



# Youth Voice NT Theory of Change



## Youth Voice NT Theory of Change: Youth Voice NT Project

The Theory of Change was developed by Dr Chay Brown, PhD, during three workshops that were held in November and December 2022, with representatives from the youth sector, government and young people.

Youth Voice NT would like to thank all who participated in the workshops and special mention to Alex Storey and the 2023 Youth Round Table for providing feedback. Cover art was commissioned and created by young Territorian @miraasmuse, and the artworks throughout the document were commissioned and created by @the\_slimy\_sailor, who is also a young Territorian.

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## Acknowledgement of Country



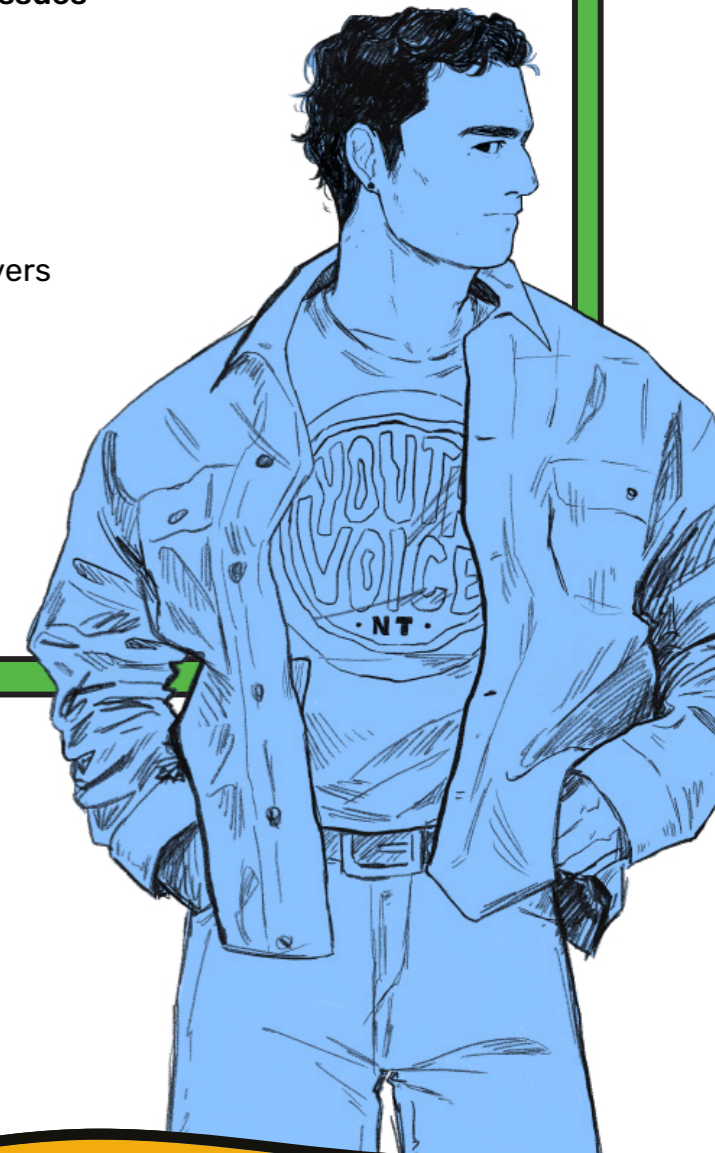
This report was written on **Larrakia country** in the Darwin region and Arrernte country in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). Youth Voice NT acknowledges and pays respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, who are the custodians of the oldest continuous living culture on Earth.



We acknowledge that Aboriginal sovereignty has not been ceded and this document was conceived and written on what **always was and always will be** Aboriginal land. We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's ongoing connection to sea, waterways and Country. Youth Voice NT pays respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and we acknowledge the leadership role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have played in building a better future with and for young people. We take inspiration from the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and commit to makarrata so that we may tell the truth about our colonisation history and work together to build a future based on equity, hope, and freedom for all.

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## Introduction

Youth Voice NT will be raising the voices of all young people living across the Territory, aged 12 to 25, who don't have a voice. Youth Voice NT aims to improve engagement with Government in the development of future policies and strategies that directly affect young Territorians.

