EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PAGE 5

1. Introduction PAGE 6
2. Policy Framework PAGE 8
3. Developing the Needs Analysis PAGE 10
4. Local Profile PAGE 12

FINDINGS

PAGE 14

5. Aggregate PAGE 15
6. Secondary Schools PAGE 16
7. Agencies PAGE 23
8. Young People PAGE 37

CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG

YOUTH SERVICES

PAGE 48

ENDNOTES

PAGE 50
Acknowledgements

The City of Greater Dandenong (CGD) Youth Services extends its appreciation to those secondary school personnel, including Principals, Assistant Principals and wellbeing staff, and local youth agency personnel, who took the time to complete the ‘on line wellbeing survey’. We especially thank all the young people who participated in completing a survey or consultation activity for their candidness and honesty. The findings elicited from this research will help shape and inform service provision to ensure Council’s efforts continue to be progressive, targeted and responsive to the needs of young people aged 12-25 years within the City of Greater Dandenong.

Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOD</td>
<td>Alcohol and other Drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCUs</td>
<td>Continuing Care Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Catholic Education Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGD</td>
<td>City of Greater Dandenong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMY</td>
<td>Centre for Multicultural Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELMHS</td>
<td>Early in Life Mental Health Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERMHA</td>
<td>Eastern Region Mental Health Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRIPP</td>
<td>Gain Respect Increase Personal Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEEFT</td>
<td>Process Experiential Emotion Focused Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMP</td>
<td>Refugee Minor Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RYAN</td>
<td>Regional Youth Affairs Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAIL</td>
<td>Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAAC</td>
<td>Southern Ethnic Advisory and Advocacy Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEADS</td>
<td>South East Alcohol &amp; Drug Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECASA</td>
<td>South East Centre Against Sexual Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE LLEN</td>
<td>South East Local Learning and Employment Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERMRC</td>
<td>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGP</td>
<td>Settlement Grants Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMLS</td>
<td>Springvale Monash Legal Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>Southern Metropolitan Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHISE</td>
<td>Women’s Health in the South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YJ</td>
<td>Youth Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YSAS</td>
<td>Youth Support and Advocacy Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YStop</td>
<td>Youth Stop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services’ key drivers for undertaking this needs analysis is to ascertain key and emerging priority issues pertaining to young people aged 12-25 years who have a connection to the City of Greater Dandenong. The findings of this needs analysis have informed the development of Council’s five-year youth strategy.

Partnerships and collaborative practice are intrinsic to the work of CGD Youth Services, as well as supporting and resourcing the work of those in our community who have a role to play in influencing the health and wellbeing of young people. This needs analysis will also guide Council in how best to direct and invest its resources.

Overall the research findings in this analysis assert our overall understanding of the prevailing issues facing young people. It has also highlighted the need to consolidate our efforts in those areas which have emerged with a priority status.

Across the three domains of secondary schools, agencies and young people the following three-key priorities were identified, mental health, education and employment and family. The other top ranking priority areas across the three domains are also represented below.

### Aggregate Findings

**Secondary Schools, Agencies, Young People**

**Priority Risk Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings – Secondary Schools</th>
<th>Priority Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mental Health</td>
<td>1. Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Education and Employment</td>
<td>2. Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Family</td>
<td>2. Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relationships</td>
<td>2. Education and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bullying</td>
<td>*family, bullying and education and employment ranked equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Alcohol and other Drugs</td>
<td>4. Multicultural issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings – Agencies**

**Priority Risk Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings – Agencies</th>
<th>Priority Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education and Employment</td>
<td>1. Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mental Health</td>
<td>2. Health and Wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Housing</td>
<td>3. Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Family</td>
<td>5. Education and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Alcohol and other Drugs</td>
<td>7. Alcohol and other Drugs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aggregate Findings – Young People**

**Youth Summit, Youth Surveys, Focus Groups**

**Priority Risk Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregate Findings – Young People</th>
<th>Priority Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relationships</td>
<td>1. Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bullying</td>
<td>3. Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mental Health</td>
<td>4. Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Education and Employment</td>
<td>5. Education and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Alcohol and other Drugs</td>
<td>7. Alcohol and other Drugs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. INTRODUCTION
CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG - YOUTH NEEDS ANALYSIS

1.1 Background
The City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services is a local government, generalist, youth service, responsible for delivering programs and services to young people aged 12-25 within the municipality. Local government has a critical role to play in facilitating the development of the local youth service system, and in delivering services to young people that promote their health and wellbeing.

