Work Ready Pillar

The 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce members met in Dubbo for their first face-to-face meeting of 2022.

On Saturday they spent time getting to know each other through a variety of activities and participated in a cultural experience at Taronga Western Plains Zoo.

The Sunday meeting was aligned to the 'Work Ready' pillar of the Regional Youth Framework, which is about ensuring regional young people have the opportunity to learn, work and achieve in their communities in regional NSW.

Members worked directly with Jillian Kilby, CEO and Founder of The Exchange, to understand the steps of Design Thinking when working on community issues. Jillian helped the members to develop pitches on how to help young people transitioning from school to work which were then presented to the Minister for Regional Youth.

The Taskforce members identified the following key areas which may enable young people in regional NSW to become better prepared to enter the workforce:

- support for dedicated Career Advisors in schools to assist all young people
- importance of young people connecting with social workers for additional support when they are transitioning from school to work or school to university
- benefits of life skill training opportunities focusing on interview skills, job search resources, financial/budgeting skills, starting your own business
- supporting young people with disabilities entering the workforce
- transport for young people to travel for work in regional NSW
- financial support for housing for young people.

Taskforce Meeting Two

4 and 5 June 2022 in Wagga Wagga

Wellbeing Pillar

The 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce members met in Wagga Wagga for their second face-to-face meeting of 2022.

The Taskforce spent the Saturday participating in outdoor activities with the Office of Sport and attended a 'Tackling Mental Health' workshop. They also spent time with co-founder of Project ROCKIT, Lucy Thomas OAM.

The Sunday meeting was aligned to the 'Wellbeing' pillar of the Regional Youth Framework, focussing discussion on young people's mental and physical health, safety and opportunities to thrive in their regional communities.

Members participated in two panel sessions with young leaders from the Riverina, including a previous Taskforce member and members of the NSW Youth Advisory Council. Ruby Riethmuller, founder of Womn-Kind and Adam DeMamiel from Boys to the Bush also spoke to Taskforce members about their organisations and impact on young people in regional communities.

Taskforce members discussed possible solutions to a range of wellbeing concerns including awareness of mental health services, the financial barriers to young people participating in sport and creative pursuits, vaping in schools and cultural connection. The Members then presented these ideas to the Minister for Regional Youth.

The Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC also attended the meeting and spoke with Taskforce members on the issues they raised, such as teacher shortages in remote communities and the need to support LGBTQIA+ youth in schools.

In the Wagga Wagga meeting, the Taskforce members made the following suggestions to improve wellbeing outcomes for young people in regional NSW:

- Encourage professionals and businesses working directly with youth to complete Youth Mental Health First Aid training
- Provide funding support for Aboriginal youth radio and podcast programs to improve cultural connections
- Provide more funding support for youth aged 18 and over for sporting and creative pursuits
- More education and awareness on the impacts of vaping on a young person's health
- An online resource to assist young people in need of mental health support to locate services in their local area.

Taskforce Meeting Three

20 and 21 August 2022 in Sydney

Connectivity Pillar

The 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce members met in Sydney for their third face-to-face meeting of 2022.

For the first time, Alumni members from the 2020 and 2021 Regional Youth Taskforce joined current members to discuss a range of issues. The group participated in an environment panel discussion with the Minister for Environment and Heritage, the Hon. James Griffin MP, the NSW Treasurer and Minister for Energy, the Hon. Matt Kean MP and the CEO of the Environment Protection Authority, Tony Chappel.

Members also participated in a range of consultations, providing feedback and insights to WorldPride, NSW Health, Office of Sport, the Department of Regional NSW Aboriginal Outcomes, Department of Education and the Regional Gap Year Campaign. The group also met with the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Health and Women, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC.

The Sunday meeting was aligned to the 'Connectivity' pillar of the Regional Youth Framework, focussing discussion on young people's transport and digital connectivity solutions to access training, health, work, services, and recreational activities.

Current members participated in a digital connectivity session with Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Small Business and Fair Trading, the Hon. Victor Dominello MP. The Taskforce members discussed extra features that they would like to see included on the Service NSW app to assist regional youth and help support them to be independent.

Taskforce members discussed possible solutions to a range of physical connectivity concerns including lack of public transport and cost of travel, cost of obtaining a driver's licence and completing driving hours, and the lack of community spaces, activities and resources for regional youth.

In the Sydney meeting, the Taskforce members made the following suggestions to improve connectivity outcomes for young people in regional NSW:

- Access to Medicare cards and other identification documents on the Service NSW app
- More digital skills training for young people
- More access to public WiFi for youth in regional areas
- Information on Service NSW app to assist young people to find mental health support in their local areas
- Mobile Youth Hubs that are managed by local councils and travel to smaller regional communities to provide support and resources to regional youth
- Providing fuel subsidies to young people travelling in regional communities for work and study
- More awareness via social media of existing opportunities available to youth in regional communities, such as events, support services and social activities
- Supporting the development of more Youth Councils to raise awareness of connectivity concerns for youth on a local level
- Upgrades and development of community infrastructure and activities for youth
- Subsidised driving lessons for regional youth – provide incentives for volunteers to help young people practice driving and reach their required hours.