In 2020, the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) was awarded a Youth Advocacy Support Grant from the Commonwealth Government's DESE. This one-year funding was used to produce two reports (Young Territorians Report and A glance at the Northern Territory Youth Sector 2021) that showed the need for further collaborative development of the Northern Territory youth services sector.

Currently there is no youth peak body in the Northern Territory. NTCOSS sought funding from the Northern Territory Government department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities to establish a youth peak. NTCOSS was granted five years of funding to support the project.

Youth Voice established the Youth Voice Group to guide the project's future. These key stakeholders support, guide, and drive the Youth Voice Project. The members are: MacDonnell Regional Council; AnglicareNT; Menzies School of Health Research; NPY Women's Council; Headspace Darwin; Australian Childhood Foundation; and Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation.



"Young people are happy, healthy, empowered and dream-filled."

## Vision

Young people in the Northern Territory are connected and supported by their friends, families, and communities. Young people are loved, listened to, and strong in their identities and culture.

Young people's lives are enriched through friendships, creativity, sport and education. They grow up in safe healthy environments and have access to opportunities and resources to express themselves, pursue their dreams and build their futures.

Figure 1: Vision work during the online consultation workshop



## Principles

Five principles will underpin the Youth Voice project. These principles provide ways of working and guide decision-making in the project.



### Walk alongside

Being flexible and adaptable, and offering support to young people in a way that is accessible and unobtrusive. Being patient and reflexive.



### Youth-centred

Being led by young people, and valuing their insight, views and experiences. Supports the aspirations and leadership of young people.



### Empowering voices

Amplifying and uplifting the voices of young people, and creating opportunities for young people to share their views and build their skills.



### Building strong relationships

Building long-term relationships based on mutual trust. Ensure relationships and rapport is built over time, grounded in trust and respect, and aiming for continuity of relationships.



### Whole of person support

Providing non-judgemental holistic support, including social, emotional, physical and psychological supports in ways that is determined and led by young people.

## Overview

Youth Project will focus on four core objectives over the next four years (see Figure 1).

Each objective is paired with five initiatives aimed at advancing these objectives.

## Theory of Change

A theory of change expresses the actions needed to bring about a change to address key problems that affect young people and explains how the change will occur.

The Youth Voice Theory of Change focuses on creat-

ing change through four outcomes areas: sector support, enabling young people's voices, establishing a peak organisation, and challenging harmful attitudes and beliefs through outwards facing communications.

The Youth Voice project seeks to address key problems by identifying their barriers, drivers, and enablers of change. With a holistic lens, pinpointing specific actions needed for each outcome, which will build upon enablers of change.

Figure 2: Overview of the objectives, initiatives and outcomes for the Youth Voice Project over the next four years



## Identifying young Territorians’ 5 core issues:

- 1. Domestic, family, and sexual violence**

Violence in young people’s families and relationships. Young people experiencing and perpetrating violence.
- 2. Isolation**

Young people are isolated from their families and communities. Negative public attitudes towards young people leaves them with little support and connection.
- 3. Lack of access to opportunities**

Young people in the Northern Territory not having the same access to education, employment, and life opportunities as elsewhere in Australia, especially those in remote communities.
- 4. Basic needs not being met**

Young people are experiencing overcrowding, food insecurity, financial stress, and poverty.
- 5. Discriminatory or inappropriate systems**

Systems are outdated and not working for young people – education system is not meeting their needs, young people are being incarcerated.

