

QFCC

YOUTH SUMMIT REPORT

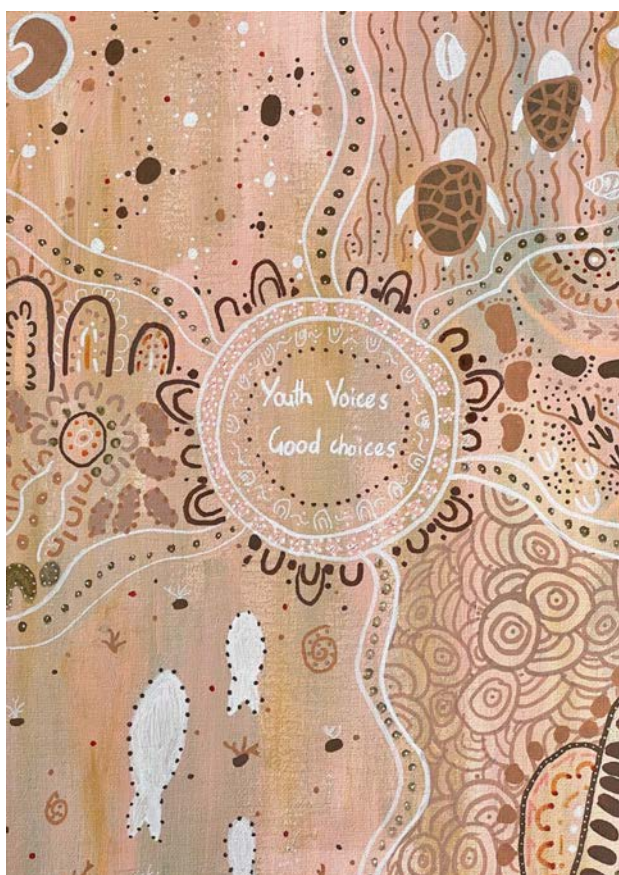
MAY 2025



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



Queensland
Government



Acknowledgements

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

The QFCC recognises the rich and resilient cultures that continue to sustain and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We respect the right to self-determination and the critical importance of continuing connection to kin, Country and culture in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise that self-determination, healing, dignity and respect are all fundamental elements needed to improve outcomes and relationships. As an agency, we are committed to embedding culturally safe and responsive design practices and delivery in our work.



35
QUEENSLAND
YOUNG
SPEAKERS

368
REGISTRATIONS

7000KM
TRAVELLED
BY YOUNG
SPEAKERS

22%
YOUNG SPEAKERS FROM
RURAL
LOCATIONS

70%
SECTOR LEADER
ATTENDANCE

**QFCC
YOUTH
SUMMIT
2025**



39%
YOUNG SPEAKERS FROM
REGIONAL
LOCATIONS

**YOUNGEST
SPEAKER AGE**
9

29%
YOUNG SPEAKERS
UNDER 18



Message from the Commissioners

The QFCC Youth Summit 2025 was more than an event, it was a powerful moment of truth, courage and connection. It was also a resounding success, with 300 sector leaders, practitioners, advocates and young people coming together to commit to a shared goal: listening to and learning from young Queensland people to shape a better future.

The summit was sold out. Thirty-five extraordinary young people travelled from 31 different communities across the state, some from as far as Mabuiag Island, Bamaga, Rockhampton, Emerald, Gympie and Warwick, covering nearly 7,000 kilometres in total. The longest single journey spanned 2,660 kilometres. Their commitment to show up and speak out is a profound reminder of why elevating youth voice matters. It takes effort. It takes courage. And it takes adults who are not only willing to listen, but to also act.

Throughout the day, these young leaders took the stage to speak directly to decision-makers about the changes they want to see in the systems, services and policies that have, and still do, impact their lives. They did not just deliver speeches, they delivered impact. They challenged assumptions, brought lived experience to the forefront, and connected deeply with those in the room. Their insights were not only heard, they shifted thinking and inspired action.

One young speaker, Oliver, captured the spirit of the summit when he said: *“People aren’t their past. They are their future, and what they want it to be.”* That single sentence is a call to all of us. As adults, as practitioners, as people in positions of influence, we must do more than listen. We must reflect. We must act. And we must ensure that listening to the voices of young people is not a one-off moment, but a permanent fixture in how we design and improve the systems meant to support them.

To every young and reflection speaker, and to all those who invested their time, hearts and energy into the summit—thank you. Your voices lead the way.

We are pleased to present the powerful speeches and insights from the summit in this report. We encourage you to listen deeply, because the future belongs to those brave enough to share their stories, and to those wise enough to act on them.

*“People aren’t
their past.
They are their
future, and what
they want it
to be.”*

- Oliver, young summit speaker



QFCC Commissioner Luke Twyford

QFCC Commissioner Natalie Lewis

From story to system

The QFCC Youth Summit series was established as a powerful platform to amplify the voices of young people across the state.

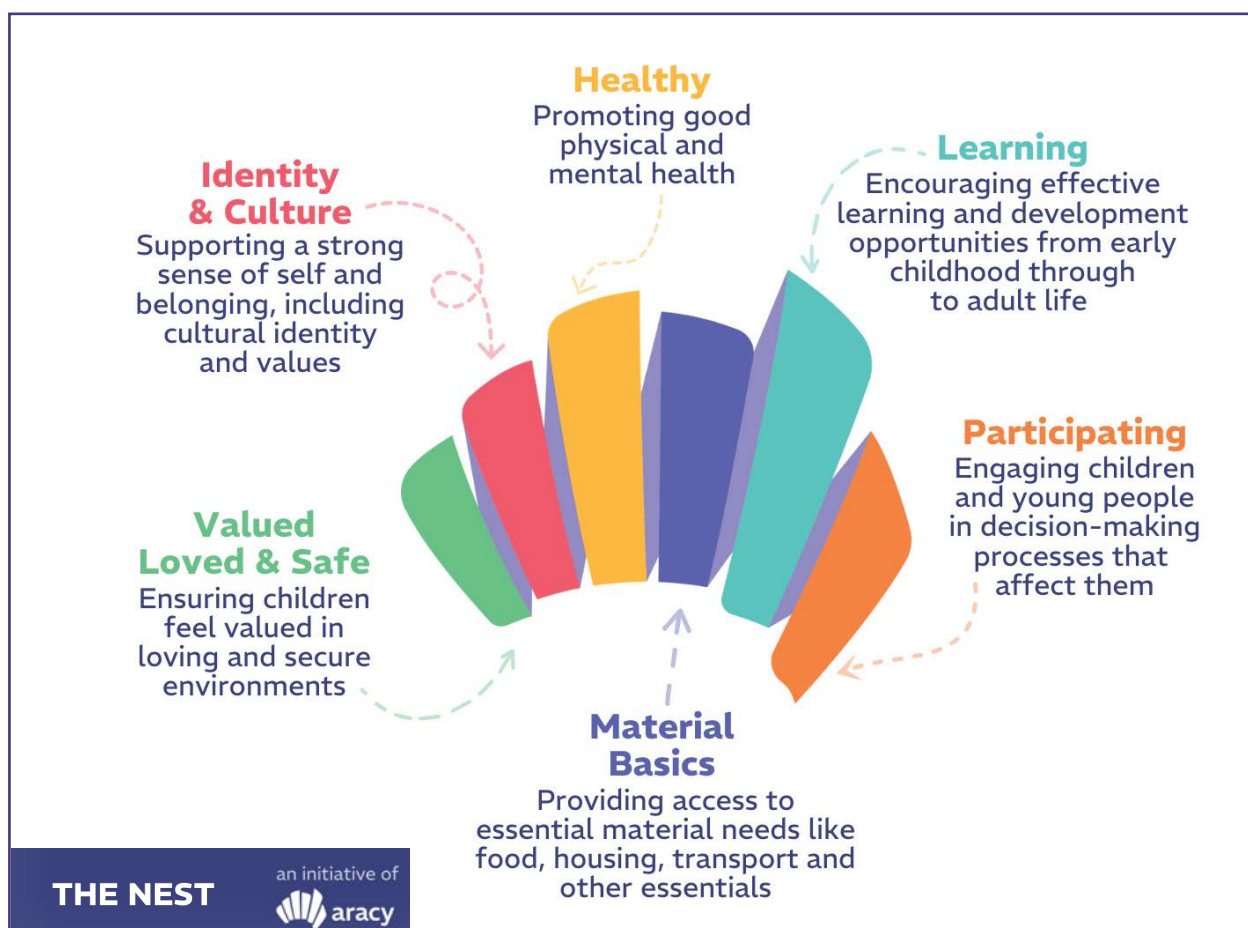
Its purpose is to provide Queensland's children and young people a meaningful opportunity to share their views and ideas, based on their lived experiences, directly with leaders and decision-makers across the sector. By placing lived experience at the centre, the summit aims to drive positive change in the systems and services that impact the safety and wellbeing of young Queensland people and their families.

