



YACtivate

Event Report

2025

What's Next for YACtivate



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Background and overview

For many years, **YACtivate** was an annual event that brought together young people from Youth Advisory Councils/Groups (YACs/YAGs) across Western Australia to **build connections and develop new skills**. YACtivate was initiated by the Town of Mosman Park's Youth Advisory Council and later delivered as a collaborative effort between several local governments over multiple years. The last event was held in 2019.

With more Youth Advisory Groups than ever before, in 2024 YACWA—as the State peak body that works extensively with YAGs—decided to bring the event back. We successfully applied for a Youth Engagement Grant from the Department of Communities. Then the City of Cockburn generously offered their Youth Centre as the venue, and the RAC Ignite Program came on board as a financial supporter.

The result was **YACtivate 2025!** This event aimed to empower young people involved in Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) to learn, share, network, and take action. It served as a catalyst for youth-led initiatives and ongoing engagement across the State. Over 80 young people and 25 staff from 30 Youth Advisory Groups attended, travelling from as far north as Karratha, as far south as Albany, and many places in between.

This report provides an **overview of two key sections** of the event designed to facilitate learning and sharing between groups. These findings are driving YACWA's next steps in supporting Youth Advisory Groups. It can also be used by participating YAGs and funders to further advocate for the growth and development of YAGs across the State.

World Café discussions

In the YAG World Café session, young attendees were invited to **explore some of the biggest challenges** facing Youth Advisory Groups. We knew there would be a wide range of perspectives in the room, as participants came from very different YAGs—some location-based (such as local government YAGs) and others focused on specific demographics (such as mental health or disability).

Eleven key questions were chosen for discussion. Each table of young people had the chance to contribute to five of these. Every table was supported by a facilitator (either an adult YAG support staff member or a YACWA team member) who was responsible for their assigned question and visited five tables to record the responses of participants.

1. Successful YAGs

Question 1: What has made your Youth Advisory Group strong or successful?

The most consistent theme raised by participants was the importance of a **supportive, welcoming, and inclusive environment**. Members said that they valued YAGs where they feel safe to share ideas, ask questions, and express themselves without fear of judgement. Respect, trust, and honesty were seen as critical foundations, creating a

space where young people can be challenged in a positive way and feel confident to take part in discussions and decision-making.

"Safe space to be challenged (enjoyable)"

"Being welcoming + open to everyone"

Building **strong personal and professional relationships** was seen as a key strength of successful YAGs. Many participants highlighted the friendships formed through the group and the opportunities to connect with people from different backgrounds, communities, and even with government departments.

"Everyone comfortable + share friendship"

"Meet great people – diverse (gov departments)"

A clear **sense of purpose and the ability to make a tangible impact** were strong motivators for YAG members. Participants valued opportunities to contribute to meaningful projects, influence change, and see visible outcomes from their efforts. Recognition through awards or public acknowledgement, and practical support such as payment for time or provision of food, reinforced that their contributions were respected and valued.

"Opportunities to inspire change"

"Paying for time, food, respecting time"

Young people said that good **staff support** was essential. They appreciated it when staff were willing to advocate for them and defend their ideas to the wider organisation and **create opportunities for youth-led change**. They said that strong leadership also meant involving the young people in practical considerations such as planning and facilitation.

"Staff ready to fight – back + defend"

They said that providing **skill-building activities** help members develop confidence and competence. They enjoyed opportunities for both practical skill development (e.g., public speaking, or mental health first aid training) and soft skill development (e.g., teamwork, communication). They also thought there was success in young people learning about and sharing roles.

"Skill building/workshops/learning."

"Changing roles – minute taker, time keep, acknowledge rotating chair."

2. Youth voice and inclusion

Question 2: How do you make everyone in your Youth Advisory Group feel heard and included?

Young people talked about the importance of **creating a space that is non-judgmental** where everyone feels safe to contribute and able to disagree. Many felt that this was best done when there was strong facilitation by a staff member and/or the Chair of a meeting. Examples of how to foster this included instigating rules such as *"no talking over others as a form of respect"* and allowing adequate time for all members to offer their perspectives. It was emphasised by many

participants that it was important for **all members to have their say**, meaning that there need to be strategies to mitigate the over-dominance of conversations by particular individuals.