## Theory of Change in action

1

2

3

4

<b>Actions</b> <i>Therefore if we:</i>	<b>Target Groups</b> <i>We will work with/involve:</i>	<b>Outputs</b> <i>This will create:</i>	<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b> <i>And will help to:</i>	<b>Long-term outcomes</b> <i>And in the long-term, will result in:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide specialist training for services working with young people</li> <li>▶ Foster and facilitate meaningful connections between young people and services</li> <li>▶ Assess current funding landscape and advocate for sustainable models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Youth services</li> <li>▶ Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased capacity, skills, knowledge and awareness in youth services sector</li> <li>▶ Youth services investment map</li> <li>▶ Increased take up and engagement in youth services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Build capacity in the youth services sector</li> <li>▶ Connect more young people with services</li> <li>▶ Identify funding avenues and promote sustainable funding models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased safe places and safe relationships for young people</li> <li>▶ More supportive and informed youth services</li> <li>▶ An adequately and appropriately funded and resources youth services sector</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide more opportunities for young people to be involved in decision-making</li> <li>▶ Create and provide leadership programs for young people</li> <li>▶ Co-design a network of youth voice mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Disengaged young people and their families</li> <li>▶ Diverse young people (LGBTQIA+ young people, young people with disabilities, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds)</li> <li>▶ Young people in regional, remote, and very remote areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Mechanisms to facilitate youth voice e.g. place-based youth councils and voice to government</li> <li>▶ Governance guide and leadership programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Innovative solutions and ideas are created and presented by young people directly to government</li> <li>▶ Government and community has a more informed understanding of young people's needs</li> <li>▶ Young people have increased access to leadership opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Young people have an active and meaningful role in decision-making in their community</li> <li>▶ Young people are directly involved in solving problems that affect them and inform policy making</li> <li>▶ Young people's leadership capacity and skills are built upon, and pave the way for the next generation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Establish a NT youth peak to advocate for the needs of young people</li> <li>▶ Create a youth council to govern the youth peak</li> <li>▶ Coordinate services and promote opportunities for service collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Youth Advisory Council/s</li> <li>▶ Youth services</li> <li>▶ Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ NT Youth peak organisation</li> <li>▶ Youth Advisory/ governing Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ More consistent funding and longer-term funding cycles</li> <li>▶ A peak organisation coordinates and advocates on behalf of the youth services sector</li> <li>▶ Increased collaboration between services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A coordinated and integrated youth services sector</li> <li>▶ Young people's leadership capacity is increased, and mechanisms are established that facilitate young people into leadership and decision-making roles.</li> <li>▶ Leadership, guidance and support for the youth services sector</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Develop social media and communications campaigns to challenge stereotypes about young people</li> <li>▶ Share achievements and progress of young people</li> <li>▶ Foster and provide opportunities for youth-led communication initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Whole of community</li> <li>▶ Diverse young people</li> <li>▶ Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Social media campaigns</li> <li>▶ Print media: newsletters, posters etc.</li> <li>▶ Media guidelines for reporting and engaging young people in the media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Harmful stereotypes about young people are challenged</li> <li>▶ Young people have more opportunities to tell their own stories and build communications skills</li> <li>▶ Young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ More supportive community attitudes towards young people</li> <li>▶ Positive connections and relationships for young people with each other and the community</li> <li>▶ Young people have increased skills and knowledge of media and communications</li> </ul>

## Enablers

In the Northern Territory, the following strengths, structures, supports, can help us to address these problems:



## Identifying Action Assumptions

### What could go wrong with these actions?

- ▶ Have insufficient time, staff, and resources to commence and sustain actions
- ▶ Negative community attitudes may detract from actions and erode political will

### What could the challenges be of working with these groups?

- ▶ People may not want to be involved
- ▶ Different groups may have different goals
- ▶ Resistance from stakeholders
- ▶ Services seeing each other as competitors
- ▶ High staff turnover

### What could the challenges be obtaining or sustaining these inputs?

- ▶ Short term funding cycles
- ▶ Competition for funding
- ▶ Inadequate infrastructure
- ▶ Funding not being allocated to staffing

### What could be some of the limitations of these outputs be?

- ▶ Some groups have different priorities
- ▶ That these outputs do not translate to the outcomes
- ▶ The outputs are not utilised, sustained, or realised.

