



YOUTH LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

MANA RANGATAHI HUI TAUMATA



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HAERE MAI / WELCOME



Inspired by the International Initiative of Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) Exchange Network meeting, the Youth Leadership Symposium 2022 – Mana Rangatahi Hui Taumata was created to allow young people to develop solutions to the challenges facing youth mental health in New Zealand.

Prior to the IIMHL Leadership Exchange Network Meeting, 130 participants from across Aotearoa came together at Te Pae Convention Centre to discuss the challenges and enablers around youth mental health, and make recommendations to address these. The participants were split across ten different rōpū (groups), each led by a pair of facilitators from our partner organisations, and tasked with discussing different topics around youth wellbeing.

Over the course of the day, participants enjoyed dynamic workshop sessions, independent networking, a powerful keynote speech from Izzy Fenwick, and powerful group presentations. The day concluded with an inspirational response from IIMHL CEO, Steve Appleton.

The key learning from the Youth Leadership Symposium 2022 is that rangatahi are willing, ready, and able to be at the decision-making table and to take an active role in conversations that involve them.

We hope this readiness translates into action to allow more young people to have their voice heard by those in power and to elevate young people into the spaces where decisions are made.

Thank you to our partner organisations Youthline Central South Island, Te Aka Whaiora, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury, ADL NZ, Te Tahi Health, Office of the Childrens Commissioner, Te Hiringa Mahara, Purapura Whetu, Odyssey House, InsideOUT Kōaro, VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, REAL and YES Disability for helping make the day great.

Thank you to our speakers Izzy Fenwick, Elina Ashimbayeva, Yani Johanson and Steve Appleton for inspiring our attendees.

Thank you to Te Whatu Ora for supporting us to make this event come to life.

THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2022 DECLARATION



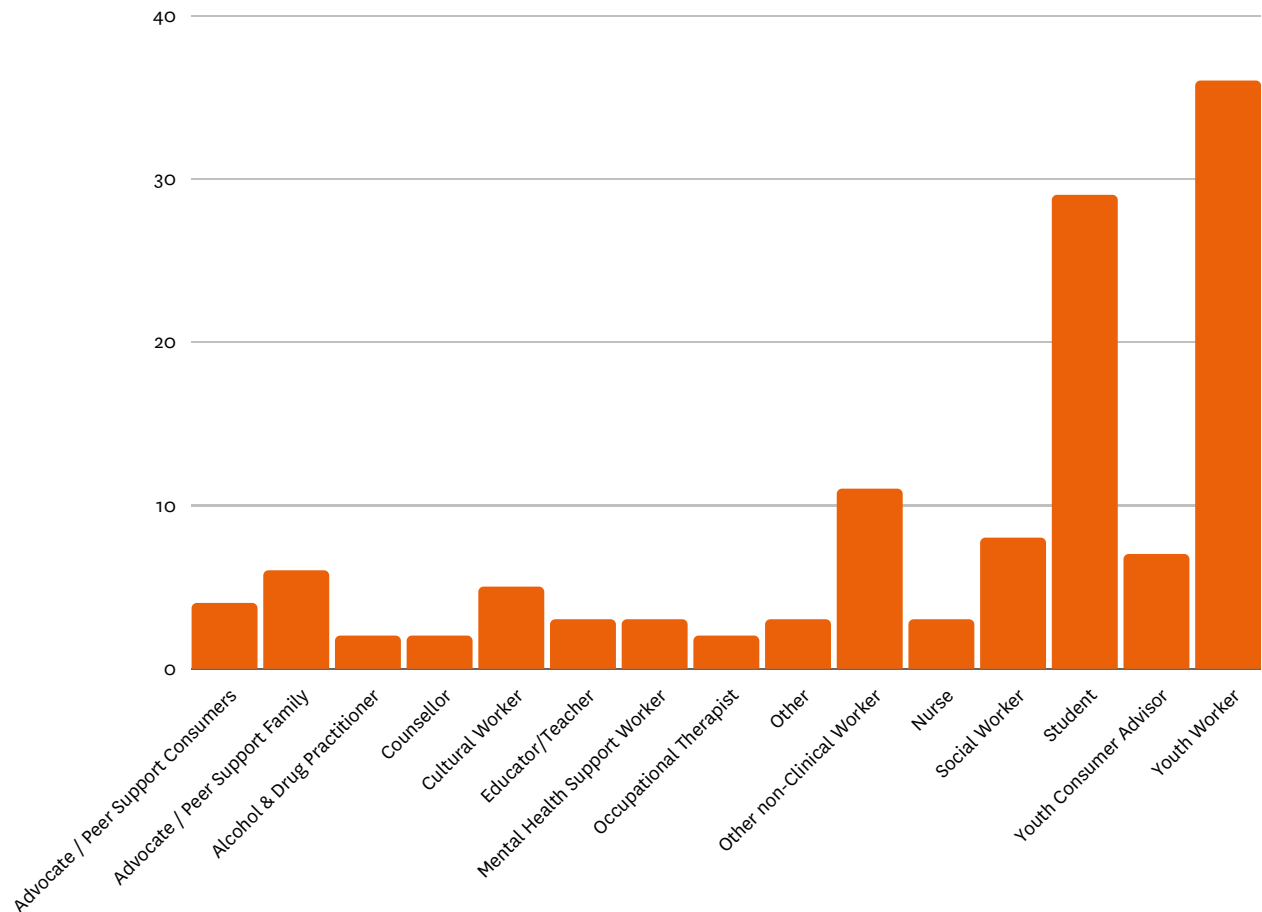
This document is designed for health professionals who want to integrate the insights of young people into their service or professional practice. We recognise it's not an easy goal to achieve, and our hope is that this resource will help guide you.



