

**2020 CHRISTMAS ISLAND**  
**'YOUTH TAKING CHARGE'**  
**YOUTH SUMMIT**  
**SOLUTIONS FOR OUR FUTURE**



# Sponsorship and Support

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The Christmas Island Youth Summit was made possible by the generous support of a number of partners and sponsors



**Australian Government**

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Communications**

# Acknowledgement of Country

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The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Western Australia and the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of country on which this report was developed, the Whadjuk Noongar people, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to their Elders both past and present.



# Introduction

In November 2020, the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Western Australia (MYAN WA) and Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) travelled to Christmas Island (the Island) to develop and deliver a two day youth summit for young people aged 12-25.

The 2020 Christmas Island 'Youth Taking Charge' Youth Summit (the Summit) was a chance for young people on the Island to learn about how to use advocacy to create change, to have their voices heard on the issues that affect them and to be empowered to be leaders in the community. It was attended by around 60 young people over two days of workshops on the 28th and 29th of November.

We also wanted to provide a direct platform for young people to share solutions to the key issues they care about on the Island directly to decision makers and others in the community. This was successfully accomplished on Monday 30 November when the young people delivered fantastic and informative presentations to multiple decision makers, including the Shire President and leadership team, Islamic Council President, other community members and families.



# Aim of report

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This report is a summation of the outcomes and learnings gathered over the course of the Summit. These are largely derived from feedback from the young people themselves, and so it is their voices that are the heart of this document. The document covers:

- The background of the Youth Summit, and overview of the workshop program;
- A summary of the key themes and issues highlighted by young people at the summit;
- The solutions proposed by the young people, and the action needed to achieve these, and;
- How this report will be used to advocate for change.

We aim to share this report with a variety of key stakeholders involved in the governance of the Island, as well as the broader community, with the aim of raising awareness of the issues and solutions proposed by the young people to promote meaningful action.





# Message from MYAN WA and YACWA

We were extremely honoured at YACWA and MYAN WA to have been able to have the opportunity to travel to Christmas Island to meet and work with the most exceptional young people running workshops on storytelling, leadership training and how to become a changemaker to advocate for positive change in their community. It was a privilege to hear their stories and the issues that they are most passionate about. As current and future leaders in their community, the young people's ideas for change will be extremely important in shaping the future of the Island, and so we look forward to supporting them as we move forward to have their voices heard.

As human rights organisations that are dedicated to empowering and promoting the voices of young people, it is crucial that we are able to travel to communities such as Christmas Island to ensure that we are able to hear their views on the issues in their communities, and promote those concerns to decision makers. The young people presented fantastic and informative presentations on the issues they care about, directly in front of multiple decision makers, community members and families and this report is amplifying these voices to the broader community, highlighting the recommendations young people shared during their summit for solutions to the issues facing the Island community.

MYAN WA and YACWA are committed to an ongoing relationship with young people and their supporters on the Island to ensure their experiences and voices are empowered to influence the State and Federal Government's decisions that affect them. We are excited to work with the newly formed Christmas Island Youth Association, their passion and commitment to the Island is evident and we know that as they grow they will be highly influential in developing and implementing innovative solutions to ongoing issues.

We would like to thank the Islamic Council of Christmas Island including Isa McIntosh and Hafiz Masli for inviting us to run and facilitate the Summit in order to help give young people the platform for their voices to be heard. We appreciate all the hard work, leadership and organisation and planning that helped us to successfully carry out this fantastic event.

Additionally, we would also like to thank the young people of the Island for their kindness, respect and their passion for creating social change. We confidently believe that every young person is a leader in their community and will be changemakers both on the Island and across Australia now and into the future.

**Zinab Al Hilaly (Project Officer - MYAN WA)**  
**Stefaan Bruce-Trugilio (YACWA Policy Officer)**  
**Habiba Asim (Shout Out speaker)**  
**Zahra Al Hilaly (Shout Out speaker)**  
**Hadi Rahimi (Shout Out speaker)**



# Christmas Island youth message

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The members of the Christmas Island Youth Association would firstly like to thank the YACWA and MYAN WA for taking the time to teach us valuable lessons that we will carry with us endlessly to build a better future for our community, and for providing the Christmas Island youth a platform to express our ideas and opinions on local issues and ideas for change. This youth summit has been an eye-opening experience as it raised so many critical issues within the community that we feel have been hidden for a long time. It allowed us to understand that we have the ability to solve these issues through collaboration and that as we are the next generation of Christmas Islanders, our opinion ultimately matters too.

The workshops taught us the importance of sharing our stories; not only did it help us understand the roots of who we are and where we come from but also allowed us to realise that we have the right to share our story. The summit also enlightened the Christmas Island youth that collaboration and unity is an important skillset to take on when becoming leaders and change-makers. The workshops helped us realise that the opinions and ideas of the youth in our community were not taken into account by our senior decision-makers and that it was up to us to step up, get involved in the conversation and have our voices heard. We stepped out of the workshops with a stronger bond and a bigger vision for the future.

In the workshops, we raised multiple issues that had not been discussed within the community and with the guidance of the YACWA team, we finally felt comfortable to express our concerns. The lack of important services is a huge factor affecting our young community. We have discovered the youth feels there is no space to comfortably seek mental health consultation with professionals, to seek advice for employment and education, and there is a lack of activities catered for young adults to get involved in.