The need for strong leadership was mentioned repeatedly as a means to navigate these issues. Important leadership qualities that the participants discussed include strong facilitation skills to make sure everyone's voices are heard, fostering an open and non-judgemental atmosphere, and validating participants' feedback.

"Opposing views are important"

"Structure allowing time for everyone to have a say"

"Facilitator can help with confidence and inclusion"

"Providing extra scope for space to disagree"

"Chairperson facilitation training to ensure equitable time/views and helping to engage"

Discussions of inclusion extended to the benefits of **assigning roles to YAG members**, and for these roles to be rotating or to change frequently so as to allow all members to hold positions of responsibility. Examples of roles included Chair, social officer, inclusion officer, minute taker, etc. Participants said that assigning roles or establishing of working groups make YAG members feel responsible and indispensable, thereby encouraging them to attend and participate in YAG meetings. Rotating roles such as Chair and minute taker also support young people in feeling they have ownership over their group and skill development.

"Specific roles – inclusion and development officer"

"Roles are shared amongst members"

"Team collaboration – two people working on actions"

Participants also discussed the importance of **building rapport** amongst YAG members. Ways to foster this that were discussed included icebreaker exercises, scheduling social events outside of the regular YAG meetings, and allowing a certain portion of the night for informal or unstructured catching up time.

"Order dinner – quarter of night is catch up"

"Social events quarterly socials – social officers"

"Icebreakers/prompts to facilitate getting to know"

Flexibility in meeting format was discussed, with the option to meet online, such as over Zoom or Teams, making the meetings feel more inclusive and accessible.

YAG members being able to track the outcome of their discussions from the meeting through to their implementation was also discussed. Young people feeling like their discussions and resolutions are actioned and that they participated in these processes was noted as important.

3. YAG barriers

Question 3: What do you think stops young people from joining Youth Advisory Groups? And how can we encourage more young people to join?

Young people felt that there were a number of factors that **stop young people from joining** Youth Advisory Groups, broadly grouping these into factors that related to the individual and factors that related to the way the group was structured.

Individual factors included anxiety, distrust, shame, stigma, embarrassment, and misunderstanding. **Structural factors** included things like difficult or overwhelming application process, no incentives, and the benefits of being part of the group not adequately communicated to young people.

Young attendees said it was important to **bridge the gap of information** that young people get about YAGs. They said that they could look at social media videos, schools' engagements and posts that educate young people about the benefits of being part of a Youth Advisory Group. There was a particular **discussion on incentives** like honorariums, food, discounts, and access to Employment Assistance Program and so on. Young people also talked about their YAG building connections with community organisations to improve the reputation, understanding and opportunities for young people.

"Aversion to local government"

"Don't know what they get out of it"

"Incentivise young people to join"

4. Marketing and communications

Question 4: How does your Youth Advisory Group share what you do with: a) people in the organisation you are connected to and b) the wider community.

In terms of ensuring others in the organisation knew about the YAG and what they do, they said that they sometimes **invited staff members from other parts of the organisation to attend their meetings**, particularly staff members responsible for the topics or projects discussed. They said that this helped the YAG to build relationships with relevant staff, and it helped staff to develop a better understanding of how the YAG works and what it does.

Young people talked about **casual and informal conversations** with staff in the organisation and said that there was a 'professional versus casual' balance to be struck, where YAGs are taken seriously for their expertise, but not formalised to the point that they lose the sense of human connection.

In terms of **reaching out to the community**, young people said that they showcased their work through a mix of digital, physical, and interpersonal strategies. **Social media** played a central role, with young people preferring to manage platforms such as Discord, WhatsApp, and Messenger to promote events and share stories of their work. These youth-led accounts helped

them ensure their engagement was authentic engagement and visible. Young people talked about regular e-newsletter updates helping keep stakeholders informed.

In addition to digital outreach, young people said that they used **physical promotional assets** placed in areas frequently visited by young people. Furthermore, they said community pop-ups and exhibitions provided interactive opportunities for the public to engage directly with YAG initiatives. They said opportunities to discuss YAG projects in a face-to-face environment was helpful and that word of mouth was a powerful tool

5. Motivation

What have you done when motivation in your Youth Advisory Group gets low and/or members start dropping out?