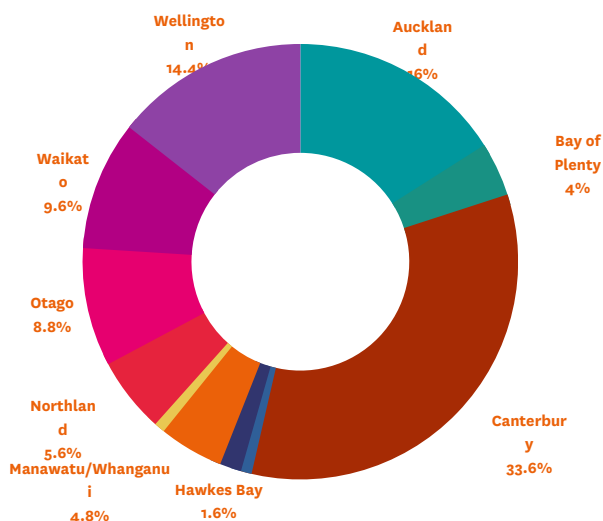
DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

SUMMARY

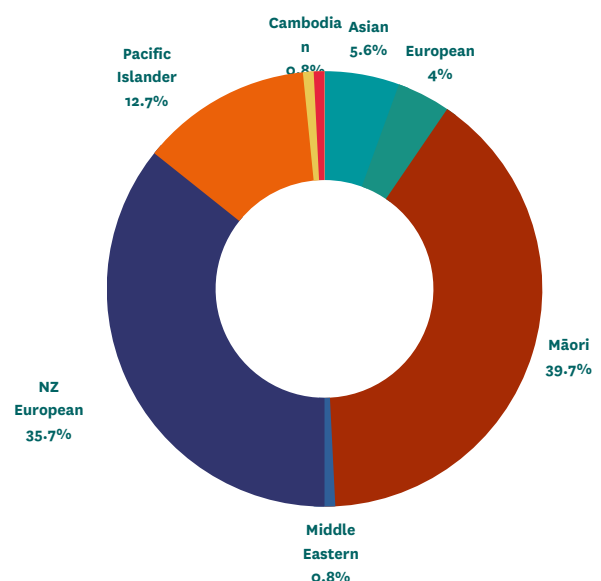
OCCUPATION



LOCATION



ETHNICITY



EDUCATION



From the age of five until early adulthood, most young people are engaged in some form of education, and it is well known that a poor educational experience can lead to poor life outcomes.

Therefore, it is vital to consider how our education system takes care of young people and find ways of helping educational institutions to support them effectively and meaningfully. A key focus needs to be on identifying key challenges in the education system that can stunt positive youth well-being. In summary, this rōpū wanted to see an education system focused on hauora; designed by young people for young people and with an emphasis on equal partnership and co-design.

