

► CITY OF MARION

SAFE SPACE PROJECT REPORT 2022–2026

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE
IN THE CITY OF MARION
SAID ABOUT WELLBEING,
EMOTIONAL SAFETY &
MENTAL HEALTH



YOUTH
COLLECTIVE
COMMITTEE

CITY OF
MARION

► **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

Ngadlu tampinhi, ngadlu Kaurna yartangka tikanthi.

We all acknowledge that we are living on Kaurna land.

The City of Marion YCC acknowledges we live, work and play on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people and we recognise the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the land. We acknowledge that the City of Marion’s cultural heritage is rich and vast and we wish to extend our respects to elders past, present and emerging. This land is Kaurna land, and Warriparinga in the City of Marion is a traditional ceremonial meeting place and an important part of the Tjilbruke Dreaming Track. We recognise the significance of the land that we meet on and acknowledge its traditional heritage and support reconciliation in our work.

► **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This project was led and written by Anita Chaplin, a member of the Youth Collective Committee.

All direct quotes in this report are from children and young people who participated in consultations for this project, and a special thanks to those children and young people who participated.

Thank you to the City of Marion Council and the broader community.

Thanks also to the following organisations that supported in the participation of children and young people in this project

- **Youth Collective Committee**
- **Headspace Marion**
- **Marion Life**
- **Commissioner for children and young people SA**

A special thank you to the YCC and to Shannon the YCC coordinator for her support in this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



► The Safe Space Project heard from young people in the City of Marion about mental health and wellbeing, and what helps them to feel safe. This project was lead by the City of Marion Youth Collective Committee in partnership with CCYP and headspace.

The consultation phase heard from over 150 young people in a range of formats, where young people lead workshops and participated in activities and surveys.

This report outlines the importance of mental health support tailored for young people, and the need for this in the community. The report also showcases how informed young people are, and that they have the ideas to create solutions targeted for their community. Young people provide mental health support, support others, and want to learn more about this.

The Safe Space Project is an initiative led by young people for young people. It hopes to provide insight into how keyed in and knowledgeable young people are about things that affect them, and that they have the solutions. The report showcases youth led ideas and hopes to demonstrate to council needs that must be addressed to support youth mental health and wellbeing in the City of Marion. We hope that this report informs programs and initiatives to improve wellbeing outcomes for young people in the City of Marion and beyond.

FOREWORD

JAMES BEAUMONT

**CITY OF MARION'S YOUNG
CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2022**



► There was an old school of thought that “adults know best and are the experts.” This is true to some extent, yes there are experts who study for almost a decade to specialize in Psychiatry, Psychology and other professions. However, this is not usually effective in providing the best care and making a young person feel safe and respected... Thankfully, we are seeing more and more decisions being made *WITH* young people, rather than *FOR THEM!* Not taking into consideration the perspective of the young person is inadequate and it is robbing the person of making choices and having a sense of independence and control over their own life.

Feeling safe and having support that actually considers my wants and needs is critically important to ensuring that I feel safe, secure and supported in life. After receiving excellent early-intervention mental health care in NSW, I wanted to use my lived experience of mental health and receiving those supports to improve

the experience for other young people who are accessing those services and navigating a mental illness or mental health crisis for the first time.

With this Safe Space project, the Marion Youth Collective Committee and The Commissioner for Children and Young People are hoping to hear and amplify the voice of young people, and advocate for what they want and need to help their support system and supporters (friends, family, health professionals, teachers, etc) make them feel safe and secure where they are, and within themselves. We hope you enjoy this report, from one young person to another.

COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SA, IN THE HEALTH HUB: IDEAS FOR CREATING MORE CHILD AND YOUTH FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES REPORT

“Children and young people have indicated their main health concern is mental health. Young people of all ages are worried about their own mental health, as well as the mental health of others; they talk about the impact and the barriers to getting what they described as the ‘right help’.

Many young people are trying to support peers whilst often dealing with their own issues. These informal support networks can often be overstretched.

Young people talk about the barriers they face in getting adults to help. They also tell the Commissioner they are most likely to turn to their parents for help, rather than school staff or professionals.

YOUNG PEOPLE WANT:

- Mental health education at school to help reduce stigma and to provide information on where children and young people are able to access services and support outside of school.
- More specialised counselling and services that work specifically with children and young people.
- Easier transition from youth to adult services”

INTRODUCTION

► The Safe Space Project is a report based on a number of consultations completed with young people in the City of Marion on what they think about mental health and wellbeing, and what they would like to see change.