As we see many of our friends and family ultimately leave our island home to the mainland to seek a better life, we want to bring these services to this island so we don't feel the need to move. We discovered that the island not only lacks services to the youth, but to all residents. These services include the basic needs of fresh food and medical and birthing services. Throughout the years we've lost the ability to own and obtain cheap goods and services and we've lost the right of holding the particular title of actually being a Christmas Islander, a title that we hold most dear, as we feel it links us to our family, culture and history. Discussing these issues during the summit is what made us believe that Christmas Island needs to fight for change for the future.

Following the youth summit, a group of the local Christmas Island youth formed the Christmas Island Youth Association. We hope to provide a safe space where we can address issues, share ideas and advocate on behalf of the young people of Christmas Island. We will strive to promote collaboration and unity to empower the youth of Christmas Island. We hold a vision of forming a stronger connection with our community leaders and senior decision-makers to ensure our voice is heard when concerning local issues, and building a better future for all residents of Christmas Island.

Again, on behalf of all the youth on Christmas Island, we would like to thank the inspirational individuals, Zinab Al Hilaly, Stefaan Bruce-Truglio, Habiba Asim, Zahra Al Hilaly & Mohammed Hadi Rahimi, for teaching us and for really helping us realise the potential we have as change-makers and future leaders. We hope you all get to see the work we have planned for the future.

**Shazmin Rosli**  
**Secretary**  
**Christmas Island Youth Association**



# From Perth to Christmas Island – How did we get here?

The idea for the Summit was conceived when the Islamic Council of Christmas Island (ICCI) invited YACWA to travel to the Island to meet with young people talk with them about the issues they care about and share stories from our Shout Out Speakers: young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds who have been empowered to share their experiences and views on a range of topics with a variety of audiences.

MYANWA has previously organised 'Catalyst' Youth Summits for multicultural young people in Western Australia, and so we decided as a result of this request that it would be fitting for us to put together a full youth summit, delivering workshops on storytelling, leadership and changemaking in order to provide a full suite of activities for young people to get involved in, showcasing a number of important aspects of telling your story as an advocate for change.







## Why This is Important?

Despite the significant contributions young people make to Australia's economy and social and cultural identity, they are often afforded less opportunities to be engaged in the political process and have their voices heard than older generations, who comprise the large majority of decision makers in governing bodies across the country. This is especially so for young people on Christmas Island, as the Island itself has limited democratic representation in the Australian political landscape, and little influence on the decisions made on behalf of them by the Federal Government. Young people on the Island are both proud Islanders, and an important part of the social and cultural fabric of Australia. Despite this, they have very little opportunities to have their voice heard on the issues that affect them, and the decisions that are made for them.

As a non-self-governing overseas territory of Australia, the Island is managed through a complex governance model that sees the Federal Government set the direction of the island whilst simultaneously delegating significant amounts of its legislative responsibility to the Western Australian State Government, which administers most key public services on the Island through Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs). Despite having no vote in Western Australian state elections, residents of the Island are subject to their laws and oversight, which can scrutinise and override local decision making. Compounding this, the sole Australian political representative of the Island is the Federal seat of Lingiari in the Northern Territory, a position which has very little connection to the Island or sway in Federal decision making.

Whilst YACWA and MYANWA largely work with young people and youth services within the State of Western Australia, given the crucial role the Western Australian Government plays in the delivery of services and governance on the island, well as the lack of a dedicated political engagement or an advocacy group representing young people on the Island, we thought it was extremely important for us to take advantage of this opportunity to support and empower young people on the Island to have a say in the decisions that affect them. And so this summit was an important first step for us to lay the foundations for a long-term partnership with the young people in the Island in the hopes of ensuring their voices act as catalysts for change.

# The Summit

## The objectives for YACWA's visit to the Island and Delivery of the Summit were:

- To provide an opportunity for increased social cohesion and confidence amongst the local young people.
- To provide a space for young people to engage in fun team activities.
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- To promote collaboration and unity amongst local young people.
- To provide young people on the Island with the opportunity to hear motivational stories from a diverse group of young people.
- To build the confidence and ability of the local youth community:
  - To have knowledge of, and take part in decision-making processes and structures on the Island and across Australia.
    - to express their views, ideas and opinions.
    - to take on leadership roles in the community.
    - to initiate and take part in social interaction and events in the community.
  - To provide a platform for the Island young people to directly engage with decision makers to highlight their strength and passion, as well as have their voice heard in providing solutions to the issues on the Island.





# The program

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The Summit included two days' worth of workshops that intended to not only provide young people with the skills of becoming a leader in their community but empower them to realise that their voices, opinions and experiences matter in all decisions and other actions taken that impact their life.

In order to tailor the Summit to differing needs we decided to split workshops into one day for young people aged 11-17 on Saturday 28 November and one day for young people aged 18-25 on Sunday 29 November. Both days were divided into three workshops full of activities including storytelling, leadership training and changemaker training. Each three workshops were intended to provide young people with the skills to become empathetic and well-versed leaders.