### Why do we think the actions will create these impacts? Could they create any other unintended impacts?

- ▶ Could create backlash
- ▶ That increases in funding and workforce do not translate to long-term change
- ▶ That young people in remote areas are excluded due to high costs of resourcing remote areas

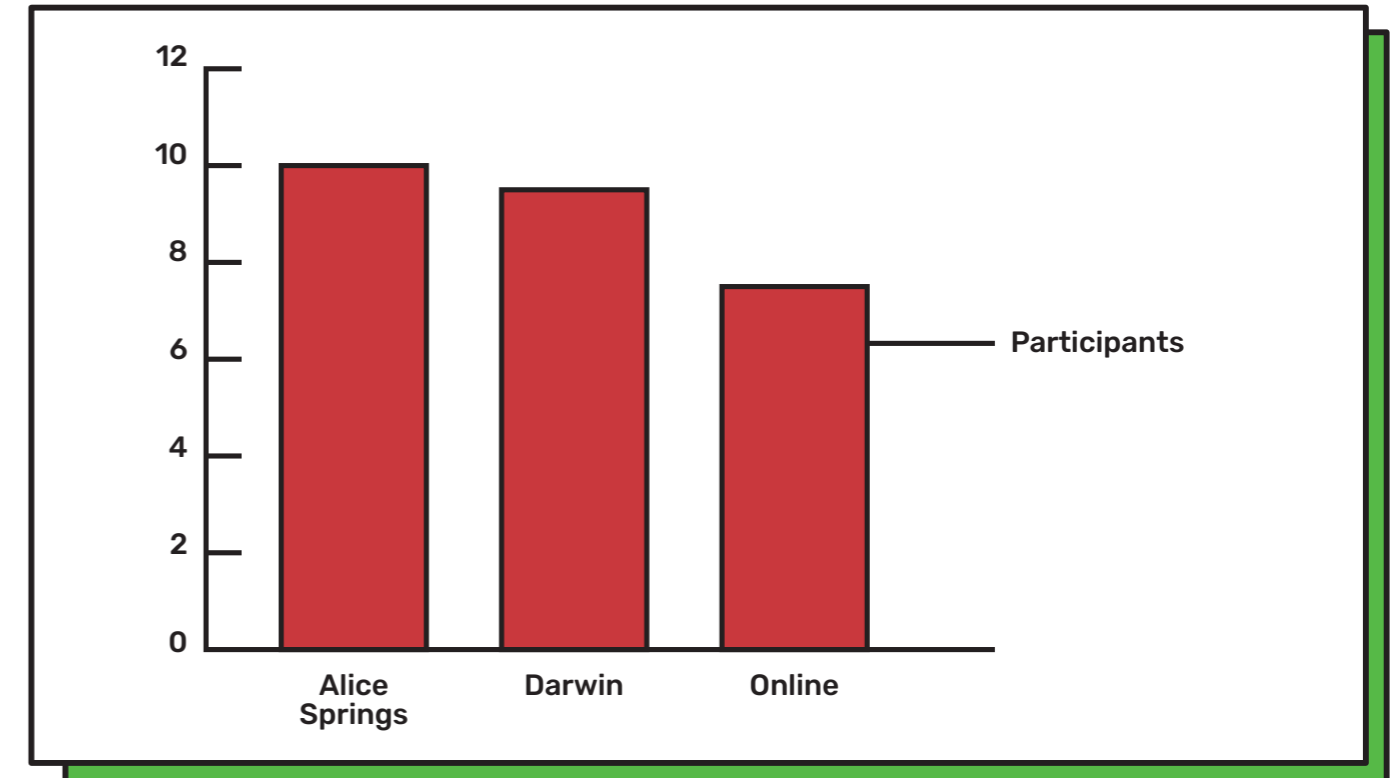
### What kind of barriers or obstacles could get in the way of us achieving our outcomes?

- ▶ Continuity of fundings, actions, and progress
- ▶ Change of government – loss of political will

## Appendix A: Method

The theory of change was developed in a series of workshops in November–December 2022. Two workshops were held in-person (Alice Springs and Darwin), and one workshop was

held online. The workshops were organised by NTCOSS and involved a range of stakeholders in the youth services and related sectors, including members of the Youth Voice Group.



Through these workshops, overarching principles were identified and prioritised. Problems, activities, target groups, and impacts were also identified, and outcomes were developed and communicated in the theory of change model.

