

Zoom

Speak

2023

CONNECTING
Youth



YOUTH Speak Report 2023



Bellingen Shire youth

This report is a way for the young people in the Bellingen Shire to communicate the issues they are facing, and to put forward their own ideas to improve circumstances for young people in the Shire.

It also provides comparison information in relation to our first annual YOUTH Speak Survey which took place in 2022.

A year of strong youth engagement

Our first YOUTH Speak Survey 2022 provided insights that led to over \$50,000 in grant funding being invested into youth community development.

Some points to highlight include the Bellingen Shire YOUTH Speak Forum which drew together over 150 young people, working on turning issues into opportunities, and 48 young people creating nine high level concepts of projects to pitch to the community to seek support to lead to fruition.

SNAPSHOT

18%

Of Bellingen Shire Youth responded to the survey

74%

Identify alcohol and drugs as a main concern for young people

48%

Identify transport as a significant barrier to achieving their education and employment goals within the Shire



andthetreesphotography

We acknowledge the eternal connection and custodianship of the Gumbaynggirr people to land and waterways in the region where we live, work and play. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to emerging leaders

A word from the project manager

As we approach the end of a transformative year with strong youth development and community engagement, I am excited to share with you the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire's annual youth survey for 2023.

This report encapsulates the collective voices and experiences of young people from all corners of the Bellingen Shire.

I want to express my gratitude to each young person who took the time to contribute to the survey. Your insights and perspectives are invaluable, and they play a crucial role in guiding the programs and initiatives we undertake to better support youth within our community.

This year's survey not only reflects the challenges faced by our young people but also highlights their resilience and creativity. The diverse range of responses allows us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolving needs and aspirations of our youth, guiding us to invest in initiatives that will make a meaningful impact.

As we move forward into the coming year, we will use the findings from this survey to refine our strategies and enhance our support systems. Whether addressing mental health concerns, promoting educational and employment opportunities, or fostering a sense of belonging, this feedback will be instrumental in shaping the path ahead.

In closing, I want to extend my deepest appreciation to the Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire Inc for supporting the youth engagement and development over the past 12 months and allowing me to work flexibly to deliver results with great support from the wider community.

Thank you for being an integral part of our community, and I look forward to the continued growth and success we will achieve together.

Kindest,
Ellie Tree
YOUth Speak Project Manager



THE SURVEY

Overview

Aims

The second annual YOUTH Speak Survey set out to reevaluate the values, dreams and areas of concern among young people from across the Bellinghen Shire, providing data to compare to the previous year. The survey aimed to capture crucial socio-demographic data and the outlooks of youth on a diverse range of topics including perceived obstacles to education and employment, general wellbeing, community perceptions of youth, and attitudes toward the future.

Involvement

A total of 298 young people aged 12-24 engaged in the YOUTH Speak Survey, representing 18% of the youth population in the Bellinghen Shire.

Young people were extensively engaged through varied channels and networks during October 2023 to achieve such a high response rate.

This Report

This report covers an executive summary and findings for each question. Beneath the stats and expressions in the report lie young individuals, each with their own backgrounds, experiences, cultures and values. What is displayed here is a mere scratch of the surface of the lives of these young people.

Demographic Data



289

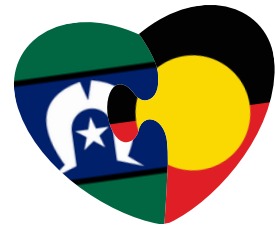
Respondents aged 12-24



44% Male

53% Female

3% Self-Describe



10%

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



3%

Identify as a person with a disability



37% 12-14 years

56% 15-17 years

7% 18-24 years



25% Plateau

44% Valley

24% Seaboard

7% Other**

** Young people who attend a school or work in a business within the Bellingen Shire but live in either Nambucca Valley, Coffs Harbour or Armidale local government areas.