The summit was designed to be more than a listening space. It was designed to impact and influence, where the perspectives of young people inform real decisions. It connects leaders from government and non-government with the lived experiences of young people, enabling more informed and compassionate

decision-making. This dialogue supports a strengthened bridge between lived experience and systemic reform.

Importantly, the summit also serves as a development ground for youth leadership and advocacy. It offers youth advocates the opportunity to enhance and amplify their personal advocacy agendas, build peer networks, and connect with others passionate about systems change.

The event was grounded in the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest Wellbeing Framework, ensuring a holistic focus on what children and young people need to thrive. Speaker sessions and workshops were framed around the six wellbeing domains, acknowledging the interconnected nature of child, family and community wellbeing, whilst reinforcing that every voice matters in building a better future.



Partners in Change

The summit brought together a diverse and dynamic group of over 300 attendees, including sector professionals, young advocates and community members from across Queensland. 70% were sector leaders representing government departments and non-government organisations including health, education, justice, youth services, housing, and child protection. Their role was to listen deeply, reflect meaningfully, and take insights back to their organisations to embed the lived experiences, perspectives and ideas of young people into policy, practice, and systemic reform.

The Hon. Sam O'Connor MP, Minister for Housing and Minister for Youth, officially opened the summit, reinforcing the government's commitment to youth engagement. The Hon. Amanda Camm MP, Minister for Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, provided a written statement of support, which was shared with attendees by the event's emcee. These contributions demonstrated cross-portfolio recognition of the importance of listening to and learning from Queensland's young people.



“ I keep reflecting on the insights, passions and stories shared and I am grateful to each of the young people for their work and calls to action... If these 35 young people are representative of the future of Queensland, we are in good hands. ”

- Kate Bjur

Executive Director, Research and Advocacy, Peakcare

“ What an amazing day. I am in awe of these young people. ”

- Divna Haslam

A/Professor and Clinical Psychologist





QFCC YOUTH SUMMIT

APRIL 10, 2025

EMPORIUM HOTEL BRISBANE

LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING the VIEWS of **YOUNG PEOPLE**



WE SHARE OUR STORY FOR
TRUTH-TELLING
... NOT FOR SHAME

FIND YOUR **PASSION**
... YOUR YOUTH GOES SOOO FAST

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

SONG WOMAN
BARINGA

YOU ARE OUR FUTURE

WE ARE ALL CONNECTING TO THIS LAND

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT THE THINGS THAT SHAPE YOUR LIVES AS YOU **SHAPE** the FUTURE

YOU ALREADY ARE **LEADERS**

... YOUR AGE DOES NOT DEFINE YOUR ABILITY TO LEAD

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

YOUR DETERMINATION AND **VALUES** WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

RAISING YOUR **VOICE** IN DECISION MAKING

HOUSING IS ABOUT CREATING CONDITIONS TO **GROW AND THRIVE**



THE HON
SAM O'CONNOR MP
MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC WORKS, MINISTER FOR YOUTH

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TRAVELLED THOUSANDS OF KILOMETRES TO BE

HERE TODAY!

PROUD OF THE INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPOKEN

IT'S ALL ABOUT IMPACT

WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THERE'S ACTION

PARTICIPATING

Ruby, 17, Gold Coast



The Butterfly Effect: Creating movement for positive change

Ruby is the founder of Kids of Purple, a non-profit dedicated to supporting young people affected by domestic and family violence. Passionate about social justice, Ruby is currently studying law with the goal of advocating for vulnerable communities. Through Kids of Purple, Ruby works to provide resources, raise awareness, and empower youth to break free from the cycle of abuse. She is committed to creating a future where every young person feels safe and heard.

Jess, 18, Wavell Heights



Community engagement beyond tokenism

Jess is an award-winning youth advocate, policy consultant, and community leader based in Brisbane. She has contributed to child protection, youth empowerment, and public policy, including serving as the 29th Youth Member for Nudgee. Jess advises NAPCAN, Orygen, and Raise Foundation, is Queensland State Secretary at UN Youth Australia, and 'Young Woman to Watch in International Affairs'.

PARTICIPATING

Leo, 25, Brassall



Making it easier for young people to be happy and healthy

Leo has been a member of the Ipswich Youth Reference Group at Headspace since 2023. Leo has helped run monthly Rainbow Chaos meetups, stalls to help promote mental health and awareness, and supported people to live a healthier and happier life.

Mo, 19, Logan

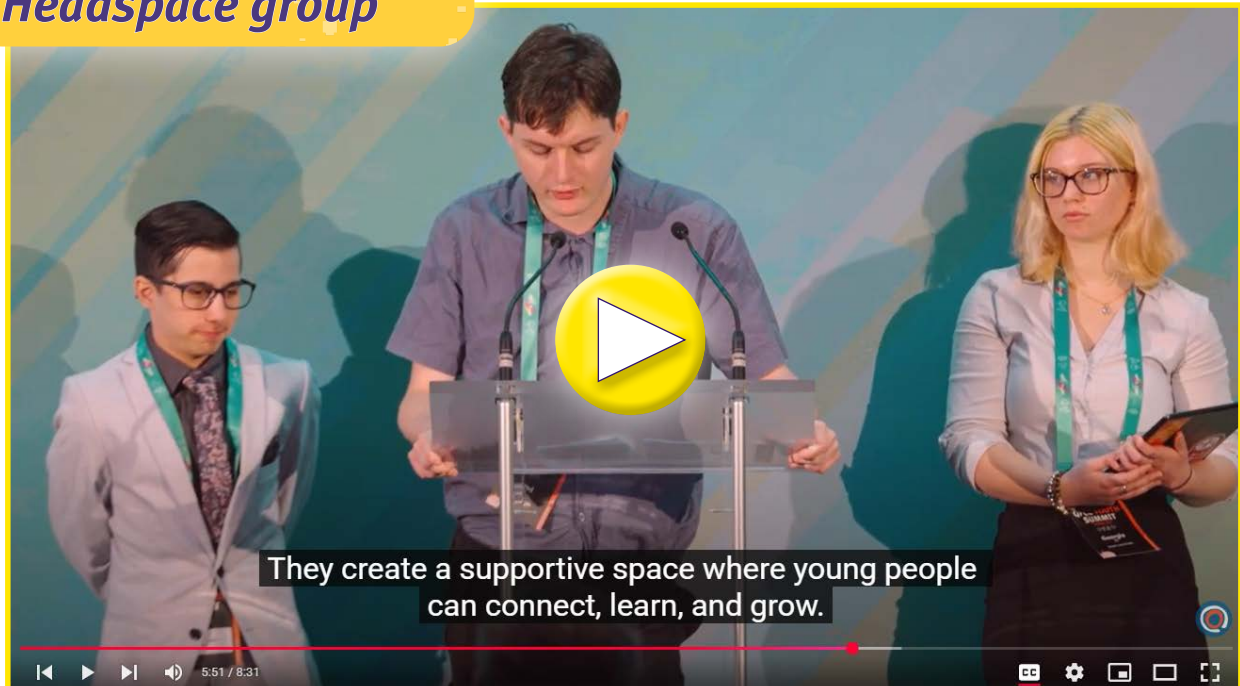


Building pathways for a generation already dreaming big

Mo is an entrepreneur and former Afghan refugee. Studying entrepreneurship at QUT, he builds businesses that create social impact. Mo co-founded SINA to support Afghan startups and hosts The Cutcast podcast, spotlighting diverse entrepreneurs. Through his ventures, Mo empowers migrant communities, breaks barriers, and promotes entrepreneurship as a pathway to independence, inclusion, and lasting change. He's even cut the mayor of Logan and QFCC Principal Commissioner Luke Twyford's hair in his barbering business.