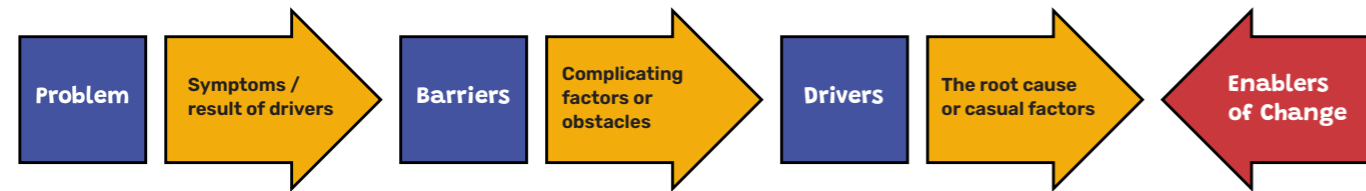


## Appendix B: Problems, barriers and drivers

A range of problems affect young people in the Northern Territory. During the theory of change workshops, participants identified problems and theorised the barriers which

effect prevention or response to these problems. Participants also identified the drivers of these problems – that is the root cause or casual factors. Finally, the participants

then brainstormed enablers or facilitators of change – those things which drive or assist with creating positive change.



Through this process, the most pertinent issues impacting young people were identified as:

### 1. Domestic, family, and sexual violence;

Violence in young people's families and relationships. Young people experiencing and perpetrating violence.

### 2. Lack of access to opportunities;

Young people in the Northern Territory not having the same access to education, employment, and life opportunities as elsewhere in Australia, especially those in remote communities.

### 3. Isolation;

Young people are isolated from their families and communities. Negative public attitudes towards young people leaves them with little support and connection.

### 4. Basic needs not being met;

Young people are experiencing overcrowding, food insecurity, financial stress, and poverty.

### 5. Discriminatory or inappropriate systems;

Systems are outdated and not working for young people – education system is not meeting their needs, young people are being incarcerated.

These problems, barriers, and enablers of change are outlined in the table below.

Problem/s	Barrier/s	Driver/s	Enablers of Change
<b>Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Harmful attitudes and beliefs about women and girls</li> <li>▶ Attitudes and beliefs that are supportive of violence</li> <li>▶ Normalisation of violence</li> <li>▶ Overcrowding</li> <li>▶ Food insecurity</li> <li>▶ Lack of supports for young people</li> <li>▶ Lack of specialised supports for LGBTQIA+ young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Gender inequality</li> <li>▶ Ongoing impacts of colonisation</li> <li>▶ Systemic discrimination and disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Young people's acceptance and positivity about gender fluidity and sexualities</li> <li>▶ Respectful relationships education programs</li> <li>▶ Strong Aboriginal women's leadership</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of access to opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Work inexperience and jobs unwilling to train</li> <li>▶ Problems with literacy and numeracy</li> <li>▶ Remoteness</li> <li>▶ Turnover of staff</li> <li>▶ Services under resourced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Geographic disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Creativity and innovation</li> <li>▶ Technology and increasing digital literacy</li> <li>▶ Access to internet</li> <li>▶ Scholarships and trainee programs</li> <li>▶ Increased support and innovation for opportunities to those in remote locations</li> </ul>
<b>Isolation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Media reporting on young people</li> <li>▶ Relationship breakdowns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Intergenerational trauma</li> <li>▶ Systemic racism</li> <li>▶ Poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Community events</li> <li>▶ Sporting organisations and opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Basic needs not being met</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Lack of adequate housing</li> <li>▶ Inadequate government financial support</li> <li>▶ Inadequate opportunities</li> <li>▶ Undiagnosed disabilities</li> <li>▶ Lack of youth mental health services</li> <li>▶ Lack of qualified professionals to work with young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Poverty</li> <li>▶ Systemic discrimination and disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Financial, health and literacy programs</li> <li>▶ Investment in adequate services for young people to access</li> </ul>
<b>Discriminatory or inappropriate systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Public attitudes towards transforming or reforming systems</li> <li>▶ Slow bureaucratic systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Systemic racism</li> <li>▶ Outdated / externally imposed systems</li> <li>▶ Punitive systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Government and sector willingness to transform systems and engagement in justice reinvestment</li> <li>▶ Restorative justice processes</li> <li>▶ Two-way learning models</li> <li>▶ Bilingual and on-Country education</li> </ul>