Council is committed to providing leadership and engaging with young people to promote their participation in the community. Council continues to work with young people, their families and other service providers, to plan, develop, and deliver quality services and programs, which are based on research that demonstrates best practice.

1.2 What is a needs analysis?
A needs analysis attempts to collect as much information as possible in order to build a comprehensive understanding and profile of the needs and issues facing a particular community or demographic, in this instance, young people in the City of Greater Dandenong. Once these needs are identified, Council is better placed to work with community stakeholders and young people to identify potential solutions, ensure services are targeted and responsive; and resources are distributed responsibly and effectively.

1.3 Rationale – Why undertake a needs analysis?
This needs analysis has been prepared with the explicit purpose of assisting the City of Greater Dandenong in investigating and assessing the current and future needs of local young people. This is to ensure that future service deliverables are targeted to meet local priorities in the most equitable, effective and efficient way; and within the parameters of Council’s role and available resources.

Further, this needs analysis constitutes a key step in Council’s strategic planning process. The findings of this report will serve to inform the City of Greater Dandenong’s Youth Strategy (2012-2017). Council’s Youth Strategy will define local priorities, strategies and resources which will be deployed over the course of the next five years to respond to the needs of young people in the municipality.

In summary this needs analysis seeks to:
- Ensure that the City of Greater Dandenong maintains progressive policy / program development through continuing to research the needs of young people; thereby ensuring Council stays attuned to changing social needs and trends
- Identify key priority issues/themes pertaining to young people 12-25 in Greater Dandenong
- Provide a platform in which to inform the development of Council’s Youth Strategy (2012-2017)

1.4 Guiding Principles
The following principles and frameworks have underpinned the preparation of this needs analysis

- **The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities**
  Human rights are the foundation for freedom, justice, peace and respect, and are an essential part of any democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law and human dignity and equality.

- **City of Greater Dandenong (2010-2012) ’Statement of Intent’ for Young People**
  Council is committed to developing and promoting an environment where young people are valued and respected. Council will work collaboratively with the community, young people and their families to develop a safe environment, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

- **Youth Participation**
  Council is committed to engaging young people in meaningful discussion and decision making processes.
**Community Development**
A fundamental commitment to social justice, participation and empowerment, early intervention and prevention will be maintained. Council will work with the community to identify common concerns and support sustainable Council and community owned responses.

**Continuous Improvement**
Council will continue to review existing services and where appropriate facilitate new and innovative programs and services that are responsive to community need.

**Partnerships and Collaboration**
Council will foster partnerships with tiers of government, community stakeholders and young people to address youth issues, thus ensuring a richer source of skills and expertise.

### 1.5 Definition of young people
In line with the City of Greater Dandenong Youth Service’s target age range, young people are defined in this needs analysis as those aged between 12-25 years who have a significant attachment to Greater Dandenong, i.e. live, work, study and/or recreate.

### 1.6 Broader application of the needs analysis findings
This needs analysis, is one of several mechanisms employed by CGD Youth Services to inform and guide Council’s strategic planning processes. However, it is also envisaged that the key priority themes highlighted within this report, will also serve as a reference point and assist local service providers, including schools and youth agencies when planning for, and providing programs and services to young people aged 12-25 years.
2.1 Commonwealth Government

**National Youth Strategy for Young Australians**
The Commonwealth Government’s National Strategy for Young Australians states that the government’s vision for young people is ‘to grow up, safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them’. These themes are reflected throughout Council’s Youth Strategy.