ENABLERS, BARRIERS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A hauora or wellbeing-focused education system is needed in order for young people to thrive in all areas of their life. Success in education should not only be measured by academic achievement, but by the growth and development of young people holistically. The Education rōpū developed a creative, visual representation of enablers, barriers, and recommendations by designing an education waka depicting the education experience, where everyone has a role to play and rangatahi are the rangatira of the waka.



“We, as young people, want to lead the waka. Each person has an oar. Each paddle represents a value because education should be values driven. From government agencies and departments to community leaders to teachers, they are all there to support the right to education, but it's not their direction or it's not their choice to make the direction. That is for us, rangatahi.

The water represents all the challenges – political, legal, institutional issues. The question is how can us rangatahi be supported to navigate those waters? The wind represents opportunities, and opportunities come and go. How do we grab onto the wind? And in terms of our pursuit of mood as rangatahi, hauora, holistic wellbeing, that's the stars for us. We are all in this together.”

EMPLOYMENT



The current job market, alongside the overwhelming uncertainty around the future, makes employment a genuine source of stress for young people. The traditional pathway of study to work, work to save, and save to buy a house is now broken, and young people are left handling the fallout. Employment remains a huge obstacle for many young people who are wanting to break generational poverty and better their life outcomes. It's tougher now more than ever to find meaningful full-time employment, and this can create stress and anxiety that has a definite impact on youth well-being. By looking at youth wellbeing through an employment lens, this rōpū looked to find ways in which workplaces could support young people. The aim, being to identify key enablers and challenges that determine what a supportive study-to-work transition could look like. In addition, the rōpū looked at pinpointing how NGOs, community organisations and government agencies can play a role in supporting youth wellbeing as they transition to work.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The Employment rōpū recognised the primary enabler for quality youth wellbeing in employment as parental support. Specifically, how parental figures talk to their children about employment. Within this rōpū, they reflected on how important it was for their parents to discuss what it means to be a good employee, to support their child, to understand their potential and to help them feel comfortable and confident in starting work.

Barriers the rōpū identified included:

- The lack of industry knowledge around the employment process
- The lack of knowledge around professional expectations
- The perceived lack of transferable skills that young people bring to employment
- The lack of accommodation for certain disabilities and neurodiversity's
- A lack of dependent unemployment benefits

Many young people are not able to understand how their personal and voluntary experiences can be used in the workplace and therefore do not talk about them when applying for roles. They don't have the 'professional language' or experience to know what to say in their application or at an interview. This can be a barrier to the employment process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Community-centred resources using familiar, accessible language
- Increased career support from schools
- Transparent feedback during the employment process
- Having support mechanisms that can advocate and speak for young people – such as the tuakana teina model to support incoming young people with mentors of a similar demographic

EQUITY



Young people face many challenges growing up, and when faced with racism, discrimination, marginalisation and prejudice, life can become very difficult. Not only can these experiences be horrible, they can also be traumatic and life-altering for rangatahi. This rōpū considered youth wellbeing through the perspective of equity and looked for ways in which young people, who hold marginalised identities, can be better supported in their schools, workplaces, and communities. In doing this they highlighted the challenges young people face including:

- Lack of access to education and employment
- Loss of culture
- Micro-aggressive behaviour
- Forced assimilation

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

Enablers and barriers to ensure everyone's voice is heard, the Equity rōpū identified cultural and intersectional inclusion as a key enabler. They felt that working to actively listen and value young people's diverse perspectives in order to facilitate change would drive positive outcomes for all. This can be expressed by a guiding principle of 'nothing about us without us'.

“We want to see everyone who usually is never seen, to be included”

“Recognise, normalise and educate young people early on that cultural intersectionality and being in the middle ground is okay”

The rōpū felt that barriers to this goal included:

- Racism
- Prejudice
- Discrimination
- Uniform policy
- The disconnection from culture due to Eurocentric systems
- Forced assimilation under the guise of professionalism

It was felt that intersectionality and unique perspectives were underused superpowers that could be used to strengthen youth wellbeing as they would normalise different ways of being, thinking and acting without undermining cultural values. This normalisation would ensure the young person did not have to abandon their own cultural values.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Māori values and Te Tiriti obligations are actioned in everyday operation – collaborating and working in partnership directly with local iwi and kaupapa Māori organisations
- Equal ethnic representation at local, regional, and national levels in the political sphere
- Institutions working with communities to meet people where the need is – as opposed to requiring young people to seek out support
- Reinforcing, respecting, and celebrating young people's autonomy, particularly in education settings