Top Three

ISSUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

74%

ALCOHOL &
DRUGS

68%

MENTAL HEALTH

43%

BULLYING

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING GOALS WITHIN THE BELLINGEN SHIRE

TRANSPORT

48%

MENTAL HEALTH

35%

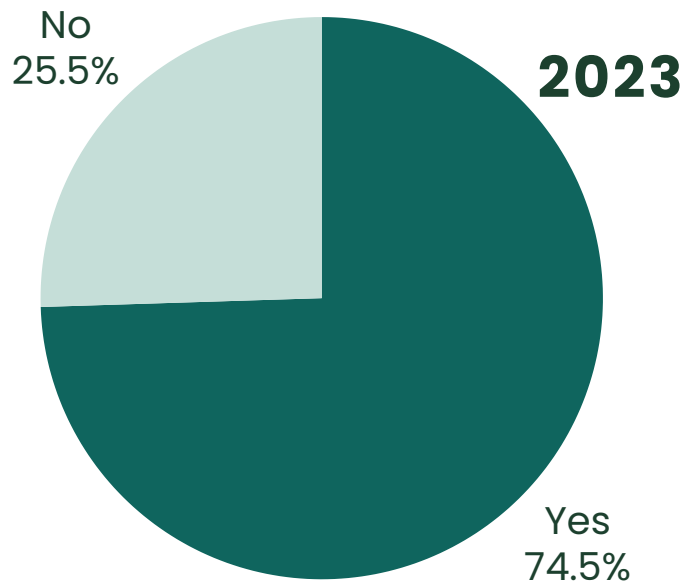
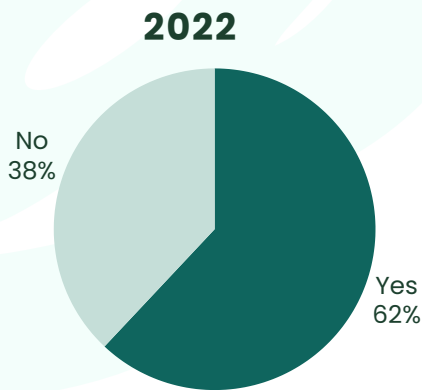
LACK OF JOBS

33%

Young people who have put their hand up to be involved in organising the 2024 YOUTH Speak Forum

35

Do you know where to seek help or support?



If yes, tell us where!

School Teacher Parents
Friends Police Other Family
Kids Helpline **Youth Hub**
School Counsellor Student Support Officer

How would you like to communicate youth issues and share ideas?