**Closing the Gap**
The Commonwealth Government’s, Closing the Gap strategy aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.

**National Mental Health Strategy**
The Commonwealth Government’s National Mental Health Strategy is a commitment by Australian governments to improve the lives of people with a mental illness. The strategy aims to:
- Promote the mental health of the Australian community
- Where possible, prevent the development of mental disorder
- Reduce the impact of mental disorders on individuals, families and the community
- Assure the rights of people with mental illness.

**Social Inclusion Agenda**
The Australian Government’s vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. This vision will be achieved when all Australians have the resources, opportunities and capacity to:
- Learn by participating in education and training;
- Work by participating in employment, in voluntary work and in family and caring;
- Engage by connecting with people and using their local community’s resources; and
- Have a voice so that they can influence decisions that affect them.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child
The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international convention to which Australia is a signatory. The Convention is a set of standards that ensure that governments provide consideration to what is in the best interest of the child. These principles and standards are reflected in Council’s Youth Strategy.

2.2 Victorian State Government

**Engage Involve Create**
The Victorian State Government’s ‘Engage Involve Create’ Youth Statement is the government’s vision for young people. This vision being; that Victorian young people are engaged in employment, education, and positive relationships; involved in community decisions; and in creating activities. This vision is reflected throughout Council’s Youth Strategy.

**Victorian Human Rights Charter**
Human rights are the foundation for freedom, justice, peace and respect, and are an essential part of any democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of the law and human dignity and equality. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities contains an agreed set of human rights, freedoms and responsibilities by law.

**2011 Victorian Families Statement**
The Victorian Government Families’ Statement recognizes that Victoria is a diverse community and the need for strong, integrated, social infrastructure, health and human services and supports, education, housing and economic participation are features critical to any healthy and prosperous community. The Families Statement highlights the importance of providing an environment that supports young Victorians to engage in education and pathways that promote to economic participation.

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Adolescent Community Profiles**
The Adolescent Community Profiles draw on data on outcomes for young people compiled through the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS). These profiles provide local level information on the health, learning, development, safety and wellbeing of adolescents aged 10 to 17 years. This data source has informed the development this needs analysis and council’s youth strategy.
Refugee Status Report: A report on how refugee young people in Victoria are faring 2011

The Refugee Status Report brings together a wide range of information to provide an overview of how refugee children and young people in Victoria are faring, focusing on children and young people who have entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program. Data sources include national and international research findings and consultations with refugee community leaders and service providers. The report provides an important foundation in guiding Council’s Youth Strategy.

Council Related Policies

City of Greater Dandenong - ‘Statement of Intent for Young People’

Council’s role in relation to young people who live, work, study or have a significant link to the City of Greater Dandenong is captured in following statement of intent.

Council is committed to developing and promoting an environment where young people are valued and respected. Council will work collaboratively with the community, young people and their families to develop a safe environment, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

City of Greater Dandenong Youth Strategy 2010-2012

Council’s current Youth Strategy provides a framework for the development and implementation of services and initiatives for young people during the period 2010 – 2012. The five key themes of the Youth Strategy framework include:

- Partnership and collaboration
- Participation and leadership
- Promotion, community presence and advocacy
- Quality services
- Places and resources for young people

The successive youth strategy 2012-2017 is being developed concurrent to developing this needs analysis.

City of Greater Dandenong, Council Plan 2009-2013

The ‘Council Plan 2009 - 2013’ is a guiding document which outlines the financial plans, annual budget, service delivery priorities, and plans for the continuous improvement of Council services, during the period 2009 to 2013. It also provides key information about the Greater Dandenong Community.

Council’s vision for the City of Greater Dandenong, as stated in the Plan, is as follows.

Greater Dandenong is a city of opportunity with quality buildings, places and facilities, and where people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds, can reach their potential to live secure, happy and fulfilling lives for generations to come.

The plan describes how this vision will be achieved by meeting the following 5 key strategic goals.