GOVERNMENT



Government services can have a significant impact on youth wellbeing, especially those that provide financial or social support and care. StudyLink and Work and Income New Zealand provide a positive impact on youth wellbeing by offering financial security and support. However, other services like Oranga Tamariki, which have the goal of supporting youth well-being, have a history of doing the opposite. So where and how can improvements be created? This rūpū looked at youth wellbeing through the perspective of government to find ways in which government entities / agencies can continue to support young people and also considered the key challenges that impact positive youth wellbeing.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

During the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, rangatahi have witnessed government services providing resources to publicly funded institutions to support students and financial aid to affected industries. As COVID-19 has associated mental health impacts, it is crucial to understand how government services can meaningfully support youth mental health. The Government rūpū felt a key enabler was the willingness, through youth councils, youth advisory boards and youth consultation, to engage with youth communities to better understand the status quo.

Barriers identified include:

- Organisations operate in silos
- There is a lack of communication and cohesion between government services
- Projects, undertaken by government agencies with a similar focus, should collaborate to minimise waste and overlap
- Despite multiple opportunities to engage, there can be an unwillingness to accept criticism or negative feedback from young people. All of these barriers minimises and diminishes the perspective of rangatahi and their own lived experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increased ethnic and cultural representation in government space, particularly for Māori and Pasifika people
- Create a 'Ministry for Future Generations', with youth sustainable membership and which focuses on succession planning and how to better support young people
- A government-wide inter-organisational approach to community engagement
- A mental health de-stigmatisation campaign led by diverse young people
- Increased pay and support for professionals who support youth
- Increased funding for youth housing and accommodation across New Zealand

HAUORA



Fundamentally, wellbeing is a broad health issue. Therefore, young people's wellbeing should be examined through a health model. Te Whare Tapa Whā is a Māori model of wellbeing that looks at four distinctive but interconnected elements – Taha Whānau (family health), Taha Hinengaro (mental health), Taha Wairua (spiritual health), and Taha Tinana (physical health).

By addressing youth wellbeing through Te Whare Tapa Whā we will be addressing the different aspects and intersections of health that have direct impacts on youth wellbeing. This can be anything from how experiences of mental distress (mental health[AM1]) can influence wellbeing or how lack of access to quality nutrition and opportunities to participate in sport (physical health) can influence wellbeing. This model will help identify key enablers and challenges in this space, and how schools, workplaces, communities, NGOs, health organisations and government agencies can play a role in elevating youth wellbeing in this area.

[AM1]Should this be 'poor' mental health or something different?

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The Hauora Rōpū identified three key barriers to positive hauora for youth: the encompassing stigma of mental distress, the quality of available information, and the overall accessibility of services. For enablers, the Hauora Rōpū highlighted whakawhanaungatanga, collaboration, equity, accessibility, and normalisation of accessing mental health support.

This rōpū created an additional focus on sufficiently supporting kaimahi and/or parents to appropriately support rangatahi.

The Rōpū acknowledged that a kaimahi and/or caregiver's commitment to uplifting rangatahi through mana enhancing practices contributes to positive hauora for a young person.

“Out with the old, in with the new to move forward. In order to do that from a hauora perspective, we need to whakamana the rangatahi, uplift their mauri and to enter a mauri ora mindset”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increased access to specialised therapy
- Strengthen kaimahi and parents through appropriate resourcing and capability-building opportunities
- Collaborative actions across different services
- Rangatahi led engagement frameworks, services, and organisations
- Faster referral responses
- Youth audits for services providers[K11]
- Services to offer opportunities to learn life skills, education and employment pathways, work experiences
- Services need to be easily accessible for rangatahi

HEALTHCARE GOVERNANCE



The pathway to wellness and positive wellbeing for young people often requires engaging with the healthcare system. As our healthcare system is overworked, understaffed and under-resourced, it is important to consider how it needs to change in order to serve young people. Healthcare governance that empowers young people requires the youth perspective to be elevated to the highest level. Having youth representation on decision making teams and boards, consulting with young people on decisions that affect them, all contributes to youth positive healthcare governance. Addressing youth wellbeing through the perspective of healthcare governance requires looking at the ways in which local, regional, and national healthcare systems can learn to better support and empower young people. This means identifying key challenges in the healthcare governance space that stunt positive youth wellbeing.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The Healthcare Governance rōpū acknowledged that local health services can be a primary enabler when they are led by their respective communities and receive appropriate funding. They highlighted the importance of identifying services that are performing well and learning from them.