## Session 1: The Power of Storytelling

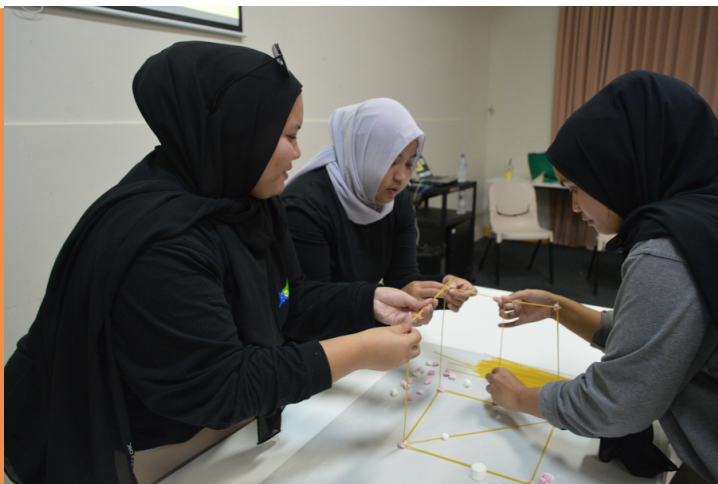
This workshop showed the young people the importance of storytelling in becoming an advocate, community member and leader. We showed that storytelling is an action that you take to create positive change that can bridge both culturally and motivationally towards a solution. The young people worked diligently in groups to create a story of the future of the Island, one that evoked community cohesion, youth participation in all areas, better access to services and all their future hopes and dreams for a prosperous island life.





## Session 2: Leadership training

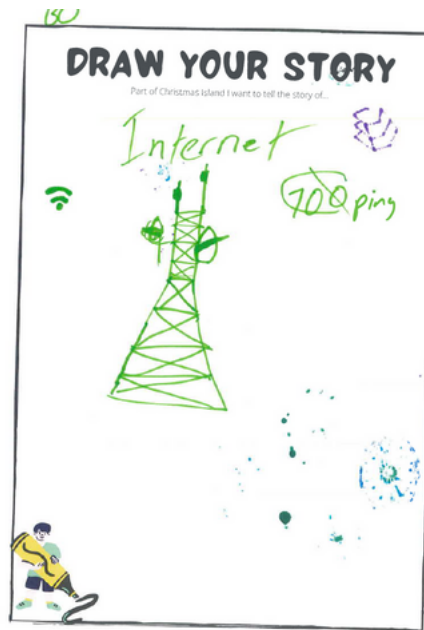
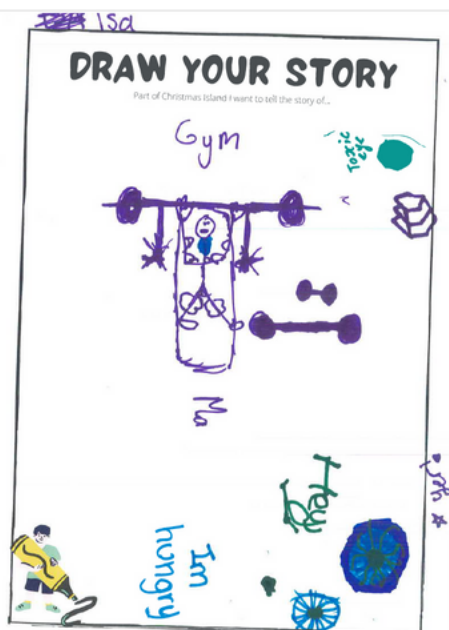
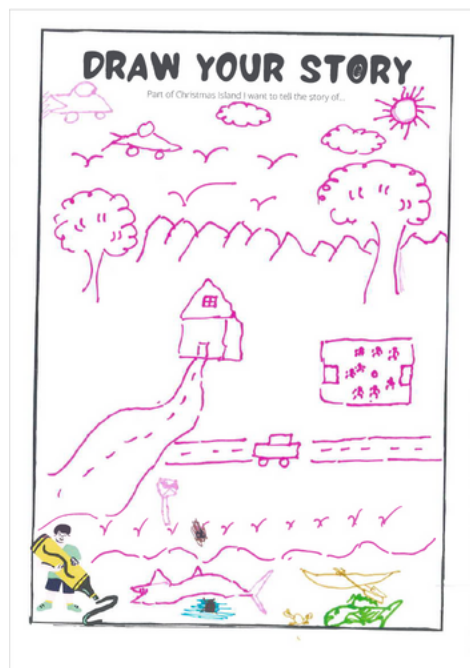
This workshop provided young people with intrinsic skills to be leaders within their community. We highlighted leadership is not a role you are given but something that you do and contribute to in your community to create positive change. A multitude of activities were run that helped young people identify leadership values and skills they already have such as empathy, integrity and creativity and how they can use these to create change in their community. These interactive activities also allowed young people to see that leadership was a shared responsibility with others and that cooperation and respect was as important.



# Session 3: Becoming a changemaker

With the newly formed skills in storytelling and leadership, young people were given the opportunity to collaborate together in groups to solve the issues that they care about. This session allowed young people to see themselves as changemakers in their community.

We wanted young people to know that many social movements across the world were created by other young people taking part in a shared story, working collaboratively and leading others to create positive change. This session allowed young people to identify a variety of issues that they care about including mental health, youth opportunities, affordability and accessibility of food, etc.