1. City Planned for the Future
2. Thriving and Creative City
3. Healthy Community and Environment
4. City of Respect
5. Leading Council
3.1 Methodology

**Demographic Profile**

A local profile prepared by CGD’s Social Planning Unit was reviewed to provide further context into the status of how young people and their families are faring in the municipality.

**School and Agency online Surveys**

The City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services’ Needs Analysis 2012 was informed by two online surveys targeting the education and youth sectors. A total of 90 online surveys were completed, 22 were received from local secondary schools and 68 surveys were received from youth agency representatives.

Online surveys were administered in late 2011, early 2012 through ‘survey monkey’ and were targeted to those in a leadership or wellbeing role within the secondary school setting; and at manager and practitioner level within the local youth sector, representative of, but not limited to, mental health, housing, drug and alcohol, training and employment and settlement services.

Where appropriate, hard copies of the survey were also disseminated at relevant wellbeing networks.

**Structure of School and Agency Surveys**

Overall questions posed in each of the surveys remained consistent across all three domains, i.e. Secondary schools, agencies and young people to allow for comparative analysis, although distinctions were made to the youth survey, by composing an abridged format that was ‘youth friendly’. Refer to methodology young people’s surveys page 10.

Both surveys targeting secondary schools and youth agencies were comprised of 13 and 14 questions respectively. These questions were then delineated into four sections:

1. Priority areas of wellbeing
2. Emerging trends and new areas of need
3. Service supports currently accessed
4. Gaps in the service system

**Youth Surveys**

The views of young people were also actively sought. A total of 100 young people completed a survey response, not online, but through direct contact with youth services’ staff, or through their attendance at CGD youth services’ programs or activities.

The survey administered to young people comprised of two key sections:

1. Priority areas of wellbeing
2. Service supports accessed (gauging young people’s help seeking behaviours – that is, the people and places a young person is likely to go to for assistance during times of need)

**Consultation/Engagement Activities with Young People**

To coincide with National Youth Week, CGD Youth Services also held a successful youth summit where 250 Year 9 students were engaged in both small and large group discussions and deliberations regarding what they see as the priority issues currently facing young people in the community.

Complementary to the youth summit, a number of targeted focus groups were also facilitated with a diversity of young people. Again, for the purposes of comparative analysis, both the methodology and questions remained consistent across consultation mechanisms with young people.
3.2 Further Considerations

Confidentiality

The information provided by all respondents to the City of Greater Dandenong through both online and direct surveys remains in the strictest of confidence, with the results collated and presented in aggregate form. Unlike, the secondary school and agency surveys it was optional for young people to provide their name on the youth survey. However, where young people did provide their name and contact telephone, it was for one of two purposes 1) to request further information or a follow up contact call from CGD Youth Services and/or 2) elected to go into the draw to win one of several prizes on offer for participating.

Data Analysis

Survey data was collated on Excel spreadsheets. Where possible, data was analyzed quantitatively and summarized into tables. When analyzing qualitative data from open ended questions, attention was given to expose the range and variety of response, as well as giving an overall ranking of popularity of responses.

Limitations of the Survey

It is acknowledged that despite our efforts in targeting individuals for whom wellbeing or direct service is their key role, the nature of certain questions may have been difficult to fully consider, depending on the extent of the individual’s role within the school and/or agency, level of expertise and area of specialization. However, despite these considerations the richness of data collected was both consistent and sufficient to formulate a solid analysis across all three domains, secondary schools, youth agencies and young people.
1. Greater Dandenong in Context

The following profile of young people in the City of Greater Dandenong has been prepared by Council’s Social Planning Unit. Information provided is based on Census Data 2011.

The City of Greater Dandenong is a vibrant and progressive municipality which is recognized as Victoria’s manufacturing heartland and home to 9,000 businesses. Encompassing an area of 129 square kilometers, the city has a population of 142,000 residents. Greater Dandenong is one of the most culturally diverse localities in Australia. Some of the community’s key attributes include:

- Over half its residents were born overseas
- Home to residents from over 150 different countries of origin
- Two-thirds of residents speak languages other than English at home - twice the Melbourne metropolitan level.