59%



Through my place of education

46%



Call/text a youth worker

82%

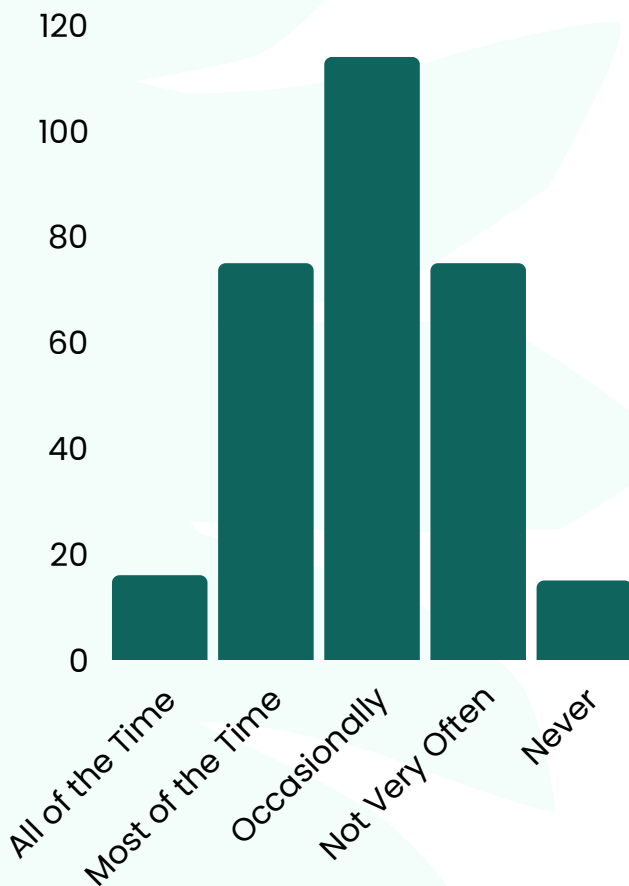
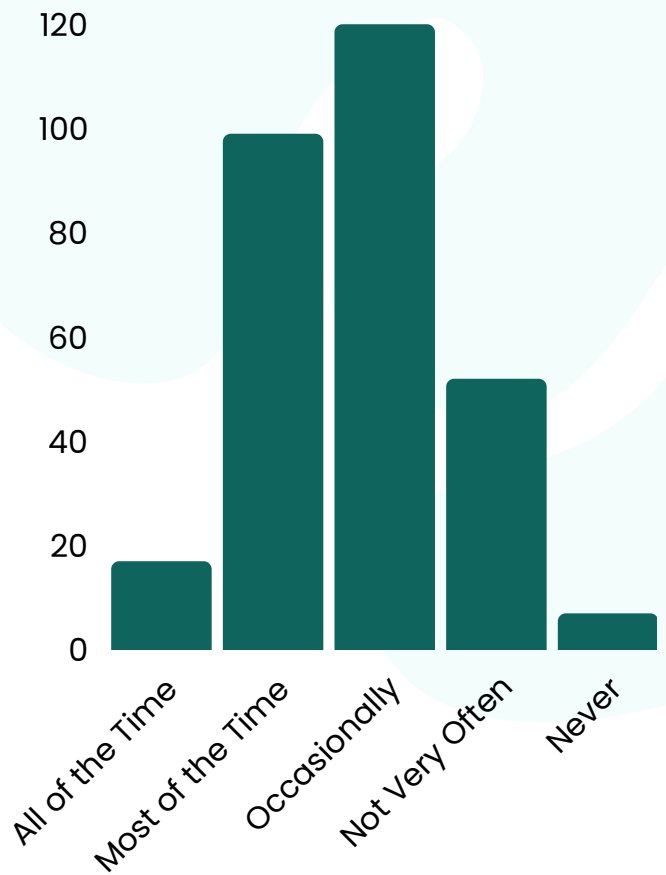


Through an annual Youth Forum

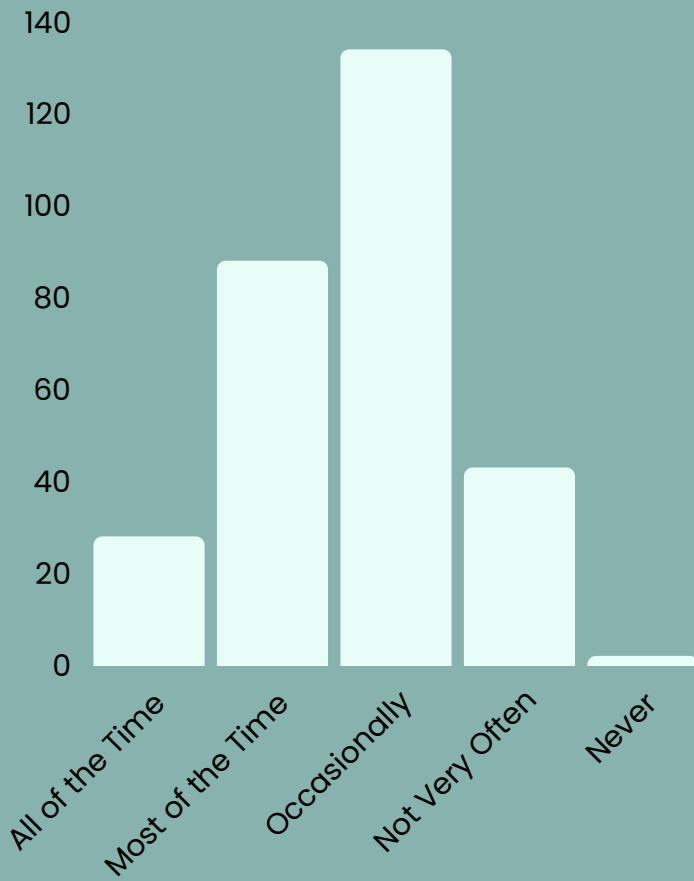
YOUTH Speak Forum 2023



Does our community offer positive things for young people to do other than sport and school events/ activities?