# Presentation night

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# Issues and Solutions

Below is a list of the issues identified by young people that are both important to them as well as impacting on their health and wellbeing. They also identified a number of solutions to these issues, which we have compiled as recommendations for decision makers to consider to create change. We have also attempted to supplement the young people's views on key issues with context around the current situation on the Island, however a lack of data on these issues has meant that evidence specific to the Island is limited, which is a significant issue in itself.

## Mental Health

### The context

Aside from a private psychologist, school psychologist, therapy assistant, and the Immigration Detention Centre (the Detention Centre) clinic on Christmas Island, there are no other health care providers on Christmas Island. Compounding this issue, the Detention Centres' clinic does not serve the general population and use of Telehealth Services is inconsistent and unreliable due to poor digital connectivity on the Island.

Young people in small rural and remote areas can often face pressure to conform to community standards, and experience a lack of freedom of activity due to the close nature of the community. This is something that was reflected in our discussions with young people. Additionally a lack of investment in services and support on the Island has led to a strong sense of pessimism about future prospects, unemployment, loneliness, loss of relationships and other factors, which can exacerbate the risk of mental health problems.

Evidence from PwC's Report into the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service (commissioned by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities) demonstrated that there is often a lack of understanding and awareness of mental health as an illness in parts of the community due to stigma. This may also have an impact on the willingness of the population to seek help from the health service, which exacerbates the core issues of a lack of mental health services on the Island, meaning that young people have little options when it comes to seeking support to maintain their mental health. Additionally, the Report noted that smoking and alcohol was raised as a concern on the Island, which may be due in part to the low price compared to the mainland, and also due to the lack of mental health services, meaning that AOD can be used as a coping strategy for those with mental health issues and no support.

### Current Snapshot of Youth Mental Health in Australia

It is important to acknowledge that youth mental health is a major issue prevalent across Australia where currently:

**50%**



mental health conditions experienced at some point in our lives will have started by age 14. (1)

**1 in 7**

young people aged 4 to 17 year's experience a mental health condition in any given year. (4)



**over 75%**

mental health problems occur before the age of 25. (3)

# The issues

Mental health was identified by the young people as one of the most important issues facing young people on the Island. Many brought up that their mental health was impacted by a variety of factors including isolation, the lack of youth opportunities to connect with others, fear of uncertainty of their future and stigma within their community.

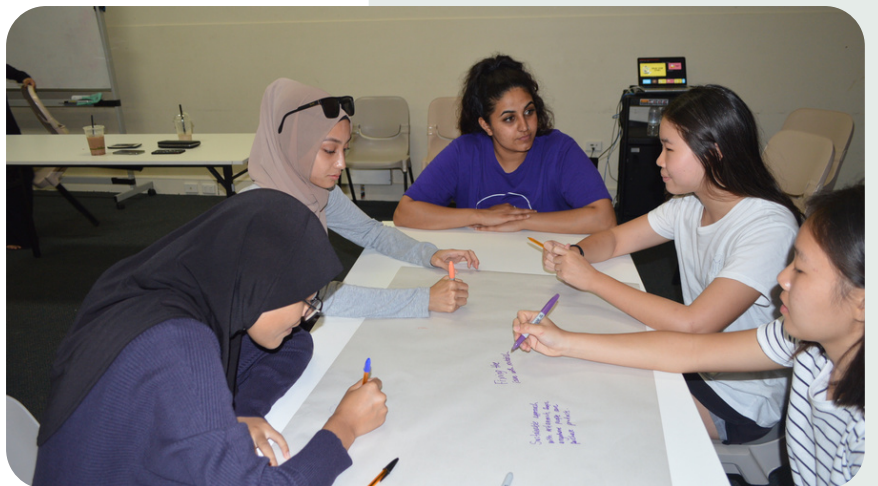
■ **There is a significant lack of access to mental health resources, professionals and services to reach out to.**

Whilst the current mental health services available are one school psychologist and a general practitioner many young people felt these services were not accessible especially to young people over the age of 18. Specific mental health support the young people noted that they would like to see in their community includes more mental health workers (e.g. councillors, therapists), youth opportunities that foster community connections (e.g. sporting, recreational facilities, youth centres), creation of youth support groups, etc.

■ **Lack of mental health knowledge and skills.** Many also mentioned that they had limited knowledge and skills within mental health to identify where they could receive help and how to help others around them. They noted that many young people feel more comfortable with other young people for support and advice. This was also noted by many young males who stated it was difficult discussing and seeking mental health support and wanted more opportunities for them to talk with other young men in safe and respectful spaces. This was also noted by other young females.

■ **Community and family stigma.** One of the main issues that came up time and again was the challenge within many multicultural communities discussing mental health problems. Many noted that they felt uncomfortable discussing mental health with their families and community.

■ **Lack of cultural and youth specific mental health support.** Christmas Island is very culturally and religiously diverse. The young people mentioned that current mental health services often lacked cultural awareness by not considering and including mental health practices that considered young people's culture and religious backgrounds. Services were not youth focused and specific meaning it was difficult for young people to individually feel comfortable and open accessing. Some noted a lack of LGBTQIA+ specific mental health support in particular from some young people who were not comfortable identifying within their families and communities.