Young people said that they had experimented with various ways to support existing members when membership dropped or to motivate one another and prospective members. They talked about a need for **strong governance documents** in the form of a terms of reference (ToR) and code of conduct (CoC) to set clear expectations, boundaries, and procedures for all members. They said that ineffective or inefficient structures meant that some people dropped off. Young people said that that this process should be member-led and adaptable to suit the membership of the day. One participant noted the importance of having mechanisms for people who need a leave of absence and who are departing from their YAG to streamline processes and limit confusion. The ability to take leave, or to be absent from meetings occasionally created an accessible and low-pressure environment, thereby discouraging members from completely disengaging if they were temporarily unable to fulfil their responsibilities.

“Code of Conduct – intervening before things escalate”

Some young people talked about fostering of a **low-pressure environment** and allowing members to engage to a level to which they are comfortable. They said that establishing of mechanisms to **support members who are struggling** or who have expressed a desire to leave the group was helpful. Ideas such as annually reviewed wellness plans, reflection interviews, check-ins before things escalate and allowing time away were all discussed. Helping members reconnect to their original motivations for joining the group was also mentioned.

“Not feeling like you always need to contribute,”

Young people said that an important aspect of maintaining membership is creating a supportive and **fun environment**, this included providing good food, check-ins, coffee catchups, and trainings. They said that these helped build a space where YAG members felt close to their peers and able to contribute fully to the group. Other tangible things young people suggested that could help build connection were name badges and personality tests.

“Reflecting on achievement”

“Fun activities build excitement”

Some more seasoned members of YAGs talked about creating a sense of **progression or mobility in the group** to prevent member drop off. Examples of this included being given roles of responsibility to reflect the tenure and experience of longer-term members.

Finally young people talked about the importance of **celebrating achievements** of the YAG including small and big wins.

6. Paid participation

Question 6: How have you managed to get funds to pay your YAG members and/or pay for projects and initiatives that you work on?

Many young people had a **limited understanding of their YAG's finances** and mechanisms of payment. This led conversation more to focus on education and the need for young people to be invited into the conversation about finances and feel empowered through their ability to seek and advocate for funding to pay YAG members and projects/initiatives.

A discrepancy between YAGs was highlighted with only a small number receiving an honorarium for their participation. Some young people said that they were sometimes given vouchers to various outlets, but that they would prefer direct debit.

Existing ways YAG members said that they **source money** were corporate sponsorship, grants, fund raising and existing organisational budget allocations. When it came to applying for, spending and acquitting money, there was a gap in knowledge between groups, with YAG members associated with not-for-profit organisations more likely to have knowledge around grant applications compared to Local Government YAG members.

The main barrier to paid participation was the **lack of consistent funding**. Grants were mentioned however they were considered to often have difficult application processes, terms and conditions which excluded YAG eligibility, and to take too long.

"Payment accessibility"

"Honorariums are important to support young people with the cost of living"

"Transparency of money – where it comes from"

7. Connection between YAGs

Question 7: What would help Youth Advisory Groups across Western Australia feel more connected and be able to learn from each other?

Young people talked about a big gap inter-YAG connection. Many said that they had a desire for connection and skill-building experiences. Ideas for how they might go about this fell into three main categories, peer-learning, social opportunities, and major events.

Peer-learning was the strongest of the three streams with a majority of young people talking about a desire to learn from one another. Young people said that there could be group chats facilitated over apps such as Teams, Slack and Messenger, with specific channels for different

topics or groups for specific interest groups (i.e. local government groups mental health focused groups or region-specific groups). A popular idea was a **YAG exchange** where members of one group would go to another group to learn from each other. An example of a YAG network like this was in the City of Swan, however participants noted that it only involved groups within that LGA. Some young people talked about opportunities to **share training opportunities**.

Young people talked about a desire to build personal connections through fun **social activities**. Ideas to facilitate more personal connections from young people were in-person/online social events, pens pals and outings. They thought this could be facilitated through a YAG calendar or a YAG newsletter. Some participants mentioned that there was a need for a 'middle man' to facilitate inter-YAG connections due to the limited resources and limited capacities within most groups.

