

Regional Youth Taskforce

2019-2020 Yearbook



Minister's foreword

Our inaugural Regional Youth Taskforce surpassed every one of my expectations, presenting bold policy reforms, eye-opening feedback and clever ideas that will positively shape the futures of thousands of their regionally based peers.

When establishing the Taskforce, we made sure that our members reflected the diversity of regional NSW. I wanted representatives from our bush and beachside communities, those from bustling regional centres and our smaller towns. We also looked for a range of ages, backgrounds and cultures as well as areas of interest.

This variety ensured we had authentic representation and a diversity of ideas. Despite the Taskforce's diversity, it was clear that all our members wanted one thing: to improve the lives and opportunities of their peers in the regions.

Hearing the issues and opinions directly from regional young people has been - and will continue to be - a priority for the NSW Government as we power ahead with the expansion of the Regional Youth Portfolio. Since our first meeting in October 2019, our Regional Youth Taskforce have been engaged and projected a strong voice.

We met four times over twelve months - one of them online due to COVID-19 restrictions. We have discussed the pillars of the Regional Youth Framework in detail and the members shared their ideas, experiences and advice with Ministers and special guests.

I have been able to highlight some of their work to Cabinet and Parliament and share their insights with both Ministers and Agencies. Together, we have already had some real wins, including our Drought Break Summer Programs being accessed by thousands of regional young people, providing feedback to the NSW Curriculum Review and advocating for the transition between P1 and P2 licenses to move online.

This Taskforce has been so successful. It has been incredible to watch Taskforce members work as a group and grow immensely as individuals. I am very proud of everything each member of this wonderful group of young people have achieved. I want to thank them for their participation and I look forward to the 2021 Regional Youth Taskforce.

Signed



The Hon. (Bronnie) Bronwyn Taylor, MLC
Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women



Role of the Taskforce

The role of the Regional Youth Taskforce is to provide policy and operational advice to the Minister for Regional Youth on regional youth issues.

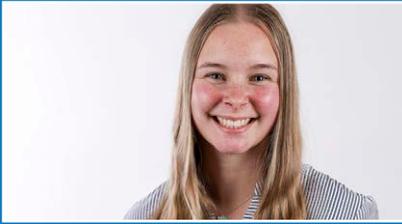
IDENTIFYING AND ADVISING

on regional youth matters and providing expertise and knowledge of the environment and context



The 2019-20 Taskforce members

(Age at the start of the RYTF)