# The Solutions

## **Invest in specific youth mental health services on Christmas Island.**

Services should include specific youth focused mental health service delivery for young people that goes beyond high school. Services should be accessible, affordable, ensure confidentiality and co-designed with young people.

### **Responsible stakeholder:**

The Federal Government (Department of Health, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications), The WA State Government (Mental Health Commission) and local community leaders.

## **Invest in more community grants that provide opportunities to run community mental health events that intend to normalise conversations and knowledge on mental health.**

These events that create social cohesion within communities and young people, provide activities e.g. RUOK Day, mental health day interlinked with cultural events to normalise multicultural mental health support.

### **Responsible stakeholder:**

The Office of Multicultural Interests in W.A. should allow cultural/religious community groups on Christmas Island to apply for grants offered in the Community Grants Programs. The WA Department of Communities should extend the Youth Development Grants to Christmas Island. The WA Mental Health Commission should provide for grants specific to supporting youth mental health.



## **Establish a youth peer support program**

that train young people on Christmas Island with the skills and knowledge to support other young people who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing mental distress and illness. This program should be run at many areas including schools as well as community areas for young people to access.

### **Responsible stakeholder:**

The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Department of Health), the Shire of Christmas Island, The WA State Government (Mental Health Commission), local community leaders and young people.

## **Ensure all services are culturally appropriate with mental health workers and practitioners having specific cultural training and understanding of the communities and cultures present on the island.**

Additionally, services should also be LGBTQIA+ friendly and provide specific mental health support on this area without stigma or shame.

### **Responsible stakeholder:**

The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Department of Health), The WA State Government (Mental Health Commission) and local community leaders.





# Medical and birthing services

## The context

In 1998 the Australian Federal Government shutdown childbirth services on the Christmas Island Hospital, which ended the opportunity for children to be born on the Island. This decision was made as a result of a determination that the Island did not have the specialist capacity or resources to ensure healthy mothers and babies, and so all funding was withdrawn. This meant that pregnant women had to leave for Perth a month prior to giving birth and stay up to a month afterwards. This decision has led to a number of unintended consequences, as many Christmas Islanders not born on the Island are unable to share a common connection of being born on the Island, something which is important to the identity and cultural connection of many Christmas Islanders and their home.

It has also resulted in a number of additional expenses for residents of the Island looking to give birth. Whilst the government does cover the cost of flights for mothers and their partners there are additional costs needed to be paid including annual leave, car hire, accommodation and additional tickets if other family members such as siblings want to attend, which means that this journey for childbirth can still end up quite expensive for Christmas Islanders who wish to raise their children on the Island. Additionally, many partners who remain behind on the Island due to work commitments cannot secure the leave or tickets required to be present for the birth of their child, particularly if the delivery is earlier than expected.

# The issues

- The young people emphasised the importance of being born on Christmas Island. For many of them, their parents and previous generations were provided this opportunity. Being born on the island was noted as a significant part of their cultural identity, something that was stated on their birth certificate and allowed them to connect to their land and community.
- They felt it was important that every community across Australia, especially those in remote and regional areas were provided high standards of medical services. They discussed that they wanted their future children to be born on Christmas Island.
- Additionally, there was mention of the limited medical services. As previously mentioned a limited access to mental health services as well as limited specialist and allied healthcare services and support.
- It was also important to note that many mentioned the financial and emotional impact it had on their families when family members were giving birth e.g. financial impacts of leaving Christmas Island for a minimum of two months.

## Last person born on Christmas Island



*My name is Muhammad Jauhar Jamil and I was the last person born on Christmas Island on 1998. Christmas Island will always be my home and holds a special place in my heart as it will always carry my dear memories and brought me up as who I am today. I've spent a few years of my childhood in Perth, and the differences there will never amount to my life on Christmas Island. My whole life, I've always been asked, "how does it feel to be the last born on the island and to hold that title?" Personally, it is a unique feeling to have Christmas Island stated on my passport as not many others can hold a title like this.*

*However, it's devastating that our new generation aren't able to hold the title of a Christmas Islander due to our lack of services. Not long after my birth, the government had decided to stop the birthing services on our island home because it was too costly to bring doctors in and birthing equipment could no longer be maintained. After 1998, mothers have to fly off to the mainland for check-ups, sometimes alone, and to give birth. Fathers and other family members now have to worry financially to be able to provide support for the mother, and sometime, siblings are left back on the island simply because the parents can't afford to bring them along. As a husband myself, I want to see my wife and other mothers go through their journey comfortably on their island home and to see our new generation be able to call themselves a Christmas Islander in the future.*



# The Solutions



## **Provide funding for specific maternal and child services on the Island.**

This can include hiring specific general practitioners with OBGYN training to be able to work directly in maternal care as well as primary care.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Department of Health) and the WA State Government (Department of Health)

## **Implement Strategies from the COAG Health Council Women-centred care report -**

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019/11/woman-centred-care-strategic-directions-for-australian-maternity-services.pdf>

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, the Department of Health) and the WA State Government (Department of Health)

**Meet directly with the Royal Australian College of the General Practitioners (RACGP) and The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists RANZCOG** to advocate for more awareness and funding for regional/remote areas across Australia including Christmas Island.