"Work together to learn from people who have already tried things"

"Have dinners or other lowkey things to hang out and get to know each other"

"Bring YACs together at forums etc. where they can meet + share!"

Young people wanted to see **major events** such as YACtivate continue. Some also suggested a YAG camp, potentially facilitated by a third party such as RYPEN or Zero2Hero. The young people noted major events have the capacity to bring young people from all regions together to a central event to upskill, share and grow.

8. Avoiding burn out

Question 8: What strategies have you put in place to ensure your Youth Advisory Group members stay engaged and don't get burnt out?

Young people discussed a few ways to stay engaged and **prevent burn-out**. They said that they wanted their time and capacity to be respected and that flexibility around meetings, such as a schedule set by YAG members, shorter meetings and so on was helpful. Some young people also wanted the option for hybrid meetings (mix of online and in person), though it was noted that effective hybrid facilitation was required for this method.

Young people also talked about support mechanisms that were important to help them feel safe and prevent burn-out, including a safe space policy, wellbeing forms, and check ins. One group suggested a 'no questions asked' policy in relation to absences, where there is a certain amount of meetings a member can miss before it is actioned officially. They said that this would allow a young person to have a bit of breathing room to manage competing responsibilities without feeling like they have to justify their absences. Some young people talked about a 'sweet spot' level of responsibility and time devoted to a YAG.

Young people talked about the importance of **activities that allowed for connections to develop** within the group. A support regularly mentioned by young people was having an informal catch-up time before the official meeting with members.

Other solutions young people said that their group had trialled included having 'capacity caps' (a mandated maximum amount of time a member can give in a certain timeframe), voluntary participation for extra activities and creating sub-groups for specific projects to limit the burden of participation on active members of the YAG and preventing burnout.

"Culture where YAG members can reach out to one another for support"

"Enforcing capacity caps for members"

"Low pressure, flexible, capacity aware"

9. YAG staff or adult support

Question: What support would you like in your role as a YAG facilitator or coordinator? Who or what might help facilitate that?

Young people agreed that adult allies were an integral part of YAGs. Young people came to a consensus that **key skills were required for facilitators** of Youth Advisory Groups and that skilled facilitators make them feel fully able to contribute meaningfully and safely during meetings. The majority of skills identified by young people as important were soft skills, such as active listening, rapport-building, and being friendly. Other qualities listed as desirable included honesty, being open or vulnerable with members (thereby increasing trust); being enthusiastic and being approachable to discuss issues or queries. They also wanted facilitators or coordinators to be able to take constructive feedback.

There was an emphasis on the need for these staff to have **strong facilitation skills**, with qualities such as being able to keep discussion on track, to fill silences, encourage conversation, and to contribute to creative problem solving being expressed as desirable.

Young people said that a staff member who was **relatable** was also desirable. This meant. someone who 'got the references.' They wanted **staff who were allies**; who they feel seen and understood by; who shared the passion that they did, and who was willing to advocate on behalf of the group.

Another strong theme was the need for the staff member to understand the landscape of their organisation, including challenges, opportunities, risks etc. Young people highlighted need for the adult/ally worker to advocate *with* and on-behalf of their group, including being accountable and transparent to the group.

"Treat youth like peers not children"

"Group can choose snacks"

"Connect with young people"

10. Advocacy and project goals

Question 10: What is a project or piece of advocacy that your group would like to try and get off the ground in the next year?

Several groups expressed interest in developing resources and campaigns to **improve accessibility and inclusivity**. This included creating school materials around gender diversity and sexual education, advocating for policy change to support young carers, and promoting pathways into TAFE through school engagement. Life skills workshops covering housing, food management, finances, and licensing were also proposed to support the transition into adulthood.

“Development of resources for schools around gender diversity and sexual education”

“Workshop on developing life skills (transition from youth to adulthood; including housing, managing food, finances and driver’s license)”

“Promoting and supporting into TAFE through schools”

“Advocating for policy change within the Department of Education recognising young carers”

Mental health was a strong priority. Ideas included increasing access to self-help programs, creating youth spaces with integrated mental and sexual health services, and ensuring mental health remains a central focus in youth initiatives.