Allie Roberson (18)
South East Region



Amanda Reid (22)
Illawarra Shoalhaven Region



Ashish Thapa (17)
Central West and Orana Region



Ben Johnstone (13)
Far West Region



Caitlin Axelby (17)
North Coast Region



Jack Antcliff (22)
Hunter Region



Jan Jafr (17)
North Coast Region



Jasmin Hughes (19)
Central Coast Region



Josef Graf Cooper (17)
Central Coast Region



Katherine Sutcliffe (14)
Hunter Region



Khawlah Albaf (13)
South East Region



Lachlan Page (19)
Illawarra Shoalhaven Region



Laura Murray (22)
New England and North West Region



Luca James (14)
Riverina Murray Region



Maddy Jerrett (15)
Central West and Orana Region



Marina Gabra (16)
Riverina Murray Region

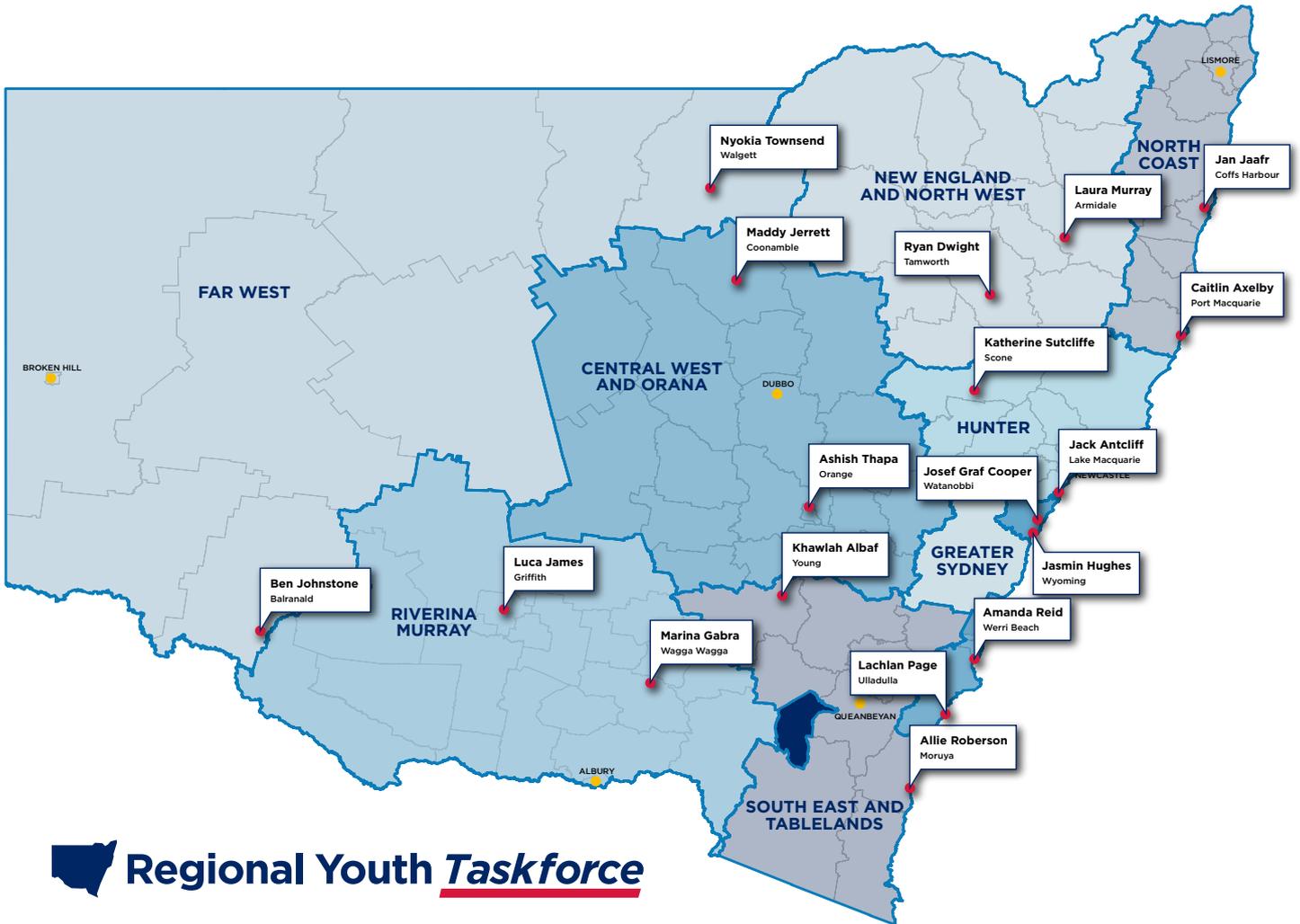


Nyokia Townsend (16)
Far West Region



Ryan Dwight (23)
New England and North West Region

Taskforce member locations



 **Regional Youth *Taskforce***

Taskforce Meetings

Four Taskforce meetings were held across 12 months to discuss the four pillars of the Regional Youth Framework: 'Work Ready', 'Wellbeing', 'Connectivity' and 'Community'. Taskforce members were also consulted several times outside of meetings. The 2020 Taskforce met four times during 2019-2020, with meetings facilitated by the Advocate for Children and Young People.

Framework on a page

Vision: Young people learn, work, and thrive in regional NSW

Guiding principles

Empowerment ↔ Resilience ↔ Equity ↔ Start early ↔ Youth voice ↔ Culture and identity

Key pillars

1. Work ready

Prepared for regional jobs of the future

Priorities

- 1.1** Young people have access to great education and training opportunities
- 1.2** Young people have the skills and knowledge to navigate the pathways into careers
- 1.3** Young people have clear options to take them from school to meaningful training, work and further education opportunities
- 1.4** Young people at risk of or are disengaged, are better supported to learn and achieve

2. Wellbeing

Happy, healthy and safe

Priorities

- 2.1** Young people and their families are supported to thrive
- 2.2** Young people can understand their health needs and navigate the health system
- 2.3** Young people have access to culturally and youth-appropriate services
- 2.4** Young people can get help, wherever and however they choose to seek help

3. Connectivity

Able to access services and opportunities easily

Priorities

- 3.1** Young people can safely access and use private transport
- 3.2** Young people can access public transport to the places they need to go
- 3.3** Young people have access to services from where they are
- 3.4** Young people have the skills to navigate and use online information and systems

4. Community

Connected and valued by their community

Priorities

- 4.1** Young people have a voice in shaping their communities
- 4.2** Young people have access to a variety of youth-appropriate arts, screen, culture, recreation and sporting activities
- 4.3** Young people feel safe in, connected to, and valued by their communities