“It is difficult to take the time out of a normal work week to go and see a therapist and sit down. Everybody deserves the right to figure out that stuff”

In terms of barriers, this rōpū identified a variety of different issues including:

- The general health inequity across ethnic minority groups
- How the current healthcare system recognises and exploits vulnerability
- How it struggles to provide support for those who exist outside the traditional gender binary and expression
- General inaccessibility - everybody needs access to information, education, and transport

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Upholding Te Tiriti through partnerships and decision making with iwi
- More accessibility for minority groups; not just people of colour but also people with disabilities and from refugee backgrounds
- Having advocacy and centralised spaces for information with someone from within the respective community at the helm
- Transitional mental health and addiction services to provide more specific support for young people so that they are not prematurely admitted to adult mental health services
- More available funding focused on supporting community-led development
- Māori epistemologies of health integrated into the healthcare system
- More affordable care for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- Consistent co-design and partnership with young people
- Hiring of appropriately qualified professionals, who have experience working with young people
- Cultural safety training for health professionals – DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) with emphasis around tikanga Māori

IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION



The ability to express one's self through clothing, hair, piercings, music or hobbies is crucial to a young person's positive wellbeing. When addressing youth wellbeing through the perspective of identity and expression, the aim is to empower young people to express themselves and showcase their identity and in doing so encourage positive wellbeing. Consideration must also be given to how young people are supported in this journey within schools, workplaces, whānau, and the wider community.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The exploration of one's identity is a natural endeavour especially for young people, and the objective of this rōpū was rooted in how to safely support young people on that journey. The Identity and Expression rōpū identified the primary enabler for positive identity and expression as existing conversations and discourse around knowing how to express yourself and how to explore different identities safely.

- Shortage of educational resources
- Shortage of youth peer workers
- Lack of supportive people in their community
- Lack of funding
- Lack of supportive parents who know how to support young people experiencing identity discovery
- General lack of social acceptance

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Identity and Expression rōpū developed a single recommendation that encapsulated their desire for action and challenge. Their recommendation is that mental wellbeing and identity be treated as a fundamental aspect of primary school education. This would be done by supporting schools and teachers to develop an inclusive health curriculum that helps young people learn about identity and how to express themselves in a safe way. They acknowledged that as young people grow, life can become increasingly difficult, and it is crucial young people have a toolbox of support strategies to maintain their values and sense of self. A young person without a solid understanding of who they are and what their identity is, is going to be lost in a sea of different ways to express themselves.

“I learnt about mental health when I was going through a depression, and that's the worst time to learn about it. It's like learning how to swim when you're drowning.”

“It's important to have safety with acceptance. Not being allowed in your own home because you're not accepted anymore, is a very real and very terrifying barrier.”

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY



By looking at youth wellbeing through the perspective of social media and technology, this rōpū aimed to find ways young people could use social media and technology in a safe and positive way and identify how to support them on this journey at school, in workplaces, at home and in the wider community.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The Social Media and Technology rōpū set the landscape by affirming that social media and technology is a permanent fixture in the lives of young people, and that there is no way to control every aspect of the online experience. They identified the core enablers as youth-only forums, which are a source of validation and connection, as well as a creative source of information when used correctly. Being supported to navigate social media well leads to a positive digital experience where young people feel more connected, empowered, and educated in their world.

The key barriers in this space are similar to the barriers identified by the Equity rōpū:

- Sexism
- Racism
- Homophobia
- Transphobia
- Xenophobia
- Bigotry
- General trolling
- Digital anonymity (allowing those who perpetuate negative behaviours online to be in disguise)

This rōpū noted that these unfortunate aspects of social media and technology can cause harm, however felt it was not worth abandoning altogether. Social media and technology can be used as a resource and shouldn't be viewed as either good or bad. The aim would be to view them from a neutral perspective in order to identify how they can be used in a way that causes no harm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media and technology are without a doubt, essential in this day and age. Young people today have never known a world without personal devices and easy access to the internet. With technology being integrated into every school and workplace, it is deeply important to understand social media and technology and the impacts it can have on young people.