The City of Marion Youth Collective Committee (YCC) started this project by looking at safety, and the top issue that presented was emotional safety. The aim of the project is to understand young people’s perspectives of emotional safety, how they keep safe and what a safe space looks like for them.

The findings from the consultations will be presented to the Council to provide recommendations on how to improve services and spaces in the City of Marion for young people with a particular focus on mental health and community wellbeing. These findings will also be shared and disseminated with the wider community in hopes to share what young people think about mental health and have a positive impact both in and beyond the City of Marion.

This project consulted, engaged, and spoke with over 150 young people in a range of contexts, including online consultations, in person consultations, engaging with the headspace Youth Forum and an online survey. We asked what helps them to feel safe, what safe spaces look like to them, and what they would do in their community around mental health and wellbeing if they had no limits.

The Safe Space Project Report is a culmination of the themes that came out of this consultation, including quotes and ideas that are from young people themselves. This project was led by and designed by young people, for young people. The YCC created the idea, young people lead workshops, and were involved in all stages of the project itself.

We hope that this report will provide some guidance on how to increase knowledge around mental health and wellbeing, and that young people have the solutions themselves.



METHODOLOGY

► The consultation methods varied in this project to ensure that young people from all areas of City of Marion were reached.

The project began as a collaboration between the YCC and the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) Helen Connolly in her Community Conversations initiative. The YCC worked with

the Commissioner to identify what they wanted to hear from young people in their community about. The YCC is a group of young people from the City of Marion between the ages of 12-25 who are interested in engaging with and leading their community. This group was involved at all stages of the project in co-designing the process.

After each workshop and consultation, we asked the young people

what they thought. Here's what some of them said about the process:



CONTEXT

► Youth mental health has been a widely spoken about topic, as research has found that half of all mental health disorders begin by age 14, and that three quarters begin before the age of 25. In the Youth Survey 2020, by Mission Australia, they found that one in four young people in Australia are feeling psychological distress. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been exacerbated and more psychological distress is being experienced by young people, and the pandemic has negatively impacted their mental health.

In the research conducted by Mission Australia, they found that 30% of young people said that in Australia, mental health is in the top three

national issues for young people. Alongside this, the other top issues were coping with stress and body image which are closely related to mental health and wellbeing.

With more young people experiencing mental health struggles, and young people identifying that this is a top issue for them, we needed to hear from young people in the City of Marion what matters to them and what they would like done in this space. The YCC identified that mental health was a top issue and wanted to hear what young people say about it.



WHAT IS A SAFE SPACE & WHAT IS EMOTIONAL SAFETY?

In looking at mental health and wellbeing, the YCC focused in on emotional safety, and feeling safe to be yourself. Emotional safety enables us the freedom to collaborate, dream, be wildly creative, share bold ideas, feel increased compassion, and express ourselves freely with one another. Emotional safety is the spot being safe and feeling safe.

EMOTIONAL SAFETY LOOKS LIKE:

- › An environment where people feel secure enough to be able to share their thoughts and ideas freely without worrying.
- › People are able to speak up and communicate openly.
- › Expressing yourself authentically, sharing fears, and insecurities, and having a conversation without fear of shaming, yelling, or rejection.

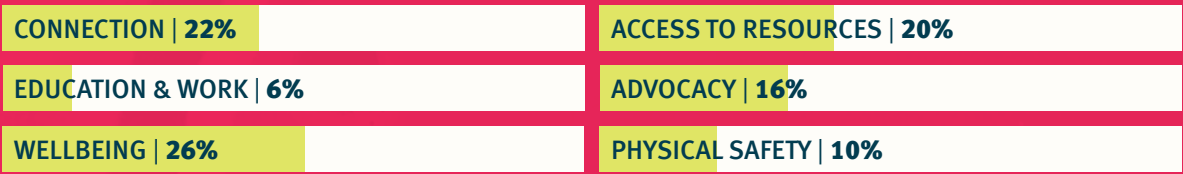


► When you feel emotionally safe, you are more likely to be your best self and contribute to your greatest ability. You are free to dream, collaborate, create, share, and express yourself. When we open up and do this in a safe environment, we invite others to do the same.

We then asked young people what this looks like for them, what helps them to feel emotionally safe, and what creates a safe space for them.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD?