**More Activities and Amenities for Young People, including Spaces for them to Connect with Peers**

## The context

Christmas Island has generally little resources invested in infrastructure beyond basic access to amenities and services, with recreational facilities and activities largely limited to outdoor pursuits, such as fishing, swimming and hiking, as well as indoor hubs such as the recreation centre. With the closure of the Christmas Island Resort, there is currently very little diversity in facilities to accommodate different social, and sporting activities.

Evidence from the Federal Government's Inquiry into the Governance of Indian Ocean Territories has shown that current land management policies and practice have demonstrated a significant lack of long-term planning and strategic vision regarding development, meaning that many potential investors looking to invest in entertainment, social and tourism infrastructure have been discouraged and therefore the Island has received a lack of interest as a result. This has meant that young people have long-lacked a modernised set of facilities and amenities for them to access and enjoy on the Island, leading to boredom and dissatisfaction.

# The issues

- One of the major concerns discussed by the young people was the lack of opportunities, facilities and events for other young people to connect, engage and spend time at. They mentioned the limited diversity of facilities, support and social activities that were affordable and accessible. In particular the major issue of concern was the reality that there is no youth centre on Christmas Island. Youth centres are not just about providing sports and recreational activities they provide a physical space for young people to develop their physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills. Youth centres offer access to drop-in services and support in a variety of areas such as mental health, housing, finance, education, etc.
- Young people were very eager to have a physical space that was youth friendly, would be accessible to all including those who had finished high school, and an avenue for them to connect to other young people. Across Australia youth centres provide opportunities and services such as direct mental health support, financial education, personal development, recreational activities such as sports and the arts, educational support such as after school homework clubs, opportunities for young people to volunteer, etc.
- Young women at the Summit also told us that they lacked a recreational space that was for them only, with other co-ed spaces not as accessible for them. They felt that the development of something like a womens' only gym or pool would allow them an accessible space where they can feel more comfortable and less insecure when working out or swimming, and allow them to wear garments and undertake activities that they would be unable to do in a mixed-gendered environment.
- Additionally, Summit attendees generally agreed that they wanted more places to hang out that did not involve engaging in sport, such as a shopping centre, or a games arcade. The development of a shopping centre in particular was noted by many young people as the most-desired space, as this would bring together a diverse range of activities and amenities for young people to access.
- Lastly young people wanted to see further investment in additional spaces for tourist accommodation and activity centres, such as the refurbishment of the Christmas Island Resort. They noted that not only would this provide employment and tourism opportunities for the Island, it would also provide a space for fun activities for young people to engage in.

# The Solutions

The most important recommendation brought up by the young people was investing directly into a community-run youth centre on Christmas Island. A major point mentioned was ensuring this youth centre was codesigned and influenced by the voices and perspectives of young people on Christmas island. They wanted this centre accessible to all young people.

## **Providing recreational sports activities.**

This also included fostering young girls and women's opportunity to take part in sports clubs, which many brought up was not accessible to them currently.

Providing support services through a youth worker(s). They wanted support such as direct mental health drop-in sessions, support groups for different groups to work.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications), the WA State Government (Department of Communities)



**More investment in the development and refurbishment of infrastructure that provides a space for young people to engage with more non-physical activities.** Key examples include:

- A shopping centre, with a diverse range of shops and activities such as book stores, a piercing store and beauty salon.
- An accommodation & activity hub for tourism, such as the Christmas Island Resort.
- A womens' only fitness centre and/or pool.
- A video arcade e.g. Timezone.
- A 24/7 convenience store e.g. 7/11.
- Fast food restaurants, e.g. Subway.
- An indoor cinema.
- A rock climbing/indoor bounce centre.
- More Halal restaurants and cafes.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications)







## Cheaper and Better Goods and Services

### The context

Evidence from PwC's Report into Indian Ocean Territories' Health Services notes that due to the cost of refrigerated air freight, fresh fruit and vegetables are very expensive, while packaged and processed foods are more affordable. This acts a disincentive for residents to eat fresh foods, meaning that that poor diet and nutrition was a significant issue on the island.

### The issues

Due to Christmas Island's remoteness and isolation from mainland Australia there has been limited access to many resources in particular foods. Often this means that foods such as fruit freights take a whole while to arrive on Christmas Island and can expire. This has unfortunately meant that the prices of healthy foods and drinks such as fruits was often very expensive and became a barrier to many young people trying to access healthy nutrition.

This was a major issue brought up multiple times by many young people especially discussing how it often meant their families experienced financial impacts when accessing food. They often discussed the unfortunate reality that some food available in the stores were expired. Additionally, some have attempted to bring in food from mainland Australia to Christmas Island however, were limited with the amount of luggage and space.

# The Solutions

■ **Resource a separate priority freight for food directly for Christmas island.**

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Tourism Australia)

■ **Mandating minimum requirements for food delivery to the island to ensure freshness and safety for consumption.**

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Agriculture, Food Standards Australia New Zealand)

■ **Invest in the development of a public guardian, with access to seed supplies to support a community fruit and vegetable plantation.** Ensure the program is co-designed by a diverse group of people on Christmas Island.

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, the Federal Government (Department of Health).

■ **Host a community kitchen/market with locals coming together to share meals and low cost/free food as well as speak about their ideas and highlight messages to the government.**

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island.