PARTICIPATING

Headspace group



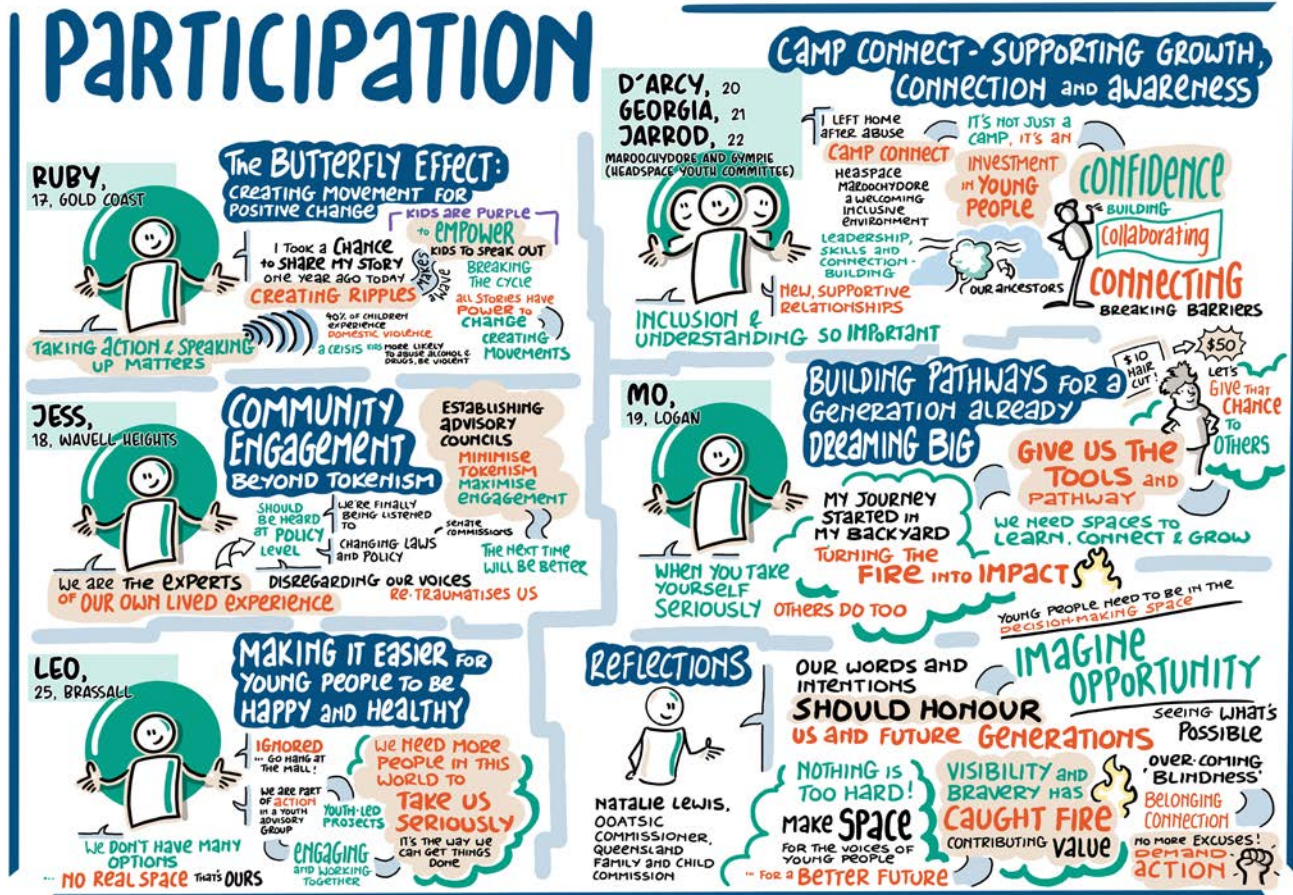
D'arcy, 20 Maroochydore / Geo, Maroochydore 21, / Jarrod, 22, Gympie



Camp Connect - supporting growth, connection and awareness

This trio is part of the youth engagement committee at headspace Gympie and Maroochydore. They are all passionate about the mental health of young people in and around their communities. They presented on the 'Youth Camp Connect' initiative, which targets an aspect of wellbeing that they are all passionate about: opportunities for young people to make and build meaningful connections.

PARTICIPATING



Reflection Speaker:

Commissioner Natalie Lewis

Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner,
 Queensland Family and Child Commission



HEALTH

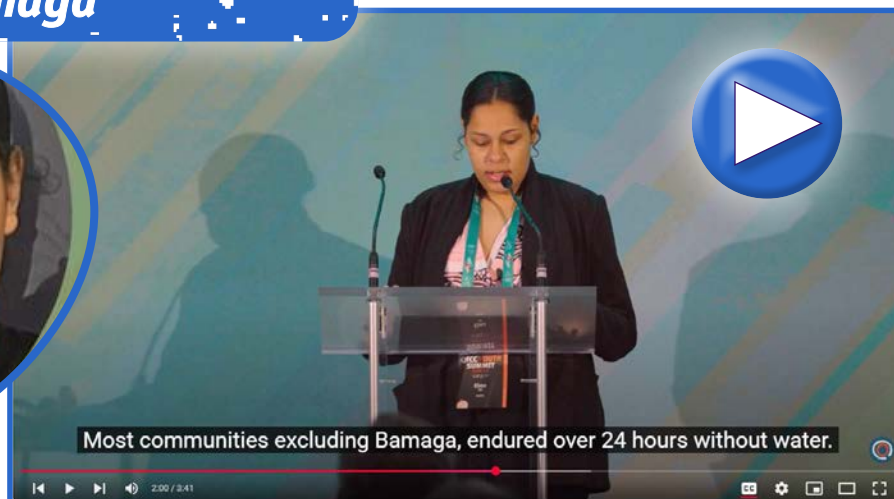
Liam, 22, Mount Cotton***Importance of Lived Experience work***

Liam is passionate about mental health and social justice. After experiencing my own mental health challenges during and after high school, he studied mental health and now works as a peer worker supporting young people. He recently started a Bachelor of Social Work at QUT, aiming to create positive change in the community by addressing systemic and social issues through lived experience.

Rachel and Shantelle, 22 & 25, Kippa-Ring & Kallangur***Breaking cycles, building futures: The power of supporting young parents***

Rachel is the proud mother of three children and Shantelle the proud mother of two children. They both share their experiences and the impact of their experiences on their parenting journeys.

HEALTH

Elma, 23, Bamaga***Building for better health: the vital role of water infrastructure***

Elma is the mother of two children, living and working on her traditional country. At the summit, Elma spoke about the vital role of water infrastructure to improve the health of the community.

Jordyn, 14, Eagleby***Redefining healthy: Social media influence on self-image***

The QFCC Youth Summit was Jordyn's third time speaking at a summit on behalf of her community. Jordyn loves sports and hanging out on the weekends with friends. At the summit, Jordyn spoke about social media influence on self-image.

HEALTH

Bailey, 19, Runcorn***Men do cry: Ending the stigma in small towns***

Bailey is a naturally empathetic person, and loves being part of groups and communities where people support and learn from each other. Bailey is currently part of the Beautiful Minds program — a lived experience group for young adults — where they share our stories to help create understanding and drive positive change.