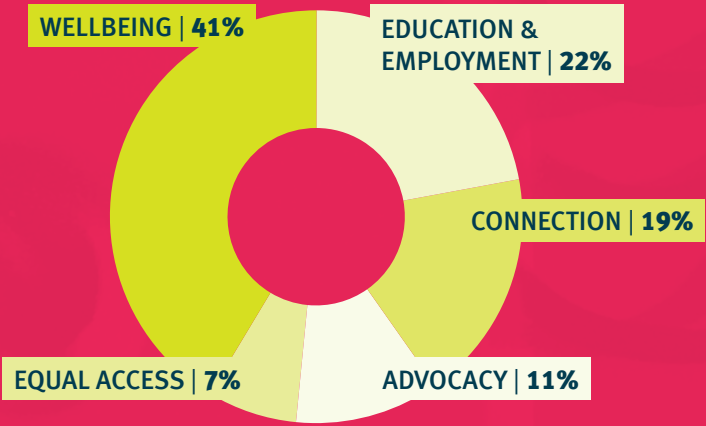
► WHAT HELPS YOU TO FEEL SAFE?



► WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU LIKE TO DO TO KEEP YOURSELF SAFE?



► WHEN ASKED ABOUT WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGE AROUND MENTAL HEALTH IN THEIR COMMUNITY, THEIR BLUE SKY IDEAS, 5 KEY THEMES CAME OUT OF THIS:



These five topics showed what young people were passionate about in terms of mental health and wellbeing and are the themes that will be mentioned throughout the report. These themes show a summary of the consultation findings and what we heard from young people.



1. WELLBEING

Young people told us that safety looks like wellbeing for them. They mentioned that self-care, relaxing, walking, and taking care of yourself is important. Having safe places to go to like community centres and quiet spaces is needed. Young people also told us that hobbies like swimming, reading, music and watching funny videos help them to feel safe.

Formal supports are important in helping young people feel safe, and they mention that mental health support and therapy is important, and that they need options of where to seek support. They mentioned they want culturally safe spaces which are less clinical and more youth friendly. This includes formal supports such as seeing a psychologist, chatting online with a counsellor, and getting a mental health care plan from their GP.

Young people came up with many ideas for how more information about mental health, and informal supports, can occur. They suggested anonymous support services that are friendly and discreet, such as a text line or a website with a safe quick exit. Young people want more support networks, people who are less clinical, who speak in youth friendly language.

Young people suggested a youth zine, anonymous q+a's with a mental health expert, tips and coping mechanisms for panic attacks and suggestions of places to go to get some space. Young people also told us the importance of having positive examples

of people who live with mental health, such as peer mentors with lived experiences, and online versions of this such as videos.

When asked about emotional safety young people told us they want understanding, empathy, and non-judgmental places to go to and people to talk to.

“Knowing who can help me and who I can talk to”

“Saying whatever I want, within reason”

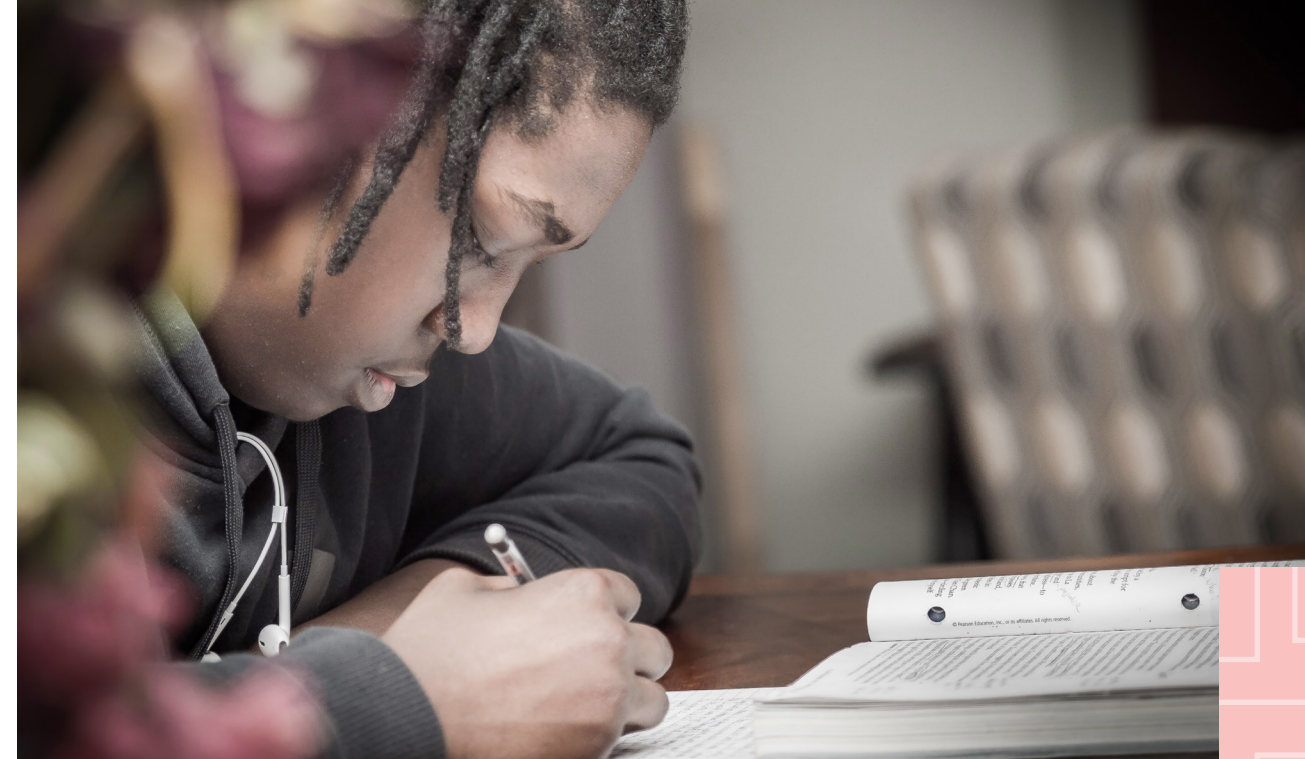
“Having a place where I can be alone to think and there are no expectations of me to do more than I feel ready for”