1.2 Young People in Greater Dandenong

27,000 young people aged 12-25 years reside in Greater Dandenong, accounting for one-fifth of its population. Owing to recent patterns of migrant settlement, these young people reflect a wide diversity in their birthplaces and spoken languages.

Cultural Diversity

Nearly a half (49%) of all young people in Greater Dandenong aged 12-25, were born overseas. They come from 120 birthplaces, including India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, China, Afghanistan and Sudan. This pattern of settlement continues to the present day. In 2010/11, over 650 recently arrived immigrants, aged 12-25, settled in Greater Dandenong from countries such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, India and Sri Lanka.

Nearly two-thirds of young people speak languages other than English at home and one in twenty have limited fluency in English – three times the metropolitan level.

Among the 490 indigenous residents of this city, 129 are aged 12 to 25 (correct as at 2011).

Education

Young people in Greater Dandenong experience less favorable early school progress, more often leave school early, are less inclined to attend university, and are less likely to be employed, than those throughout Melbourne. Thirteen per cent of young people in Greater Dandenong leave school before completing year eleven, compared with 10% across metropolitan Melbourne. Recent humanitarian settlers are most at risk, with two-fifths of young people from Afghanistan and Sudan leaving school early.

Employment

Though unemployment rates amongst 20-24 year olds declined from 18% to 12.6% in the 15 years to 2011, local unemployment remains higher than the metropolitan level of 9.7%, despite a steady increase in local jobs. In 2011, disengagement rates in Greater Dandenong were the second highest across Melbourne, with 16% of 20-24 year olds neither in paid employment nor enrolled in education.

Social Inclusion

Relatively unfavorable educational outcomes and employment levels among young people set limits upon social and economic opportunity for many local young people. In addition, the perceptions of young people themselves, as well as crime levels and birth rates, hold important implications for social inclusion and future prospects of local young people. Locally, the proportions of young people who commit or are victims of violent crime are among the third highest in metropolitan Melbourne. Ominously, levels of substantiated abuse of adolescents are the second highest in the metropolitan area; while the proportions of young people who did not have a trusted adult in their life, did not have someone to turn to for advice, or were dissatisfied with life, all are the highest in Melbourne, according to a State Government survey conducted in 2009. In 2009, local birth rates among women aged 15-19 years and 20 to 24 were twice the corresponding metropolitan rates. Such elevated birth rates are strongly related to limited educational attainments and employment prospects.
Disability
Overall, 360 young people, or 1.4 per cent of those aged 12 to 25 years in Greater Dandenong, live with a disability - the same rate as for metropolitan Melbourne.

Incomes and Dwelling Types
As most young people live with their parents, their housing tenure reflects broader trends across the city. Approximately seven in ten young people live in homes owned or rented by their parents, while the majority of the remaining young people rent their accommodation privately and 3% reside in government-subsidized accommodation. It is estimated that approximately 500 people in Greater Dandenong are homeless, of whom a substantial proportion are teenagers or young adults. Among young people aged 20 to 24 who are not studying, incomes are lower than elsewhere across metropolitan Melbourne, owing to the higher local unemployment rate.

Family Type / Household Composition
Family and household circumstances of young people vary widely. Within Greater Dandenong, 79% of residents aged 15-24 years live with their parents or other relatives, either as dependent students or non-dependent children, 10% reside with a partner, 2% live alone and 6% are in group households. This is a similar pattern of household circumstances to that witnessed across metropolitan Melbourne.¹

Further Facts and Figures
- 51% of sexually active adolescents do not practice safe sex by using a condom. The City of Greater Dandenong is ranked the 10th highest in terms of proportion of young people who do not practice safe sex.