HEALTH



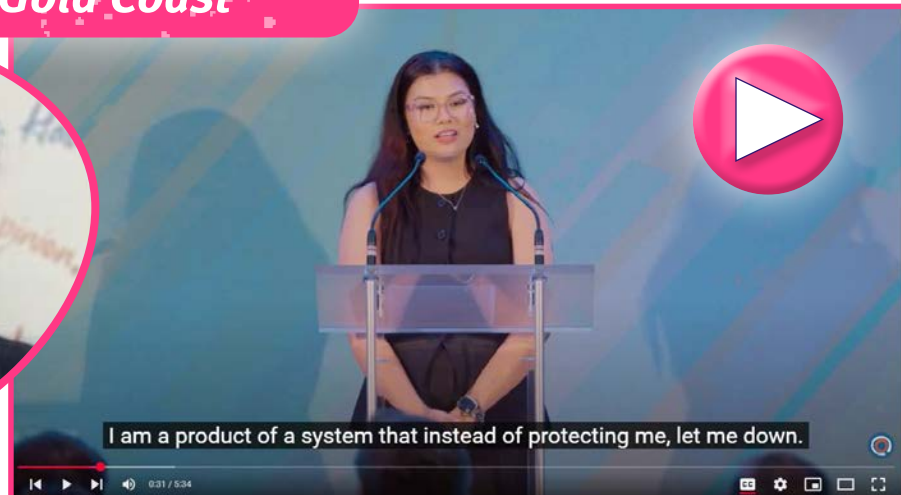
Reflection Speaker:

Dr Robyn Littlewood
Chief Executive Officer
Health and Wellbeing Queensland



VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

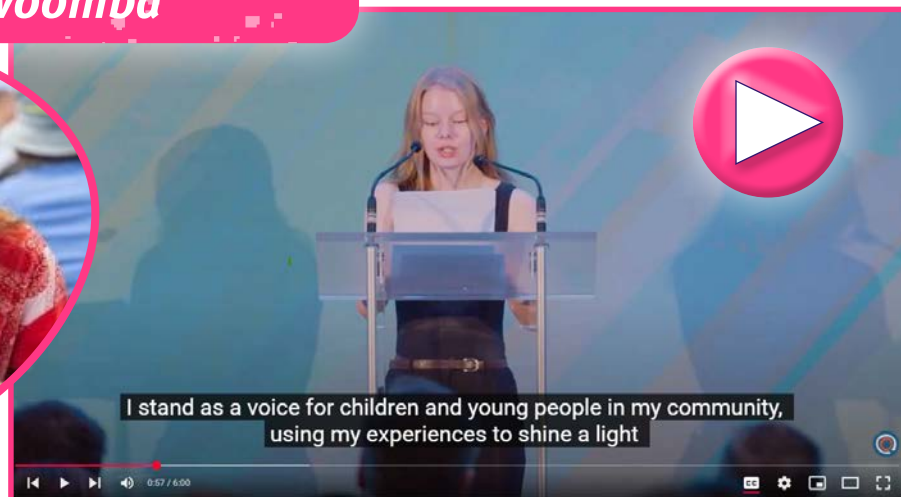
Caroline, 25, Gold Coast



Understanding siblings who go on to become sibling carers

Caroline is a professional with living experience of the child protection system. Caroline spoke at the summit last year which resulted in the establishment of the Sibling Carer initiative.

Ash, 17, Toowoomba

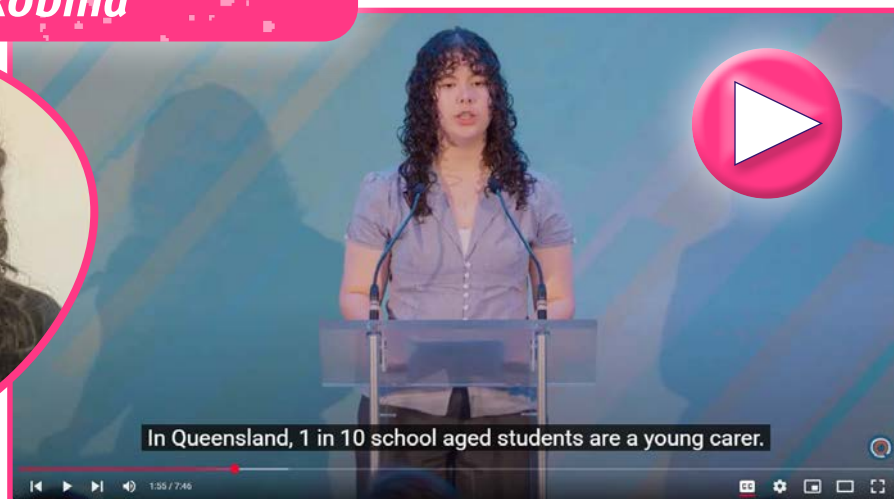


Super Safe Stars: Empowering children to stay safe, speak up and shine bright

Ash is a year 12 student and passionate youth advocate. Ash volunteers with Rosies, Vinnies, and Toowoomba Regional Council, and represented Toowoomba South in the 30th Queensland Youth Parliament. With lived experience and a background in early childhood education, she is committed to child safety reform. Her initiative, Super Safe Stars, empowers children experiencing abuse to take the first step toward seeking help.

VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

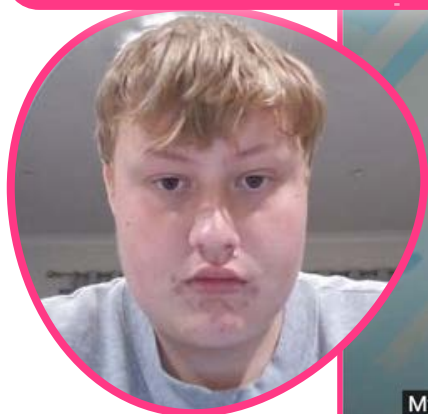
Claudia, 16, Robina



What I've learnt and would like to see as a young carer for someone with a disability

Claudia is proudly Indonesian-Australia and a young-carer for her little sister. She proudly advocates for disability rights, accessibility and addressing domestic violence. She loves debating, civic opportunities and participating in academic activities at school. Claudia brings awareness to the urgent need of greater support for young carers.

Caleb, 14, Ipswich



Valued, loved and safe: A call for change in child protection

Caleb has lived experience of the care system since the age of nine. Over past years, Caleb has realised many things about his life, including both the positives and negatives this experience. At the summit, Caleb spoke about how the system should be changed for the better.

VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

Magenta, 23, Palm Beach



Losing yourself in the system in the world of disability

Magenta has lived with cerebral palsy since she was born. She has been in the foster care system throughout her childhood and this has shaped her into being the person she is today. She tries to amplify the voices of young people in the disabled community and those with lived experience of the foster care system.

VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

valued, loved & safe GROUP 2

CAROLINE,
25, GOLD COAST

UNDERSTANDING SIBLINGS
WHO GO ON TO BECOME SIBLING CARERS

I FELT INVISIBLE
NO MORE SILENT SUFFERING
WE SEE YOU, WE HONOUR YOU, WE HAVE YOUR BACK NOW!

LOVE ALONE WAS NOT ENOUGH
NOT FITTING INTO ELIGIBLE CRITERIA

FACE MANY CHALLENGES
BURDEN HIDDEN FROM VIEW
SEE IT, AND CLOSE THE GAP
SHOULD BE ENSHRINED IN POLICY

SYSTEM FAILED ME
YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE
HEAL OR FURTHER FRAGMENT SIBLING CARERS
HOPE

CALEB,
14, IPSWICH

valued, loved and safe:
a call for change in CHILD PROTECTION

FELT LIKE I HAD NO SAY IN THE MATTER

EVERY CHILD SHOULD THRIVE NOT JUST SURVIVE

POLICE TOOK DAD AWAY ... I WAS ALONE LOST & TRAUMATISED
JUST LISTEN TO NURTURE AND UPLIFT

CONVENIENT DECISIONS
NOT BASED ON VALUING THE CHILD
CHANGE THE SYSTEM

CHILDREN ARE NOT JUST PASSIVE RECIPIENTS
OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE MUST BE HEARD
DIGNITY AND CHOICE
SUPPORT FOSTER PARENTS & UPLIFT

ASH,
17, TOOWOOMBA

SUPER SAFE STARS:
EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO STAY SAFE, SPEAK UP AND SHINE BRIGHT

SHINE A LIGHT ON ABUSE & NEGLECT
RECOGNISING UNSAFE SITUATIONS & NAVIGATING
PLAY BASED & CONNECTED APPROACH

SUPPORTING HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS
TRANSCENDING GENERATIONS
UNITING, EMPOWERING

EDUCATORS MUST RECOGNISE
INTEGRATE INTO BREADER CURRICULUM
CONSISTENT, SUSTAINED

MAGENTA,
23, PALM BEACH

LOSING YOURSELF IN THE SYSTEM IN THE WORLD OF DISABILITY

SAFE, PROTECTED, VALUED, CHERISHED PEOPLE

I LEFT CHILD SAFETY AT 21 YEARS OLD
IMAGINE WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW YOURSELF

DEVELOPING A UNIFORM TO FIT IN
BUT WHO WAS I?
WHO WOULD SUPPORT ME TO FIND OUT?