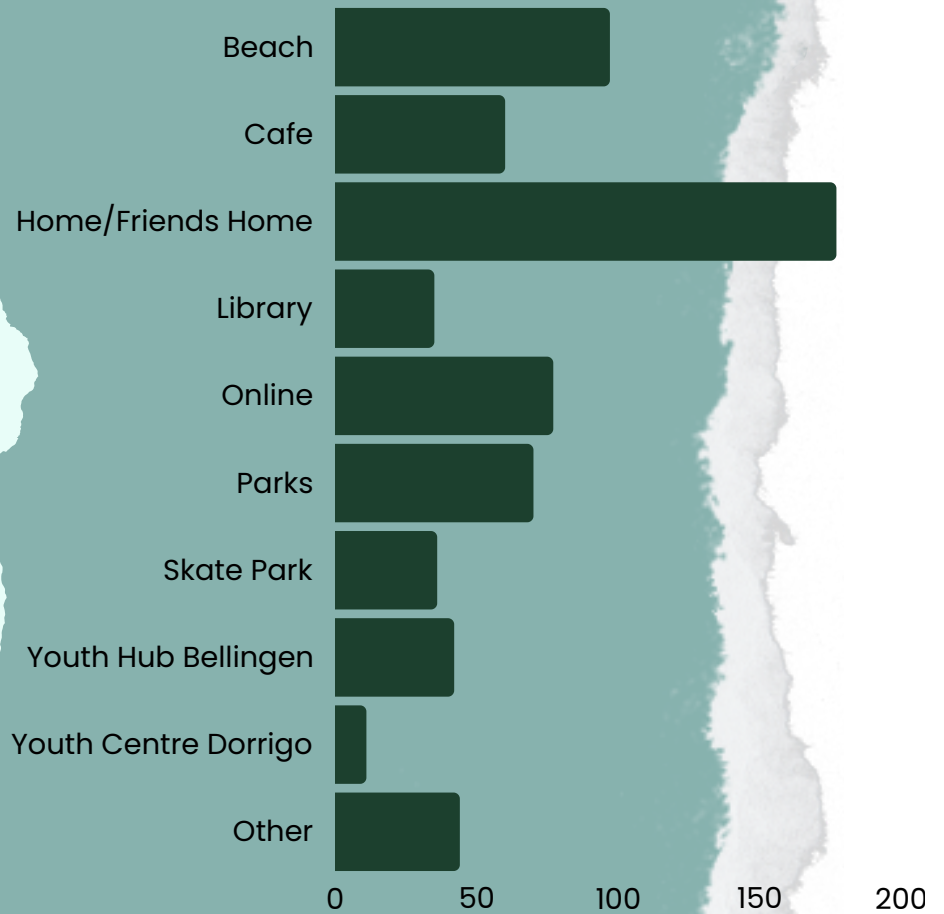


Do you feel like the community has a positive image of young people in the Bellingen Shire?