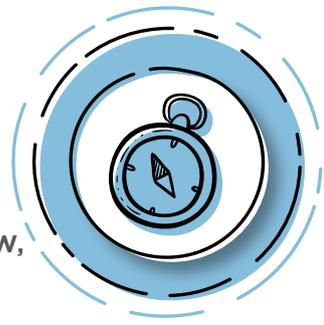
Strategic alignment

20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW ↔ Regional Development Framework
Cluster-specific youth strategies ↔ Local youth strategies

Diversity in regional NSW

Aboriginal young people ↔ Vulnerable and disadvantaged ↔ Young people with disability
LGBTIQA+ ↔ Refugee ↔ Culturally and linguistically diverse

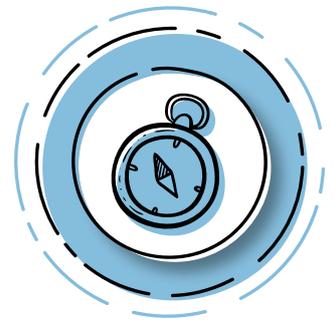
Meeting One - Orientation meeting



12-13 October 2020
Sydney

**SPECIAL GUEST: Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional NSW,
Minister for Trade and Industry, Hon John Barilaro MP**





Meeting One – Outcomes and achievements

- Reviewed and provided feedback on the Regional Youth Framework. This included changing language to be more appropriate, refining priorities and adding an additional priority that ‘Young people have increased understanding of the workforce’ (priority 1.5) under the ‘Work Ready’ pillar.
- Taskforce feedback on life skills classes and making the transition to out-of-school life easier which was provided to the Minister for Education.
- Taskforce comments and ideas about mental health issues and the need for further services were provided to the Ministry of Health and contributed to the 2020 expansion of the Wellbeing Health In Reach Nurse program in schools.
- In the lead up to the 2019 summer school holidays, the Regional Youth Taskforce provided input and guidance to develop the ‘Drought Break’ Regional School Holidays Activities program. This delivered:
 - › Five fully subsidised camps for 262 young people aged between 7 – 15 years
 - › Sport clinics for 14 communities
 - › BBQ and Beats events in 20 rural locations, with over 1,330 young people participating and 442 parents and carers attending
 - › 500 enrolments for fee free training courses delivered in 33 drought affected community by eight training providers
 - › Grants of up to \$10,000 for 30 councils to extend pool hours, offer reduced or free pool admission, train and employ lifeguards and pool staff, hold outdoor cinema and fitness programs.



Meeting Two – Connectivity focus



5 April 2020
Online

SPECIAL GUEST:
Minister for Customer Service, Hon Victor Dominello MP



Meeting Two – Outcomes and achievements

- Discussion with Transport for NSW about regional transport options and costs led to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal directly consulting regional young people and Taskforce members in their review of regional and rural local bus fares.
- Transport for NSW are targeting regional young people for consultation on their 16 Regional Cities Service Improvement Program.
- Department of Customer Service are consulting with the Office for Regional Youth and the Taskforce along with other stakeholders, to update their youth landing page and assist with the Becoming an Adult life journey pages. These pages assist young people access the government services they are most likely to need.
- Following discussion with Minister Dominello about the difficulty regional youth had accessing Service NSW centres to update driver's licences, the NSW Government announced in June that learner drivers can now progress online through their licence levels from P1 to a full licence.
- Taskforce feedback on online learning, technology, connectivity, wellbeing and school workloads during COVID lockdown which was provided to the Minister for Education and the NSW Education Department.

Meeting Three – Wellbeing focus



19 July 2020
Queanbeyan

**SPECIAL GUEST: Resilience NSW Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons,
PCYC CEO Dominic Teakle and Headspace CEO Jason Trethowan**



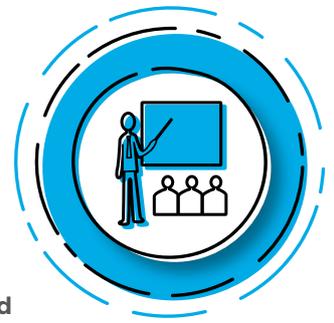


Meeting Three – Outcomes and achievements

- Discussion of the importance, scope and extent of life skills courses in school curriculum, which Education are reviewing as part of the NSW Curriculum Review.
- Discussed the need to address the stigma associated with mental health issues and reduce the stigma in seeking help. The Taskforce advocated for increased Mental Health First Aid training.
- Re-assess the COVID restrictions impacting youth support services.
- Concerns were raised about access to services in remote towns, length of funding terms and holding services accountable for outcomes.
- These and other issues were discussed with the relevant agencies to progress relevant actions.