“Focus on mental health”

“Increase mental health, education, programs and groups with a focus on self-help”

Participants proposed several projects aimed at fostering **creativity and safe expression**. These included launching low-cost art classes for young people, establishing a film and arts centre with accessible equipment and education, and organising a youth festival in collaboration with local councils. **Community beautification projects**, including youth-led public art, were also suggested to enhance local spaces and promote local pride.

“Create a low-cost young people’s art class that is safe for young people”

“Creation of a new film building/centre for young people to provide free and/or low-cost education in the film and art sectors as well as access to film and arts equipment”

“Creation of youth festival in collaboration with local councils”

“Community beautification projects of local areas, including local contribution to the art project.”

Young people talked about their desire to **increase YAG membership** and program attendance through better and more targeted promotion. Supporting young people into employment and paid volunteering was another key goal, aiming to build skills and confidence while offering meaningful opportunities.

“Increasing attendance through promotion of a program”

“Increasing member of YAGs through promotion of information”

“Supporting young into employment and paid volunteering”

One group proposed an **environmental program** to increase tree canopy coverage, aiming to reduce skin cancer risks and encourage outdoor play. Repurposing unused buildings into youth hubs was also discussed as a way to revitalise spaces and meet community needs.

“Environmental Program to increase canopy to decrease skin cancer rates and increase outdoor play”

“Repurposing unused building into youth spaces with mental and sexual health services”

11. Youth issues

Question 11: What youth issues are you most passionate about at the moment and why?

A recurring theme was the importance of **accessibility**, whether to mental health services, education, housing, or community support. Rural mental health was a particular concern, with participants calling for better education around mental wellbeing, more services, and reduced stigma around seeking help.

Equity and inclusion were central to many conversations. Young people expressed the need for more pathways and support towards higher education, inclusive environments in primary and secondary schools, and better access to services for Trans and LGBTQIA+ youth – especially during school hours and without requiring parental consent. The lack of queer representation in leadership roles was also noted as a barrier to feeling seen and **supported**. **Young people talked about the importance of recognising** young carers in educational settings, early intervention in childcare, and building peer support skills to help each other through crises.

Environmental concerns, especially around climate action, were raised as urgent priorities. Participants advocated for stronger declarations and tangible steps toward sustainability. Worker’s rights were another key issue, with young people sharing experiences of unfair pay, poor working conditions, and age-based discrimination.

Housing insecurity and the uncertainty of life after school were major stressors, alongside the need for education on practical life skills like taxes and navigating adulthood.

Holistic education that addresses real-world issues and the emotional impact of suicide was seen as essential to creating resilient, informed communities. Some young people also talked about the importance of youth involvement in community initiatives, access to arts and cultural spaces, and platforms that amplify young voices.

What is next for Youth Advisory Groups?

In the final session of the day, young attendees were asked to answer three questions:

1. How could YAGs attending today stay connected?
2. What do you want YACWA to do after this event?
3. What is one piece of advice you have for other YAGs?

How can YAGs stay connected?

The post-event evaluation survey data showed that **98% of YACtivate attendees made a new connection** at the event. Young people talked about meeting and networking with other YAGs as being one of the most important aspects of the event.

We also asked young people at the end of the event how they wanted to stay connected. Young people said that they could use online platforms to stay connected, and that this could be used for learning between YAGs, and also for social connection. Collaboration between YAGs was seen as desirable, and young people talked about sharing information, pairing up as ‘sibling YAGs’ and working together on projects and events.

“Zoom collaboration session – ‘YAG United,’ help each other and share ideas”

“Team building activities with other YAG → so they can hit the other YAG up for advice on an event they have done”

“Hold more social catchups”

A lot of ideas were explored in the World Café through the connection between YAGs discussion (see [here](#)).

What do you want YACWA to do after this event?

Young people had many ideas on what YACWA should do after YACtivate 2025, most notably training and further education.

Young people wanted **further events** and opportunities such as YACtivate. They wanted the ability to connect with others in the space, build further skills and create social connections with other engaged young people.