IF WE CAN DEVELOP OUR PERSONALITY WE CAN THRIVE
IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD AND AN ADULT
WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE?

CLAUDIA,
116, ROBINA

WHAT I'VE LEARNT AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE AS A YOUNG CARER FOR SOMEONE WITH A DISABILITY

I FELT CONFUSION IN MY YOUNG LIFE
I ADORE MY SISTER ... BUT IT'S HARD
RECOGNISE THE ROLE

1 in 10 IS A YOUNG CARER IN QUEENSLAND
390,000 AROUND AUSTRALIA
MISSING OUT ON FRIENDS & SCHOOL
THE RIGHT SUPPORT WOULD HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE FROM THE START

VALUE US
HONOUR US
UPLIFT US

REFLECTIONS

IT TAKES ENERGY & ACTION
NOT JUST A VALUE SET

YOU'VE SHOWN US THE POWER OF STORY TELLING

DIRECTOR GENERAL BOB GEE, DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH JUSTICE AND VICTIM SUPPORT

YOU LET US IN EMOTIONALLY WITH LOVE AND COURAGE
YOU OPENED THE DOOR AND WE STEPPED THROUGH
THANKS FOR YOUR HONESTY AND BRAVERY AND ADVOCACY

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
PEOPLE WILL FOLLOW YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY OF LOVE, HOPE AND CARING

Reflection Speaker:

Bob Gee

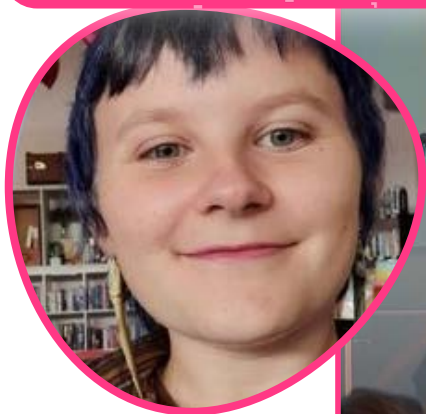
Director-General

Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support



VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

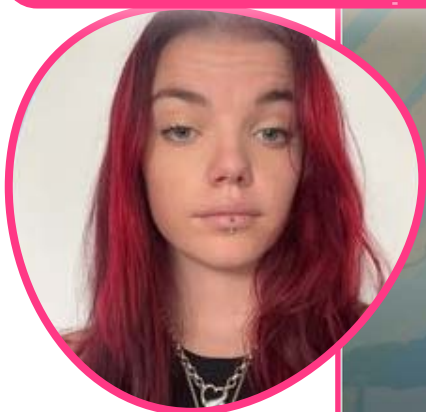
Emmarose, 22, Maroochydore



Unofficial caretaking in the family home

Emmarose works in hospitality and is also a carer, assisting her twin brother with his daily tasks. She recently moved out of home for the first time with her brother and a close friend. Paired with her own mental health struggles, there are new challenges that each day brings.

Nel, 19, Kallangur



Mental health: Another 100 days of fear and stress

Nel is currently studying a Diploma in Business and a Certificate in Business Bookkeeping, while also having studied a Certificate IV in Youthwork. Nel grew up in the foster, kinship, and residential care, aging out in 2023. With practical knowledge of the foster care system and my experience, Nel wants to create a better process within the child protection system for both young people and frontline workers.

VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

Lea, 20, Little Mountain



From Surviving to Thriving: The Lifesaving Nature of Gender-Affirming Healthcare

Lea has been a QFCC Youth Advocate since 2022. As a queer trans woman with Autism and ADHD, Lea is passionate about inclusion and equity. Lea helped advocate for the 2023 Births, Deaths and Marriages Act reform and contributed to Orygen's and the Australian Human Rights Commission's youth advisory groups.

Lily, 15, Rockhampton



Breaking free from the medical model of disability: An autistic person's perspective

Lily is passionate about building a more inclusive world for neurodivergent young people. Lily's advocacy focuses on awareness, self-advocacy, and better support systems. Lily speaks about the barriers autistic individuals face and why acceptance, understanding, and meaningful accommodations are essential.

VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE

VALUED, LOVED & SAFE GROUP B

EMMAROSE

UNOFFICIAL CARETAKING IN THE FAMILY HOME



MY NEEDS ARE ALWAYS 2nd
Caring for my brother now we have moved out of home
FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY... IS THERE MORE I COULD BE DOING?
anxiety panic attacks
I FALL APART SOMETIMES
CARERS NEED SUPPORT THAT FITS INTO OUR BUSY LIVES
SEEN VALUED
SUPPORTED

LILY

BREAKING FREE FROM THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY: AN AUTISTIC PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE



I HAD TO PARTICIPATE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE
are we really less able
TREATING US LIKE 200 YEARS AGO
AUTISM IS NOT A DISORDER
ELIMINATE THE STIGMA
EDUCATION IS KEY
SO WE HAVE TO MASK TO SATISFY THE MEDICAL MODEL
ACROSS OUR VAST COMMUNITY... LISTEN AND FOCUS ON ABILITY
COMMONLY CELEBRATE FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

NEL

MENTAL HEALTH: ANOTHER 100 DAYS OF FEAR AND STRESS



CAN BE EASILY HIDDEN
100 DAYS OF DELAY TO SEE A THERAPIST
AND SO MANY NEED HELP
THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME
BOX BREATHING
IM for 4 HOLD for 4
OUT for 4
COOL SHOWER
RANT ZONE
WRETE IT DOWN, THEN RIP IT UP, THROW IT OUT
YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IS SO IMPORTANT
I MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE IN THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM
FEELING OVERWHELMED?

REFLECTIONS



LUKE TWYFORD, PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER, QUEENSLAND FAMILY AND CHILD COMMISSION
YOU HAVE TRUTH BOMBED AND LOVE THIS STAGE
WHAT SCARES US ABOUT THAT?
WE HAVE TO SHARE LOVE FOR HUMANITY
WE CAN'T DEFEND THE CURRENT MODEL
PARLIAMENT NEEDS TO HEAR YOUR VOICE
WHY CAN'T WE SAY "I LOVE YOU"?
WE CAN'T FACE THE TRUTH
STRONGEST OPPOSITION FROM THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND LEAST!
YOU STOOD HERE BRAVELY
YOUR MIND CAN HOLD YOU HOSTAGE
HOW CAN WE KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE?

LEA

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: THE LIFE SAVING NATURE OF GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE



LIVING FREELY AS MYSELF
I COULDN'T KEEP LIVING A LIE... BUT THEN THE STIGMA
FEELING AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF RELIEF TO LIVE AUTHENTICALLY
OUR LIVES ARE WORTH IT!
THIS IS NOT A TREND... NO ONE WOULD CHOOSE THE
THE REAL HARM IS DENYING CARE
(SUICIDE POOR MENTAL HEALTH)
... WE ARE NOT CONFUSED OF WHO WE ARE
... WE ARE SURE

Reflection Speaker:

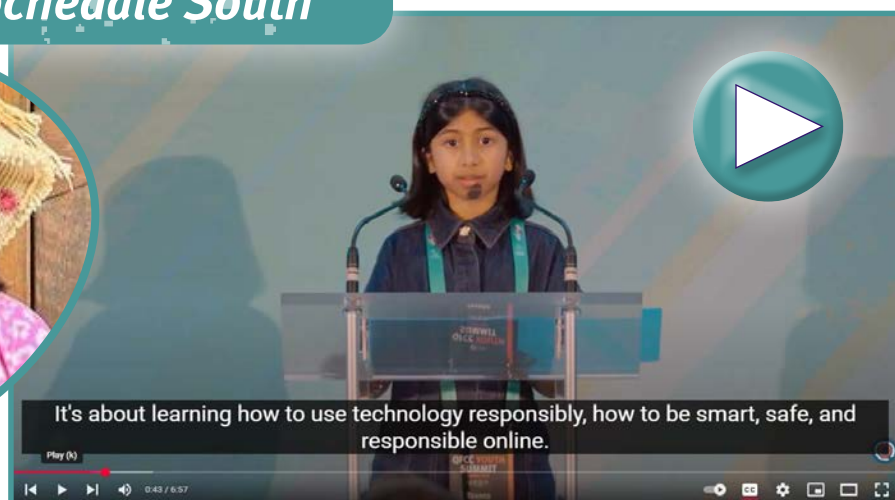
Luke Twyford

Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commissioner

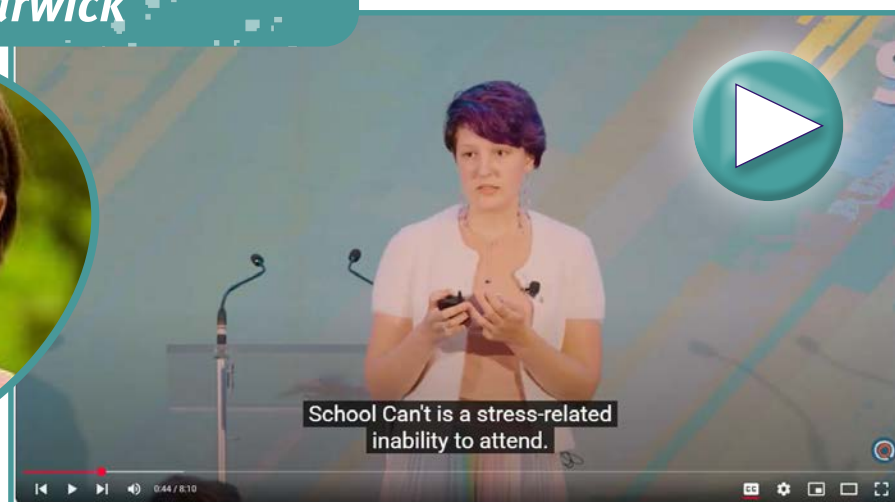


What is about the word love that actually scares us?

LEARNING

Teanna, 9, Rochedale South***Digital literacy and safety for young children in Queensland schools***

Teanna has a great passion for digital literacy and online safety. A curious and enthusiastic learner, she enjoys using technology to enhance her education while exploring how to stay safe online. Teanna is committed to helping young children become confident digital citizens.

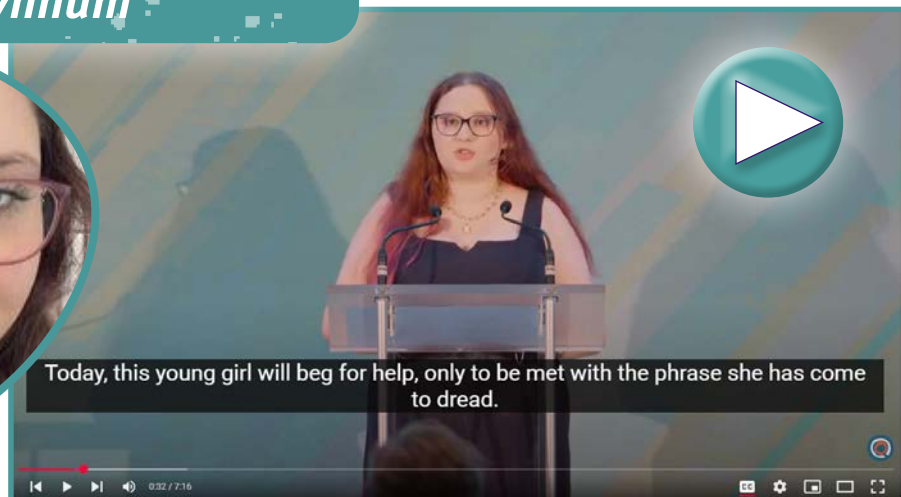
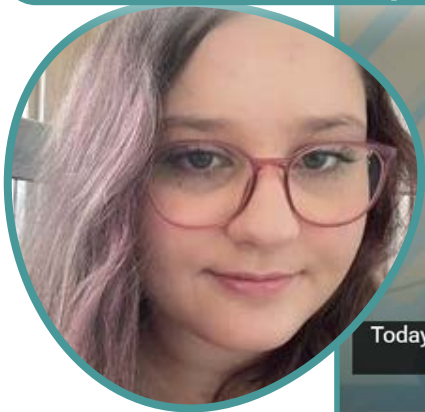
Stella, 15, Warwick***When school isn't the answer: Finding a new way forward***

Stella is a creative and has a passion for entrepreneurship and leadership. Recognised as one of Warwick's Most Influential Under 30, Stella founded a neighborhood plastic recycling initiative, which led to her being invited to the National Plastics Summit in 2019. A finalist in the National Tax, Super and You competition, she is academically accomplished, with awards like the Academic Achievement and Principal's Gold.

LEARNING

Olivia, 20, Salisbury***Engaged in education***

Olivia is an aspiring Early Childhood Educator passionate about inclusive education and disability advocacy. With experience in playgroup facilitation, youth leadership, and public speaking, she has appeared on Channel 7 as a Play Matters facilitator. Olivia has spoken at the World Down Syndrome Congress and Logan City Council, using her lived experience to champion accessibility, inclusion, and equality.

Grace, 18, Wynnum***School is the real world***

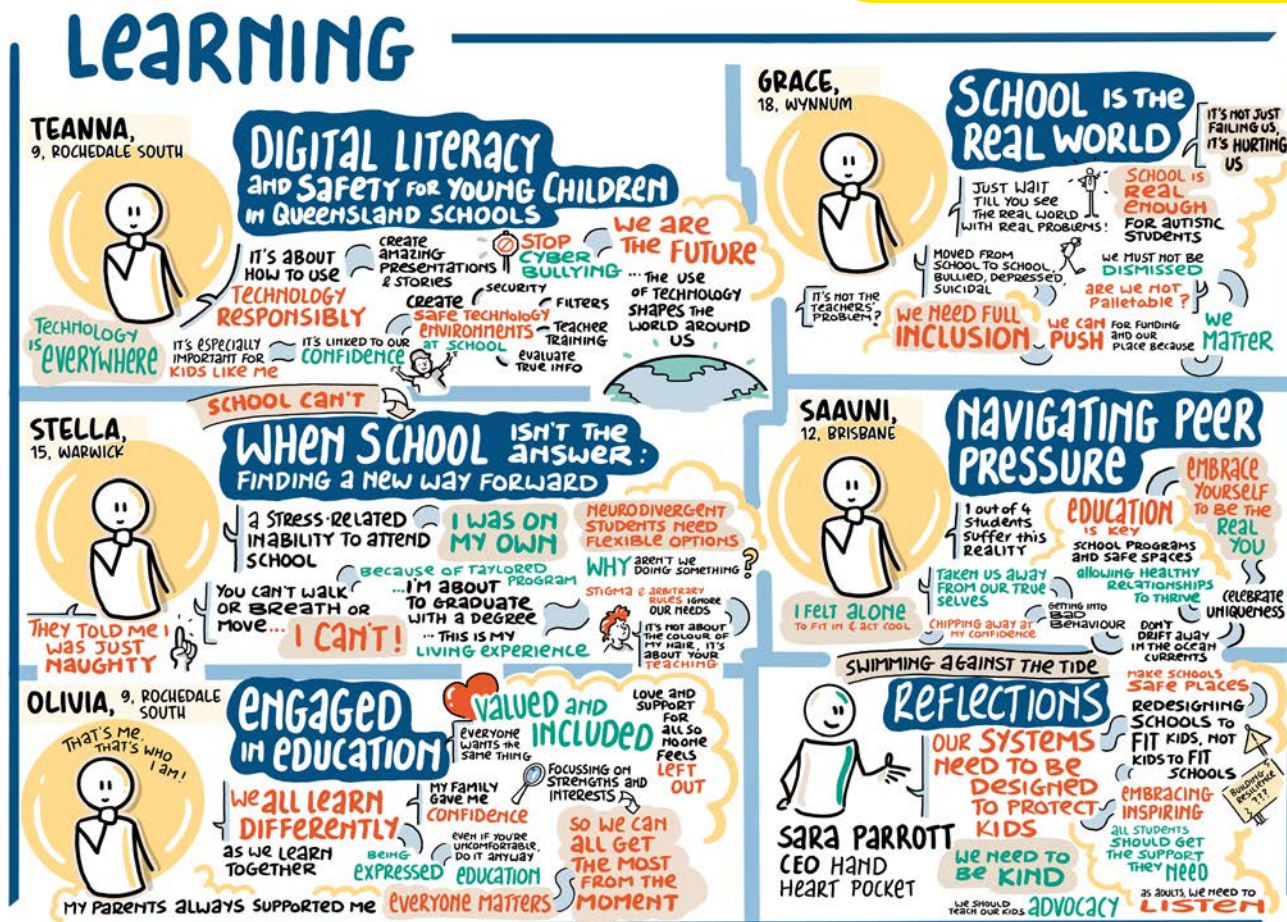
Grace is a high school student, artist, writer, and young advocate with a love of sharks. As an autistic person, school has been a major challenge, leading to lifelong conditions including Tourette Syndrome and Functional Neurological Disorder. Through these experiences, Grace discovered the power of advocacy, volunteering with Headspace, and co-designing transition supports.