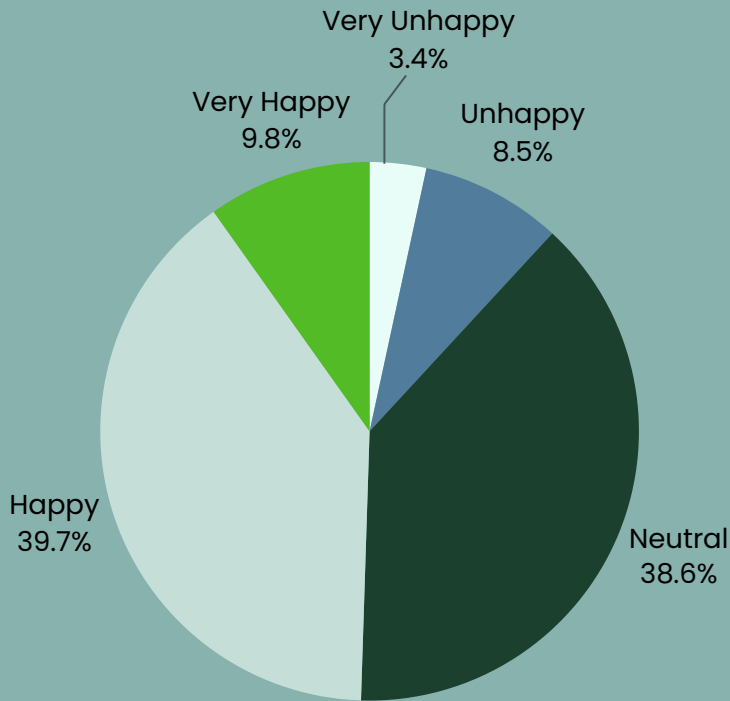
Do you see our community investing in youth-led programs and projects?

Where do you prefer to hang out with your friends?