■ **Invest in establishing an eco group to manage vegetation and food security.**

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.







## Encouraging Awareness of the Island to Foster a Stronger Connection to the Mainland and Encourage Tourism

### The context

The high profile operation of the Detention Centre on Christmas Island since 2001 (with a temporary closure from October 2018 - February 2019) has dominated Australian media narratives about Christmas Island, with other more positive aspects of the Island and the people living there largely ignored. With numerous high profile incidents, including protests and riots, poor living conditions and human rights abuses, deaths of refugees in detention, as well as the ongoing media demonisation of asylum seekers led to the Island's tourism industry being 'all but destroyed'. Additionally, commercial charter planes and accommodation which normally hosted tourists were largely filled with personnel involved in operating the detention centre.

Additionally, there are a multitude of other factors which have been significant barriers to improving tourism on the island:

- The cost and regularity of flight services to Christmas Island has been a major barrier to increasing tourist numbers on the Island. Despite being an Australian territory, a flight to the Island is roughly 6x more expensive than a flight to Bali, Indonesia, leaving little chance for the Island to promote a competitive case to attract tourists.
- Christmas Island is excluded from mainland tourism bodies, meaning that the Federal and Western Australian Governments take very little interest in investment in tourism for the Island.



# The issues


During the Summit young people expressed their disappointment and sadness at the broader narratives promoted in the Australian media landscape about the Island. Generally, the majority of information shared through the media about the Island is about the Detention Centre and asylum seeker boat arrivals, which largely cast a negative light on the Island, and discourage tourism.


They felt that the Island's people, history, culture and natural attractions all receive minimal attention, and as such there is very little common knowledge about the Island, its place as part of Australia and potential as a holiday destination amongst the mainland Australian population.

They said that they felt that this has strongly contributed to their feelings of a lack of belonging in Australia, as the majority of the mainland makes little effort to make them feel included in national consciousness, and decision making.


It is clear that the young people are proud of their history and culture as Islanders, and so wanted to challenge media narratives and promote a more positive image of the Island, as well as make it easier for mainland Australian and international tourists to visit. This would help foster a sense of belonging amongst Christmas Islanders to the Australian community, as well as bring economic opportunities to the Island.


## The Solutions

 **Host a youth-led national exhibition (online and/or in person) that is curated by Christmas Islanders on the Island's people, history and culture in Museums across Australia.**

 **Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications - Office of the Arts), the Shire of Christmas Island, the WA State Government (Department of Culture and the Arts).

 **Engage a youth-led marketing campaign to develop and deliver a dynamic campaign across multiple platforms (online and offline media) encouraging Australian and international tourists to visit the Island.**

 **Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Tourism Australia)

 **Invest in subsidies for flights travelling to and from the island to make travel costs cheaper for tourists.**

 **Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Tourism Australia)



## More Opportunities for Youth Engagement – Decision Makers Valuing the Voices of Young People

### The context

Christmas Island's governance system is incredibly complex, and fosters a sense of diffused responsibility amongst its various components, which has a detrimental effect on the island community. The Island currently has a 'democracy deficit' because IOT residents do not have state-level representation in Western Australian Parliament despite being under state laws, service delivery and management. This is compounded by the fact that their sole Federal representative is located in the Federal Seat of Lingiari in the Northern Territory, which has little connection to the Island or influence over the decisions made for it. Additionally, the cost of administration of the Island sits with the Federal Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (DIRD), who are generally under resourced and so cannot provide the investment required to improve the Island, as with being an overseas territory there are significantly higher per capita costs comparative to the mainland.

The general sentiment held by many Islanders is that there is little they can do to influence change on the Island, as they lack a political and/or electoral mechanism to hold those that govern them accountable to their needs. Feedback from the 2015 Federal Inquiry into Governance in the Indian Ocean Territories showed that many stakeholders were dissatisfied with consultation to inform administration and service delivery on the Island, feeling that it is inadequate and tokenistic, with the the outcomes from discussions not relayed back to the community and feedback delivered not reelected in the final decision made.

This feeling of helplessness is amplified for young people, given that they generally lack political influence and have little targeted consultation with decision makers. This disillusionment amongst the younger generations is significant, with many aiming to leave the island when they reach adulthood due to a lack of opportunity and feelings of powerlessness. Despite this they maintain a strong connection with the island and their heritage, and still want to be involved in improving the prosperity of the Island for its inhabitants.



# The issues

During the Summit young people strongly indicated to us that their voice was not being heard across all levels of the community, and so this has fostered a level of apathy and disengagement. They felt that decision makers see this disengagement as a sign of young people not wanting to be involved in leadership around decision making on the Island, however it is largely because there is not enough direct effort from older generations and key stakeholders in the community to engage with young people and provide them with accessible and engaging avenues for input.

Young people were incredibly excited at the Summit to have an opportunity to tell their story and share ideas for change with like-minded young people, as many had never been given a similar opportunity in the past.

They wanted to utilise the Summit as a starting point and catalyst for community leaders and decision makers to take more responsibility for proactive engagement with young people by providing them with better opportunities to have their voice heard.