“Being able to engage and be myself”

“Having people to support you”

▶ KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ Young people want spaces where they can be free to be themselves and feel safe.
- ▶ Young people want access to mental health support when they need it, and to know what kinds of support are available to them.
- ▶ Young people need people around them equipped to provide the support they need, and know who they can talk to in their communities.



2. EDUCATION

Young people overwhelmingly expressed an interest in learning and in being taught life skills that help them to feel secure and confident about their futures. They told us that having a job and skills to get a job is important, and that being financially secure is crucial to them feeling safe. Young people want to be informed and educated, and they seek out resources on things that interest them, as long as they know what is available.

Information around drugs and alcohol and keeping safe around drugs is important to young people feeling safe. Young people said they want education available around drug and alcohol which is accessible, and for parents, caregivers, and trusted adults. Young people said they would like equal access to drug testing kits and information about drugs.

Young people told us they want more information about sexual health and education about the pill, periods, endometriosis, contraception and more. Young people said they would like more resources for doctors about this so that they feel more supported when they approach traditional healthcare providers.

“Workshops around employment, resume skills”

“Information about being safe around drugs”

“Information about the pill”

“Keeping safe at night clubs”

“Free access to youth focused trainings for parents”

“Preventative courses for parents”

“Action against bullying”

▶ KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ Young people are interested in being educated about life skills that will help them secure their future, such as financial literacy and job skills.
- ▶ Young people want to be informed about the risks of drugs and alcohol and how to be safe around these, and where to seek help.
- ▶ Young people need access to sexual healthcare that is safe, accessible, and non-judgemental.



3. EQUAL ACCESS

Young people told us that equal access is important. Young people said that having equal access to food and resources that you need makes them feel safe, as well as a home and feeling safe at night. Young people told us they wanted more equal access to facilities in public spaces, that lights are on at night and there is more safety information available.

As mentioned throughout this report, young people want access to knowledge in ways that is useful and helpful for them. Whether this is through community groups and online services, or workshops that are free and available, young people want to learn in non-judgmental spaces.

Inclusive spaces are crucial and young people mentioned they want LGBTQ+ spaces and services that are friendly. They also said they want this to be included in community centres and public spaces by having unisex bathrooms, gender neutral and inclusive areas so they feel comfortable, and they do not have to worry about bullying or harassment.

Young people told us that they want resources to be provided in many different languages and have artwork from different cultures. Young people told us they want their spaces to be inclusive for all types of people

“Diversity training, inclusivity and feeling welcome”

“Not worrying about bullying or harassment”

“Unisex bathrooms”

“Inclusive space for all types of people”

► KEY FINDINGS

- › Young people want spaces to be accessible for all types of people and for all cultures and languages to be represented.
- › Young people want to be supported and have staff that are trained in diversity and inclusion processes.
- › Young people want to access knowledge in varied ways and for these spaces to be non-judgmental.