Meeting Four - Work ready and community focus



11 October 2020
Dubbo

SPECIAL GUESTS: Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC, Dugland Saunders, Member for Dubbo and Bernie Shakeshaft, CEO Backtrack Youth Works





Meeting Four – Outcomes and Achievements

- A range of suggestions were discussed with the Education Minister including home schooling, work readiness and business mentoring and support for students with disabilities.
- Create a commitment for Local Councils to establish Youth Councils and have youth workers – Office for Regional Youth to discuss with Office of Local Government.
- Regional Youth Awards and volunteer awards to be scoped by the Office for Regional Youth
- Events for young people (e.g. using Community notice board, Our Local) Service NSW to provide a feed of local events based on postcode.
- The Taskforce provided many ideas on how to improve the next Taskforce experience that will be considered by the Office for Regional Youth.



Consultations with Taskforce members over the year



Drought Break: providing ideas for Regional School Holiday Activities



Review of NSW Education curriculum and improvements to online learning, technology, connectivity, wellbeing and school workloads during COVID



Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) review of regional and rural local bus fares



Feedback provided to the Department of Primary Industries on youth working in agriculture



Research commissioned by the Advocate for Children and Young People into addressing the stigma associated with mental health issues and seeking help



UNICEF Youth Drought Summit actions



Transport for NSW consultation on their 16 Regional Cities Service Improvement Program



Improvements to the Department of Customer Service youth hub website to connect young people to content and government services

and lots more ...

Taskforce members reflect on their year



What did you learn from your involvement in the Taskforce?

Marina Gabra: “I learnt that you can have an impact on the community regardless of your age, gender or background.”

Maddy Jerrett: “Through the taskforce I learnt a lot about myself and what I am capable of, I learnt to be a much more outgoing person. I also learnt a lot about other regional areas in NSW and the diverse range of issues that affect young people. I learnt so much from the other taskforce members and they have given me a different outlook on life.”

What was enjoyable, interesting or informative about being part of the Taskforce?

Katie Sutcliffe: “The amazing guests were inspirational and very personal. From Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons to Bernie Shakeshaft, they provided the members with great guidance and stories to strengthen our roles as youth leaders in the community.”

Khawlah Albaf: “I really enjoyed meeting new people, discussing what we are passionate about, sharing our ideas and bouncing off each other to come up with better ideas, travelling to new regional areas, meeting up and hearing about what we achieved and the progress of our actions.”

Lachlan Page: “The mateship between all the members was really great. All age groups mixing together and becoming quite close friends.”

Describe something you felt was achieved, an outcome or change you and the Taskforce helped make?

Katie Sutcliffe: “The Drought Summer Fund was a major achievement for the Taskforce that I had thorough contribution to.”

Luca James: “I think we set the groundwork as the first Regional Youth Taskforce, figuring out the best ways to do things, and how to improve the meeting for future groups, making them more efficient and effective.”

Ashish Thapa: “I felt like our work with Transport and Service NSW was a success, same with our discussion on mental health as it brought good results.”

Maddy Jerrett: “I feel that as the first Regional Youth Taskforce we have really paved the way for other young people to voice their opinions. We have shown parliament that young people do have opinions and we really want to be involved in the decision making. We have made it so much easier for others to have their say and get involved in the decisions that matter to them.”

Lachlan Page: “The changes to the licence system is a big win to regional youth as they no longer have to go to Service NSW to convert from P1 to P2. Other ideas have been raised with Minister Taylor and Minister Dominello for what can be integrated onto the Service NSW App.”

What issues or things you were consulted on that you found useful to contribute to?

Katie Sutcliffe: “I was eager to contribute to any issue, but I was interested in allowing youth to get viable jobs and life skills for the future, mental health (with the Minister for Mental Health) and activities like the Drought Summer Fund that can be such a difference for rural youth.”

Marina Gabra: “It was extremely useful to contribute to the mental health and wellbeing aspect. It allowed for me to voice some of the concerns in my region, yet I also gained a lot of insight as to how other schools, universities and communities as a whole respond to mental health and wellbeing. It also allowed for me to implement some strategies that other members of the Taskforce had in their regions into my community.”

What advice would you give a new member of a future Taskforce?

Ashish Thapa: “Be yourself and always be ready to say yes to anything because saying yes opens many doors and this brings opportunities.”

Amanda Reid: “Speak up for what you believe in and don’t be too nervous to have a say on what you are passionate about.”