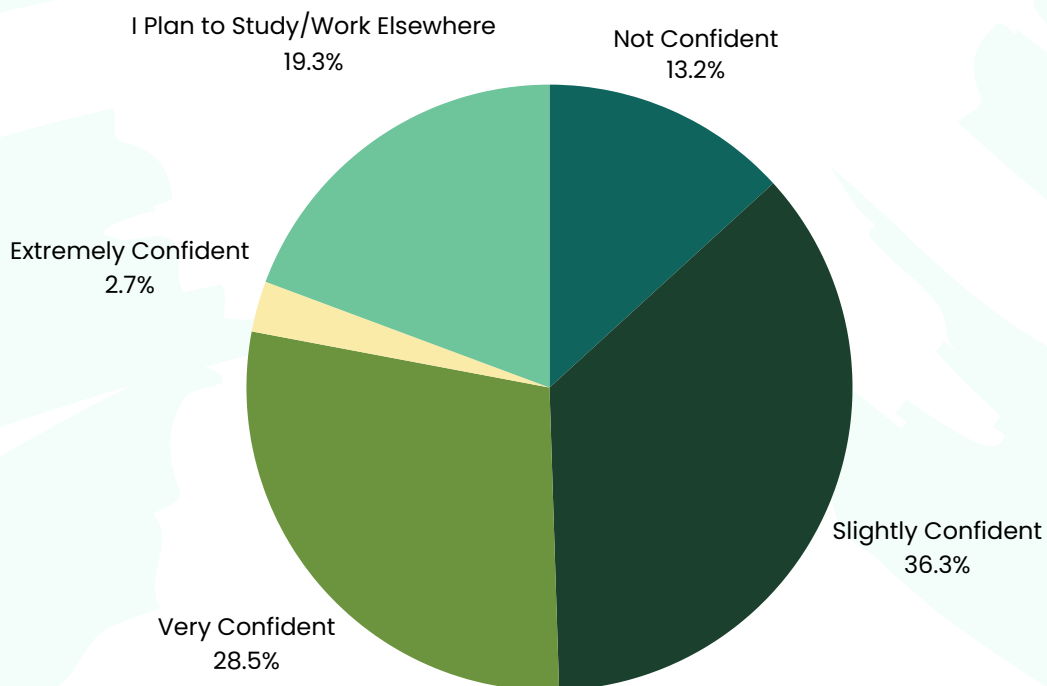


*Other - River, Dangar Falls, "in town", and Urunga Lido

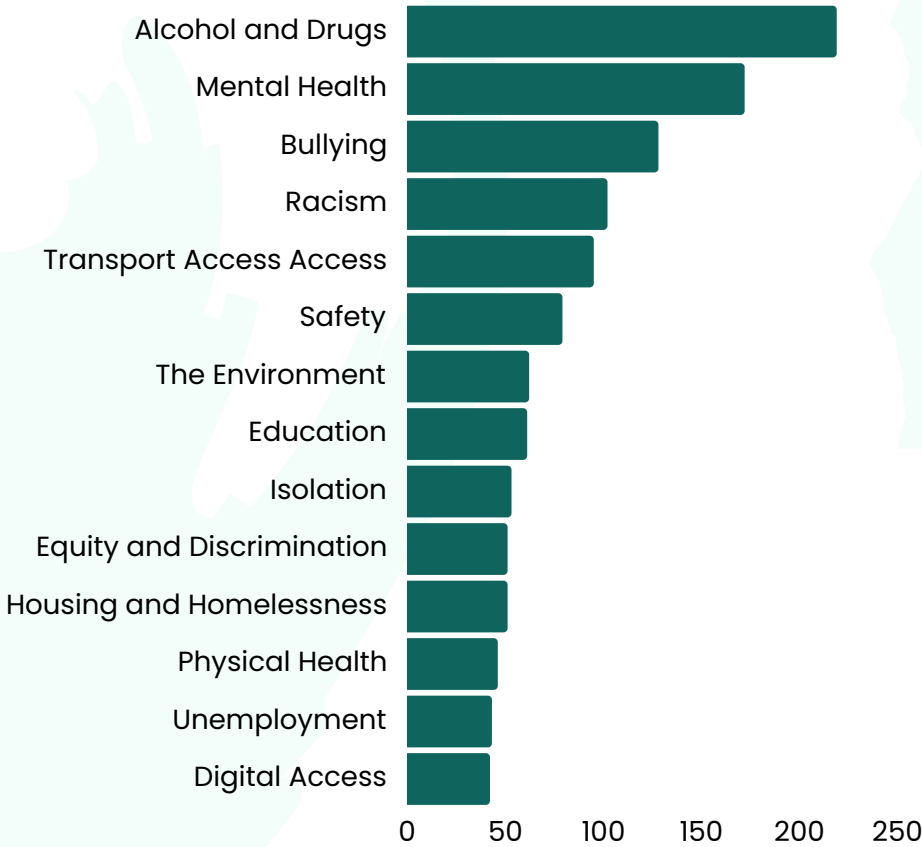
How happy are you Living in the Bellingen Shire?



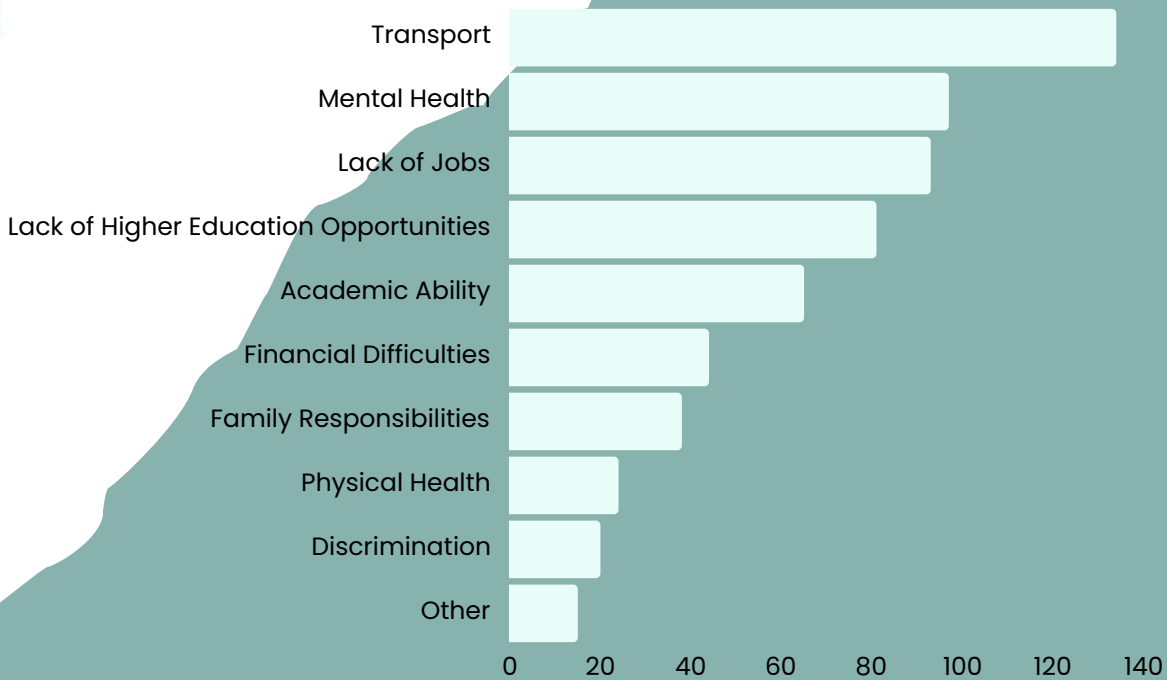
How confident are you in achieving your study/work goals within the Shire?