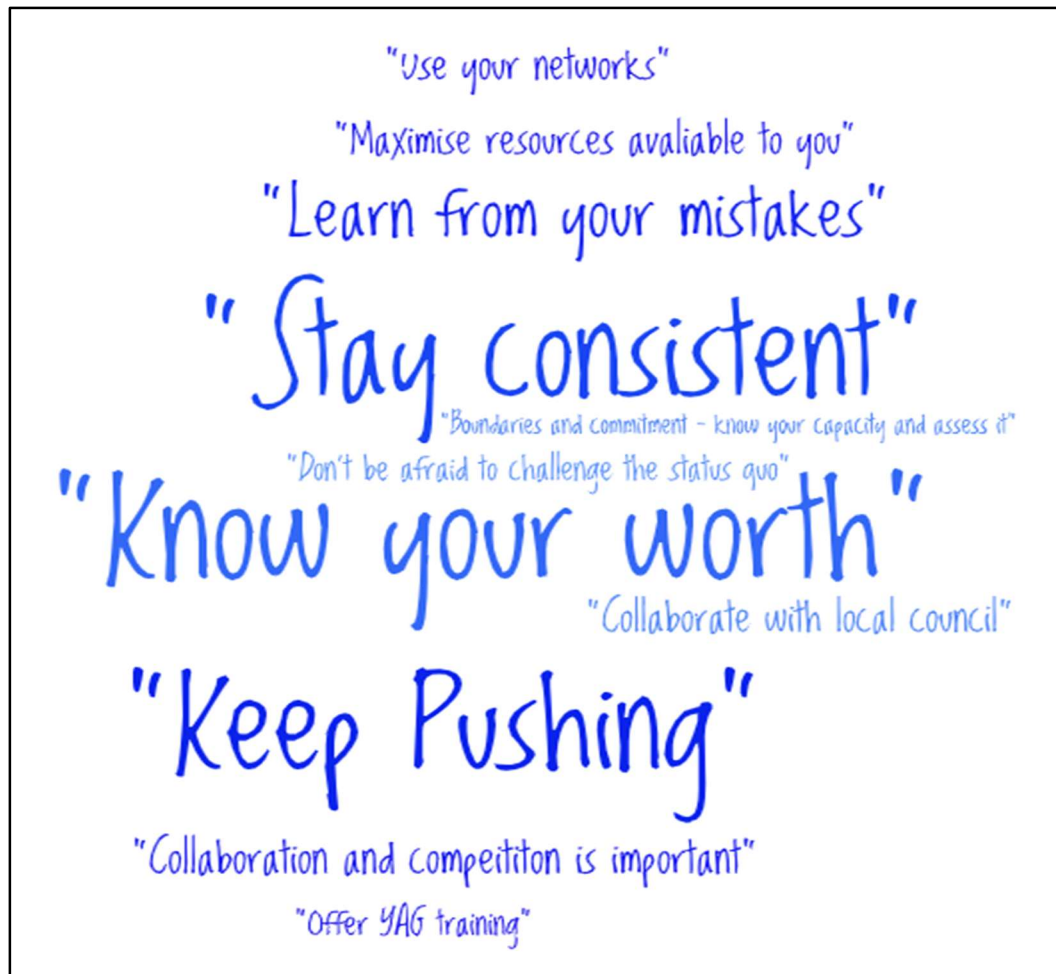
Further training for YAG members was a significant theme, specifically training for the group’s current or aspiring chairperson. Young people also recognised a need for a **digital resource hub** to support new, developing, or established YAGs in continuing or ensuring best practice engagement with young people.

“Play a role in connecting YAGs”

“Digital Resource Hub”

What is one piece of advice you have for other YAGs?

We asked young people what one piece of advice was that they had for other YAGs. The responses have been put in into a word cloud below.



Appendix A: Survey data

Participants gave YACtivate an overall rating of 8.4/10 for how much they enjoyed the event.



98% of participants made a new connection at YACtivate.



96% of participants said that they would recommend YACtivate to other young people who are part of Youth Advisory Groups.



Some comments:

"Loved it, I loved meeting new people"

"I learnt strategies for youth advocacy initiatives"

"That a lot of benefits can be gained if YAGs work together more."

"I have learned about the different projects that different YAGs have initiated around WA"

"Each of the groups have interesting and different, unique ways to engage youth in their community."