LEARNING

Saavni, 12, Brisbane***Navigating peer pressure***

Saavni loves learning and making a difference. An important issue that is affecting the lives of young people, including Saavni, is peer pressure. Saavni says that this has affected her life significantly and will continue impacting the coming generations of people if no action is taken. She is truly driven to make a difference for young people to believe in themselves and be proud of who they really are.

LEARNING



Reflection Speaker:

Sara Parrott

Chief Executive Officer
Hand Heart Pocket



IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Estre, 25, Capalaba



Disconnected roots - Why we need our Elders

Estre is a passionate and skilled professional with extensive experience in cultural presentations, customer service, hospitality, and youth mentoring. Adept at crafting cultural artifacts with precision and artistic detail Estre is deeply passionate about working with children, event management and exploring cultural learning opportunities.

Masoumeh, 22, Saint Lucia



Roots of resilience: A celebration of identity and culture

Masoumeh is a passionate youth advocate and final-year Bachelor of Health Sciences (Public Health) student at the University of Queensland. As a former refugee, she brings powerful lived experience to her work in youth advocacy, cultural identity, and inclusive systems. She is committed to creating space for young people from all backgrounds to feel seen, heard and empowered to lead meaningful change in their communities.

IDENTITY AND CULTURE

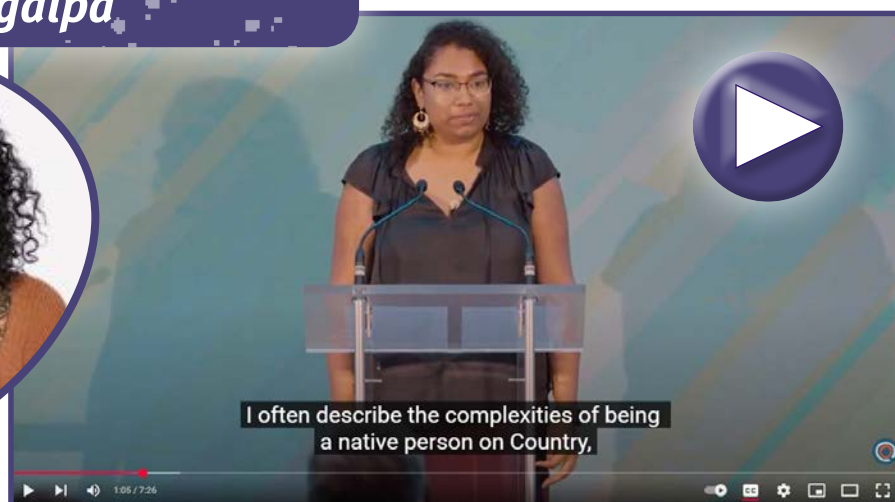
Kynesha, 22, Emerald



They told me I wasn't – but I am

Kynesha is a proud aboriginal woman who loves influencing positive change. She inspired Commissioner Twyford with her artistic skills and her fierce advocacy for children in care. At the summit, Kynesha spoke about the critical roles that identity and culture play in the care system.

Rhea, 23, Tingalpa



Climate crisis: A perspective from the Torres Strait Islands

Rhea is a proud Punjabi Indian and Zendth Kes woman from the Ait Koedal Clan of Saibai Island, with the saltwater crocodile as her totem. Rhea works as a housing case manager and holds degrees in social work and human services. Her goal is to become an Indigenous sociologist, decolonising policy by embedding First Nations knowledge into systems to drive structural reform and challenge dominant Western frameworks.

IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Peter, 25, Doolandella



Refugee with commitment to community impact

Peter is a former refugee with a passion for poetry, arts, psychology, service to humanity and cultural preservation through storytelling and public initiatives. Through his journey as an immigrant, Peter has gained valuable lessons that have taught him the importance of forgiveness, harmony and pulling together to overcome adversity, lessons that have shaped him into the force he is today.

IDENTITY AND CULTURE

IDENTITY & CULTURE

ESTRE, 25, CAPALABA

DISCONNECTED ROOTS - WHY WE NEED OUR ELDERS

GRATEFUL TO BE HERE TODAY ON THEIR COUNTRY

WE NEED CONNECTION TO OUR ROOTS

LET'S WATER THEM

BABY SITTING BLINDLY

ELDERS ARE NOT PRESENT IN THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

THE POWER OF ELDERS

INFLUENCING OUR LIFE

HELPING US RECONNECT

RHEA, 23, TINGALPA

CLIMATE CRISIS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS

REFLECT

IT'S PAINFUL AND BEAUTIFUL

MY LAND IS SINKING

I WILL NOT LOSE HOPE, WALKING STEADY AND SURE

COLONIAL IMPACTS & CONSTRUCTION

EARLIER DEATH, FUNERALS

DISEASE BREAKING THE CYCLE

NAVIGATING DUALITY

FLUCTUATING DISPAIR

WALKING THE WHITE MAN WAY TO BE HEARD

GREATER RATES OF DETENTION

BEING SHAMED IN A MORE DOMINANT CULTURE

MASOUMEH, 22, SAINT LUCIA

ROOTS OF RESILIENCE: A CELEBRATION OF IDENTITY AND CULTURE

I THOUGHT LEADERSHIP WOULD NEVER LOOK LIKE ME

CONNECTING DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE

IDENTITY & CULTURE SHAPES OUR WORLD

PARTICIPATION

ROOTS DON'T STOP GROWING

BEYOND TOKENISM

VALUING & RESPECTING DIVERSITY

AND OUR PATH

WILL THE SYSTEM MAKE SPACE ... PASS THE MIC...

TO THRIVE NOT JUST SURVIVE

PETER, 25, DOOLANDELLA

REFUGEE WITH COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

WE SHARE IN LOVING IDENTITY AND CULTURE

IT'S WHAT WE HOLD ON TO

IDENTITY IS TRADITION

CULTURE IS BELONGING AND NOT NECESSARILY FIXED

WE MUST ADAPT AND PRESERVE

CHILDREN INHERIT OUR MINDSET ... THEY ARE WATCHING US

SHOW THEM HOW TO ADAPT AND PRESERVE SO THEY CAN NAVIGATE

UPHOLD YOUR CULTURE AND KNOW WHO YOU ARE

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY? FOR A FUTURE WORTH SHAPING

KYNESHA, 22, EMERALD

THEY TOLD ME I WASN'T - BUT I AM

I WAS TAKEN FROM FAMILY, CULTURE & COUNTRY

MOB? SONG LINES? MISSING PIECE OF MY HEART

CULTURE ERASED BY CHILD SAFETY DISCRIMINATION AGAINST

I FELT SAD & LONELY

IM NOW ON THE JOURNEY TO FIND WHO I REALLY AM

ALL PEOPLE SHOULD BE EDUCATED

THOSE RESPONSIBLE SHOULD BE EDUCATED

ABOUT FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

INHER LIGHT TO SEE THIS HAPPEN TO ANOTHER CHILD

MENA WALLER COO. CANCER COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND

REFLECTIONS

CO-DESIGN SOLUTIONS

GENUINELY INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION MAKING FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

SUPPORT CONNECTION & SENSE OF BELONGING & IDENTITY

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A VALUABLE VOICE

CULTURE IS A STRONG PROTECTIVE ASPECT

RECONNECTING FEELINGS

RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITY RESPECT RECIPROCITY

HOLDING SPACE AUTHENTICALLY

CONNECTION COUNTRY INTER-GENERATIONAL FAMILY

CONNECT THOUGHTS TO PRACTICE

AUSTRALIA NEEDS YOU!