Taskforce Meeting Four

5 and 6 November in Tweed Heads

Community Pillar

The 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce members met in Tweed Heads for their fourth and final face-to-face meeting of 2022.

The Taskforce members spent the Saturday before the meeting participating in community activities including a beach clean-up and tree planting with Kingscliff Community Dunecare and an on country cultural walk at Fingal Head with Banaam Applied Cultural Intelligence. Taskforce members also met with cofounder of MoneyGirl, Mariam Mohammed for a discussion on strength-based community development.

The Sunday meeting discussion was aligned to the 'Community' pillar of the Regional Youth Framework, which is about ensuring young people are given the opportunities to explore their creativity, collaborate with others, develop a sense of achievement and feel socially and culturally connected to, and included in, their communities and environment.

Members participated in a panel session with One Mob Radio to discuss the importance of radio and podcasting in connecting communities. They discussed issues impacting cross-border communities and heard from the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation on the work being done in communities impacted by flood. The Taskforce came prepared with insights they had gathered from visits to youth and community facilities in their region. Through a session focusing on inclusive communities, members developed a deeper understanding of inclusion and accessibility for young people with disabilities.

Members visited Byron Youth Services and also joined in a game of wheelchair basketball.

At the meeting in Tweed Heads the Taskforce members made the following suggestions to improve community outcomes for young people in regional NSW:

- More promotion of existing services for young people in regional NSW
- Encouraging more youth volunteering in schools
- Providing community spaces where young people can feel safe and connected
- Providing a range of activities for young people to participate in all year round
- Cultural inclusion in all communities
- Financial literacy courses for young people as part of developing life skills
- Supporting strong leaders to build capacity in local communities
- Improving access to funding after disasters
- Increased disability awareness in communities to improve attitudes towards young people with disabilities.



What has been a highlight of your time as a member of the 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce?

Caitlin Blanch: I have thoroughly enjoyed connecting with like-minded individuals who are passionate about making a difference in their community. As an aspiring community leader, it can feel isolating, but meeting people who appreciate your observations and offer new insights enhanced my confidence.

Campbell Quintrell: The number of contacts and the networks I have gained from the Taskforce is massive and it wasn't until I was a member of the Taskforce that I realised the importance of these connections. I loved being in an environment where the conversations I love to have are listened to and deemed as important.

Gianrico Wynn: Like many, I truly believe the relationship I have built with fellow keen young leaders would absolutely have to be the highlight of my time as a member of the 2022 Regional Youth Taskforce

Why is it important for young people to have a voice in the NSW government?

Molly Brabham: It is incredibly important for young people to have a voice in NSW government as decision makers need to know what actually affects us and how to solve problems even when we can't be in the room.

Mikal Tesfamariam: Engaging youth in government initiatives increases understanding and interest among young people in public affairs. The Regional Youth Taskforce allows young people to actively participate in decision-making and know that their concerns are taken seriously. I believe positive civic engagement is important, particularly among youth, as it builds trust and transparency between generations as well as citizens and their government.

How has being a member of the Taskforce enabled you to be a better advocate for young people in your local community?

Ben Healey: Being on the Taskforce has enabled me to be a better advocate for young people in my local community by giving me the opportunity to work alongside people of different backgrounds, perspectives, education levels, and ages. It has helped to develop my understanding on how to effectively communicate what I'm passionate about.

Mikal Tesfamariam: As my term progressed on the Taskforce, so too did my political literacy and acumen. Developing my understanding of government's operations equipped me with the skills necessary to represent and lead my contemporaries in an enterprising yet cogent manner.

Caitlin Blanch: I have gained a lot of confidence and experience in regards to being an effective leader. I realise the importance of not always being the most outspoken, rather the most observant and considerate of others. I feel empowered to genuinely believe in the importance of my concerns and appreciate their value, in turn, increasing my self-esteem. Moving forward, I have further developed a passion to engage in events in my community and have encouraged others to do the same.

What would you say to other young people who are considering being a part of the Regional Youth Taskforce?

Abbie Kelly: I strongly encourage any passionate youth to join the Taskforce. It was genuinely the greatest decision of my life to apply for it. No matter who you are you will be listened to. Always remember that no matter who you are and what you believe in you can always make a difference.

Campbell Quintrell: Genuinely one of the best experiences I have ever had. The knowledge, experience and confidence that is gained from a being a member of this Taskforce is enough for me to recommend it to anyone. Having fun with young people that think like you while being listened to is one of the best feelings ever. You won't regret it.

Chelsea Burgess Hannon: My advice to anyone considering applying for the Regional Youth Taskforce is to believe in yourself and the power of your voice to make change. If you want to see certain changes in your community, you must find the courage within yourself to stand up and advocate for what you believe in, because what you do has far greater impact than what you say.

Luke Austin: Give it a go and throw your hat in the ring. It is an opportunity unlike few others and a great way to grow your skills, learn about new places and meet amazing new people. If you have a passion for people and making positive impacts for the betterment of communities across regional NSW, the Regional Youth Taskforce is a great place to start.

Department of Regional NSW

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