4. CONNECTION

Young people told us that they feel safe when they are connected socially and are talking to family and friends and being with others. Lots of young people mentioned that being safe for them is feeling loved and supported. Young people also mentioned that having pets and being around animals makes them feel safe.

When asked what support they look for, young people often told us of informal support. They told us about community groups and clubs they are involved in, social media pages that share mental health information, social groups, and family members. Young people told us they go to groups such as the LGBTQI collective, the gaming and Minecraft club, and resources such as a journal, a vent book, google and YouTube videos of people sharing their stories. Young people told us the importance of having a chosen family to go to, informal mentors, and people in general that help to make sure they are healthy and safe.

We heard that young people also provide informal supports to their networks and often feel under-resourced in doing so. Young people said they ask what they can do to help, they learn when to listen and give advice, and provide them with information. Young people said they want mental health first aid training, and access to resources that have tips and advice on how to give support.

“Being there to receive rants, and support them”

“Knowing when to listen and when to give advice”

“Helping direct them to services”

“Letting people know youre there”

“Being gentle with providing info”

“Provide support however you can”

► KEY FINDINGS

- › Young people often go to informal supports in their networks, and these informal supports need to be provided with information on how to support such as mental health first aid.
- › Young people themselves are often supporting their friends and community and want to be informed on how to do this appropriately.
- › More resources on providing support to young people experiencing mental health need to be produced and widely circulated.
- › Young people want to learn about mental health and how to respond to mental health challenges.



5. ADVOCACY

In all the workshops and consultations, a theme of advocacy around changing the narrative of mental health stigma came about. Young people told us they want more space for businesses to accept mental health and support it.

Young people told us they want more information on mental health, and for the stigma and taboo around mental health to be reduced and removed. Young people suggested that everyone should be trained in mental health response, like they are in first aid. Young people said they want mental health components in their education.

We heard that young people want “ALL mental health” to be talked about, and that some diagnoses can be stigmatised. Young people want to learn about the different types of mental health disorders and have positive examples of people who live with these diagnoses. Young people told us they want a directory on different mental health diagnoses and what they mean, in accessible formats in youth friendly language, that reduces the stigma of these diagnoses.

Young people also told us that they want to know their rights and what is available to them. Young people want to be involved in decisions affecting them and know how to advocate for themselves.

“Mental health days are valid!”

“Remove stigma around all mental health”

“Thinking of mental health as equal to physical health”

“The progress that’s in anxiety and depression, [we] need that for everything”

“Get rid of taboo around mental health”

“Young people to KNOW THEIR RIGHTS”

“Positive examples of people who’ve lived with them i.e. bipolar, schizophrenia”

“Directory on different mental health diagnosis”

“Talking about ALL mental health”

► KEY FINDINGS

- › Young people want more information on mental health to help remove the stigma and for positive examples and people with lived experience to share their stories.
- › Young people told us they want to learn about mental health diagnoses in a format that is youth friendly.
- › Young people want to know their rights and how to advocate for themselves and others.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

- 01 Create systems to mitigate stress by providing more opportunities for young people to engage, access supports and learn about mental health and wellbeing.**
 - A. Workshops on life skills like financial security.
 - B. An online resource with up-to-date information on mental health services and diagnoses.
 - C. Collaborate with mental health organisations.
 - D. Funding for schools to have well-resourced mental health professionals and wellbeing committees.
 - E. Specific funding for mental health and wellbeing initiatives through grants and partnership programs to foster support in City of Marion.
- 02 Removing stigma around mental health.**
 - A. Having trainings available for mental health response, mental health first aid.
 - B. Having a wellbeing focused youth committee.
 - C. Online spaces to learn about mental health that is inclusive, and about all diagnoses.
 - D. Young people knowing their rights and how to access help.
 - E. Removing the taboo around mental health.
- 03 More resources available that are easier to access.**
 - A. Resources in youth friendly language.
 - B. Anonymous Q+A with mental health experts and advice.
 - C. Positive examples of people living with mental health diagnosis.
 - D. Creating a directory on different mental health diagnoses.
- 04 Support for family and friends of young people experiencing mental health.**
 - A. Training that is accessible to all parents, caregivers, mentors, trusted adults.
 - B. Creating support groups for the community.
 - C. Creating peer support programs and mentoring.
- 05 Equal access and inclusion for all young people in the City of Marion.**
 - A. Gender neutral toilets and unisex bathrooms available.
 - B. Diversity training available.
 - C. Resources around sexual health and education.
 - D. Information about being safe around drugs and alcohol.

► FURTHER INFO + REFERENCES

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