Reflection Speaker:

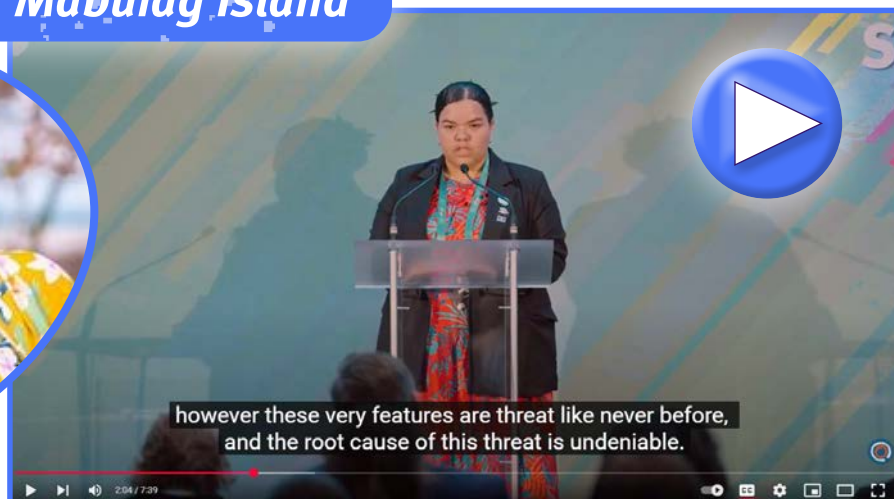
Mena Waller

Chief Operating Officer
Cancer Council Queensland



MATERIAL BASICS

Jahmaica, 22, Mabuiag Island



Our Islands, Our Home: protecting home and culture from the impacts of climate change

Jahmaica is a young mother from the Panai tribe. Although new to the climate space, Jahmaica is a passionate advocate for improving the future of her home and community.

Amelia, 18, Greenbank

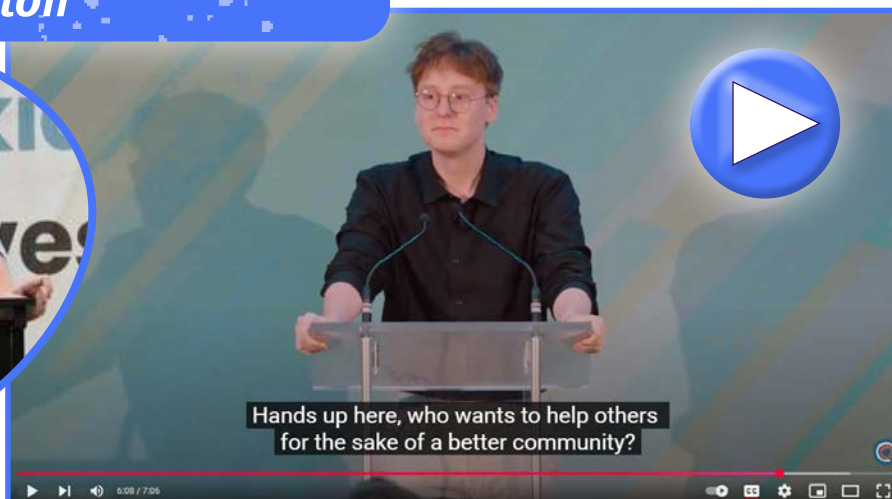


The cost of mental health support for childhood trauma survivors

Amelia is a child safety advocate, survivor, and Youth Ambassador for Bravehearts. She sits on the Bravehearts Youth Advisory Council and the 2025 Australian Child Rights Taskforce. Named Logan's Young Australian of the Year in 2023, Amelia has spoken nationally on child protection and mental health. She's studying Law and Political Science at Griffith University and is passionate about advancing the rights, safety, and wellbeing of young people across Australia.

MATERIAL BASICS

Oli, 17, Kingston



More than my past - A voice for the unheard

Oli wants to change the world and leave it better than when he found it. After recovering from addiction with the support of specialised services, Oli has worked hard to get his life back on track, attaining a traineeship and supporting others in need of connection, friendship, to regain confidence and feel accepted by, and part of, the community.

MATERIAL BASICS

MATERIAL BASICS

JAHMAICA,
22, MABUIAG ISLAND

OUR ISLANDS, OUR HOME: PROTECTING HOME AND CULTURE FROM THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



OLI,
17, KINGSTON

MORE THAN MY PAST -a VOICE FOR THE UNHEARD



AMELIA,
18, GREENBANK

MENTAL HEALTH IN CHILDHOOD TRAUMA SURVIVORS



REFLECTIONS



Reflection Speaker:

Ben Gales

Executive Advisor, Office of Social Impact
Queensland Treasury



PARTICIPATING



HEALTH



VALUED, LOVED AND SAFE



LEARNING



IDENTITY AND CULTURE



MATERIAL BASICS

Feedback loops

A critical engagement tool.

The feedback cards were designed to enable attendees to directly respond to the powerful presentations delivered by young speakers. These cards created a meaningful two-way exchange, allowing adult allies to reflect on what they heard, acknowledge the courage and insight shared, and commit to action. By writing personalised messages, leaders demonstrated that young people's voices were not only heard but deeply valued.

The cards captured genuine moments of connection and accountability and now serve as a lasting record of commitment, reinforcing that the perspectives shared at the summit will influence real change. Each young speaker was provided a copy of the cards written for them.

273
FEEDBACK
CARDS
COMPLETED

FEEDBACK CARD QFCC YOUTH SUMMIT 10 APRIL 2025

Thanks for supporting the youth advocates. This card is your chance to share feedback directly with them—what inspired you, what you learned, or what stood out. Your words can encourage, uplift, and help them grow as advocates and future leaders.

If you wish to connect with the young person after the summit, please leave your contact information.

Speaker name: Nel

Feedback:

Thank you for sharing your story today! I teach a course on child protection practices at the University of Southern Qld. I would love to connect with you about potentially sharing your reflection with my students via a recording. I think that they could learn a lot from lived experience.*

*Dr Rachel Leslie
rachel.leslie@unsw.edu.au*

** I also teach a course on emotional dysregulation*

Thank you for contributing to positive change for the children and families of Queensland.

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Speaker name: SAANVI

Feedback:

Dear Saanvi
Thank you for sharing your story and for challenging me about what peer pressure can do to the young people in my life. Continue to be the real you! You are strong and smart and have within you all you need for a thriving future.

~ Sara

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Speaker name: Leo

Feedback:

As an infrastructure planner I think your request to be part of outdoor space design is so 'on point'. We need to plan for all ages. We are looking at codesign for our future parks and working to understand the best way(s) to do this. Recently we went into two high schools to talk with youth - we learnt we can't assume we know what youth want and we know it is more than skate parks. We hear you.

Thank you for contributing to positive change for the children and families of Queensland.

Next steps

Embedding youth voice for systemic change.

Following the 2025 summit, our focus now turns to embedding the voices of young Queensland people into the decisions, policies and services that shape their lives. The powerful speeches delivered by youth advocates have been publicly released and will continue to be shared widely throughout the year, ensuring their ideas and insights reach a broader audience, including key policymakers, sector leaders and community influencers. This collection of voices will serve as a vital resource for organisations committed to youth-informed, evidence-based decision-making.

We remain committed to empowering children, young people and families to influence the systems that affect them. This includes:

- amplifying the lived experiences of Queensland children and families, particularly those experiencing inequity, marginalisation or vulnerability, and creating real opportunities to influence change
- supporting others to build their capability to meaningfully engage with children and young people
- using communication methods that reflect the preferences of young people and their families
- celebrating and promoting the voices, achievements and contributions of young Queensland people.

In the months ahead, we will publish an Impact Report capturing the key themes, recommendations, commitments and outcomes from the summit. This report will outline strategies for integrating youth voices into current and future reforms and promote accountability across sectors.

This report and the advocacy speech videos will be shared with government, ministers, non-government organisations and community stakeholders ensuring youth perspectives continue to inform, challenge and inspire systemic improvement.

“ The courage it takes to share stories like these shouldn’t be underestimated. In a system full of noise, listening to people with lived experience needs to be prioritised. ”

- Leadership specialist