Young people are digital natives and so are often leaders in this space. It is only fair then to give them a seat at the table. The rōpū felt it is necessary to challenge the current situation, policies and approaches to social media, as well as the current education around social media. Their recommendation is to collaborate with the Ministry of Education to create a digital wellness education programme for high school students. This programme would have a promotional campaign to share goals and garner support from the public.

THE FUTURE AND SOCIETY



Young people are currently facing a growing number of unprecedented events– climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, global political unrest, worldwide injustice, financial recessions, and housing market crashes. The uncertainty of the future, and the constant societal shifts are enough to make anyone uncomfortable, and this is especially true for young people as they navigate life. By considering youth wellbeing through the perspective of the Future and Society, this rōpū looked for ways to empower young people to envision their future with hopefulness.

ENABLERS, BARRIERS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Future and Society rōpū examined the future of New Zealand youth wellbeing through the Te Whare Tapa Whā model, and specifically through Taha Tinana, Taha Whanau, and Taha Hinengaro. Through Taha Tinana, this rōpū advocated for a shift away from the current clinical, 1-1 based model and a move towards a more holistic approach to health through the integration of Māori values.

This approach would include:

- A greater focus on community,
- Flexibility to allow for different responses based on individual needs
- The use of data and sustainable funding (which would then serve to encourage a similar approach in other services)
- Funding of new wraparound services

Through Taha Whānau, the rōpū advocated for more instances of community-led collaboration, and consistent partnership with iwi to ensure everyone can be heard, listened to, and respected within their community.

The aim is to learn from this collaboration and develop contemporary models of community engagement, particularly for marginalised communities. Lastly through Taha Hinengaro, this rōpū want all funding for youth mental health to be approved by youth through the development of a national youth governance body. Furthermore, they expressed the need for a wellbeing traffic light model to approach conversations around youth mental health and the development of a toolkit of support strategies. In the green setting, the young person may be feeling quite well, less well in the orange setting and even less in the red. This practice could be shared and employed by teachers, clinicians, counsellors, youth peer workers and other professionals who support young people. Depending on how the young person responds to the traffic light model, a different support strategy and resource can be used.

WHĀNAU AND COMMUNITY



Families and communities play an important role in helping a young person to develop positive wellbeing. The support a young person receives from those close to them is crucial to their success, and a lack of support can make life very difficult. Addressing youth wellbeing through the perspective of whānau and community means finding ways in which NGOs, organisations, and government agencies can support whānau to help the young people in their lives to thrive. In addition, it requires identifying how a young person's familial context can greatly influence their wellbeing. In doing this it is possible to identify key challenges in the familial environment and local community that can stunt positive youth wellbeing.

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The Whānau and Community rūpū defined whānau as:

“Connection, not necessarily by blood, for the purpose of supporting you and helping in the shaping of your own individual identity and that of the collective as a whole forever.”

The core barriers identified included:

- Sexism
- Racism
- Homophobia
- Transphobia
- Xenophobia
- Unconscious bias
- Limited community funding
- Stigma around mental health

All of the above barriers contribute to an intergenerational disconnect, where young people are marginalised in their own communities and left out of the conversation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This rūpū's recommendations were delivered in the form of attributes they would like to see within whānau and communities in Aotearoa so that they can better support rangatahi:

- Be receptive to the growing cultural and ethnic diversity of New Zealand's population
- Exhibit equity in healthcare and health outcomes
- Make it easier to access specialised health services
- Be open to more creative self-expression by young people
- Have a strong sense of regional and local identity
- Work towards decolonisation of our language and minds
- Create co-governance between communities, whānau, iwi and hapu

“If we're not at the table, then we're on the menu”

A VISION FOR YOUTH WELLBEING



The strong appetite for Youth Leadership is unyielding and a testament to the fact that not enough is being done for the youth voice to be heard and utilised. It is not enough to just report, sustainable action is required



A commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi from the health sector



The use of accessible and understandable language



Young people are fiercely determined and want to have an active role in their future



Acknowledgement of the power and gift of mātāwhiri Māori and the need to integrate into our current ways of working



There is an express need for intersectional, collaborative and multifaceted approaches to the youth mental health crisis; silos only work for storing corn



Intergenerational communication – despite some of the existing rhetoric, we don't want to just shout at you but be in active conversation and collaboration



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the SDGs.

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