They also identified that young people were not given adequate civics and citizenship education as part of their experience at school on the Island. Young people gave us feedback that learning about the Island's system of governance at the Summit was the first time that they had ever had it explained to them, and wanted to see an improvement in the way that the information is presented, through both easy to read and engaging resources and clear and in depth education modules on the topic in school.





# The Solutions

- **Establish and resource a formal Youth Advisory Committee** as part of the Shire of Christmas Island to give young people an ongoing opportunity for involvement in decision making and an avenue to be directly engaged in consultations with the Local, State and Federal Governments. Young people sitting on this committee should also be reimbursed for their time.

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island

- **Host an annual Youth Summit, similar to the "Youth Taking Charge" Summit**, that invites young people from all over the Island to take part in training empowering them to use their voice, and bringing together decision makers from the Shire, the Western Australian and Federal Governments as well as other key stakeholders to listen to young people concerns and allow them to influence decision making. The Youth Advisory Committee and Youth Association could be supported to take the lead in designing the format of this conference, to ensure it is accessible to young people.

- **Support the newly formed independent Christmas Island Youth Association** with resources, office infrastructure and materials to enable them to develop into a robustly established youth advocacy group with a strong voice in the community and in decision making spheres.

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, local community leaders

- **Develop easy to read infographics that provide an overview of the Island's governance, laws and policies** that affect young people as well as ways for young people to get involved in the political process.

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, the Department of Education (WA State Government)

- **Invest in a leadership and public speaking training program for young people on the Island.** Similar to MYAN WA's Shout Out program, this could empower young people to deliver online and in-person speeches to schools, local councils, government agencies, in the media and other key organisations on the Island and the mainland, where they could tell their stories, promote their ideas on the issues they care and raise the profile of the Island and its culture.

■ **Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, local community leaders, YACWA

# The Solutions



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**Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, local community leaders, YACWA

**Review and improve civics and citizenship education in the Christmas Island Education System,** including knowledge of how the Island's governance works, and roles and responsibilities of citizenship in Australia. This should be taught from an early age to all cohorts as a mandatory module separate to existing optional social studies and political science subjects.

**Responsible stakeholder:** the Department of Education (WA State Government)



# Other issues and solutions

These are a series of broader recommendations that fall outside of these categories, but could be used to improve the daily experiences of young people on the Island. These have been pulled together from feedback from the young people at the Summit, and additional research into other issues on the Island.

**Explore the regulatory options of ending the prohibition of importing pet dogs and cats into Christmas Island.** Discuss potential guidelines and procedures that ensure the animals are healthy, desexed, regulated. Engage the community to establish a responsible pet management plan.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Shire of Christmas Island, the WA State Government (Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries).

**The Federal or WA State Government should provide a flexible small grants program** that is specifically designated towards projects that aim to improve youth health and wellbeing outcomes on the Island. Preference should be given to youth-led projects and organisations.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal and WA State Governments (Department of Communities).

**Establish a future sustainability plan that incorporates a sustainable waste management plan.**

**Responsible stakeholder:** The WA State Government (Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, the Waste Authority).

**Explore options for the Western Australian Government to reduce the 'democracy deficit' by playing a more active role in directly engaging with young people on the island, and investing in programs, services and infrastructure that supports them.**

**Responsible stakeholder:** The WA State Government

**Further explore the possibility of changing the governance structure of the Island** to provide residents with a representative in the state or territory Parliament (either Western Australia or the Northern Territory) who they could raise their concerns with directly.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal Government.

**Key decision makers more closely with the Shire to deliver key Service Delivery Agreements** on the Island as well as better engage with Island residents (including young people) to inform this.

**Responsible stakeholder:** The Federal and WA State Governments.





## Where to From Here? Building a Long Term Partnership to Create Change

We believe that the success of the Summit must go beyond the workshops that we facilitated and should focus and include the continued opportunities and growth of the young people on the Island. This means continuing the relationships between YACWA, MYAN WA and the young people and other key stakeholders on the Island.

For us in YACWA and MYAN WA this can be exemplified through both systemic participation in advocacy, by ensuring the Island's youth voices are included in future research, communication, advocacy and policy work. We hope to include young Christmas Islanders through YACWA's opportunities, programs and events such as future State of the Youth Sector Forums, Unfairground Conferences and YACWA Youth Awards.

We also want to ensure that future youth leadership roles and opportunities are provided to younger people. For MYAN WA we intend to ensure there is representation in our youth roles and projects such as Shout Out a leadership speaking program that trained and grew multicultural young leaders in the community as well as our youth forums.

This report is a brief snapshot of the key issues and outcomes heard during our conversations with young people at the Summit. With this we hope to empower and amplify the voices and perspectives of the young Christmas Islanders, so that their needs are heard by decision makers and incorporated into action taken that affects them.

In order to do this we will be sending this document out to a number of key stakeholders, including the Shire of Christmas Island, Western Australian and Federal Governments as well as other leaders in the Island community. We hope that this will then lead to interactions between these stakeholders and the young people, as YACWA is well placed to facilitate and support this.

This report is not the entire picture of the issues facing the young people on the Island but it can be a starting point to create change. YACWA hopes to build on the relationships that were established during the Summit to advocate for the rights of young people on the Island. We confidently believe that every individual has the capacity to be a leader in their community, and will be changemakers both on the Island and across Australia now and into the future.