Biggest struggles for youth



What are the biggest barriers that may affect you achieving your study/work goals within the Shire?



*Other - All responses related to lacking motivation

Youth Led Project Ideas

Young people were asked to nominate projects that they would like to see happen in the Bellingen Shire in the future. 210 individual responses were provided. The top responses fit into the following four categories:

1

Events and transport (including greater access to public transport, music festivals, concerts, movie nights, library events and camps)

2

Infrastructure upgrades (including skate parks, bmx trails, full sized basketball courts and footpaths)

3

Workshops and programs (including more youth-led projects, art and cooking workshops, racism education, survival skills, fishing adventures and environmental programs).

4

Business opportunities within the Shire (including sushi and boba tea shop, fishing shops, smoothie shops and fast food shops).



INSIGHTS

This year our YOUTH Speak Survey captured an impressive

18%

of the youth population of the Bellingen Shire.

● The top three issues for young people has remained mostly unchanged compared to 2022, with mental health, alcohol and drugs, and bullying continuing to be identified as the main three concerns in 2023.

● 1 in 4 young people still don't know where to seek help or support. This is a crucial gap we need to continue to address. From follow up conversations, we understand that there are many factors at play including stigma, perceived confidentiality, and logistical barriers (including financial, transport and lack of services on the ground).

● 59% want to communicate and share youth issues and ideas through their place of education. This reiterates the importance of services, communities and schools having strong working relationships.

● The biggest barriers to achieving goals within the Bellingen Shire has shifted significantly, with transport overtaking mental health as the main barrier. This is likely due to the large increase of responses from young people living on the plateau in Dorrigo and surrounds.

● The large majority of young people from the valley and the seaboard identified the Bellingen Youth Hub as a place to seek help/support, whereas young people from Dorrigo mostly identified key people in their school.

YOUTH SPEAK PROJECT IMPACT

98%

of Youth Speak Forum attendants said the facilitators/scribes were helpful in leading the conversation, and that they felt more connected to the community through this process.

Out of those who participated in the Youth Speak Forum, 78 responded to both the 2022 and 2023 surveys.

In 2022, 28% of these respondents believed they had a voice in shaping the future of the Belling Shire. In 2023, this percentage surged to 93.6%.

Similarly, in 2022, only 7.7% expressed interest in organizing a youth forum, whereas in 2023, this figure rose to 45%.

Among the 78 respondents who engaged in both surveys and attended the Youth Speak Forum, 41 went on to initiate a youth-led project.

In the 2022 survey, 18% of these respondents felt that the community generally viewed young people positively. However, in 2023, this positive perception increased to 59%, with an additional 7% stating that the community "always" holds a positive image of young people.

END



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