Out of 79 municipalities in Victoria, CGD was ranked:
- 23 in accordance with the high percentage of young people aged between 15 and 17 who ever used illegal drugs.
- Tenth highest in rates of young people aged 15 to 17 who sniffed glue or chromed, with 7.8% of these young people reporting that they had sniffed glue or chromed.
- Number one (26.3%) of young people who do not have someone to turn to for advice when they have problems.
- One in terms of the number of adolescents convicted and placed on a community order (per 1000 adolescents 2009/10)
- 2 in the rate of child abuse substantiations, per 1000 adolescents 2009/10.²
5. AGGREGATE FINDINGS
PAGE 15

6. SECONDARY SCHOOLS
PAGE 16

7. AGENCIES
PAGE 23

8. YOUNG PEOPLE
PAGE 37
5. AGGREGATE FINDINGS

Priority Youth Issues - Secondary Schools, Agencies, Young People

A comparison of top 3 priority themes across secondary schools, agencies, young people
6. SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This section of the report presents the key findings from surveys completed by secondary school staff.

A total of 22 online surveys were received from secondary schools in the City of Greater Dandenong. Of the 22 online surveys received, respondents were representative of the leadership or wellbeing streams i.e. Adolescent Health Nurse, Wellbeing Coordinator, Year level Coordinator, Principal or Assistant Principal. Pleasingly, of the total survey responses received, all secondary schools within the municipality submitted a response, providing representation from Government, Independent and Catholic secondary schools.

**Priority Risk Factors**

Risk factors are factors in a young person’s environment which increase their vulnerability to social, behavioural and health problems.

The following graph depicts online survey responses of the key areas of wellbeing concern as raised by school personnel, relating to secondary students in Greater Dandenong.

**Top 3 Priority Areas of Wellbeing Concern - Secondary Schools**

![Graph depicting priority areas of wellbeing concern for secondary schools.](image-url)
### Categorisation of Wellbeing Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition of Theme Presenting Issues/Underlying Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mental Health</td>
<td>Anxiety, depression, stress, grief and loss, low self esteem, body image, suicidal ideation, self harm, diminished motivation, sense of hope and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Family</td>
<td>Separation, divorce, family court proceedings, family issues, family violence, break-down in family structure, tenuous relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bullying</td>
<td>Encompasses face-to-face bullying, social exclusion, cyber bullying, misuse of social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Education &amp; Employment</td>
<td>Access to affordable or appropriate education and educational supports, school refusal, truancy, disengagement from learning, unemployment, work readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Challenging Behaviours</td>
<td>Anti-social or risk-taking behaviours, verbal or physical aggression, violence, physical fighting, criminal behaviour, court orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Multicultural Issues</td>
<td>Tensions between different cultures and ethnic groups, racism, intergenerational cultural conflict, settlement issues, gaps in CALD specific services, cross cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Alcohol &amp; Other Drugs</td>
<td>Alcohol or other substance misuse, including both licit and illicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Relationships</td>
<td>Peer and friendship issues, tenuous parent – child relationships/siblings, student-teacher, partner relationships, loneliness and isolation, lack of community connection, lack of positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Housing</td>
<td>Access to safe, stable and affordable housing, transient housing e.g. couch surfing, homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Health &amp; Wellbeing</td>
<td>Overall physical health and wellbeing, nutrition, self care, personal safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Access to Services</td>
<td>Access to programs and services including, free to low cost activities, recreation, sport or personal development, out of school or in school activities, transition programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Sexual Relationships</td>
<td>Sexual health, teenage pregnancy, unsafe sexual practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 New Technology</td>
<td>Inappropriate use of mobile phone technology, including sexting, screen time, cyber crime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes overall ranking of top 3 reported priority issues, with ‘family’, ‘bullying’ and ‘education and employment’ ranked equally at 10.77%.
Mental Health

Survey respondents were asked to nominate, what they considered to be the top three priority issues for young people they provided assistance to over the previous 12 months.

As the graph on page 16 highlights, mental health concerns were overwhelmingly reported as the primary driver for young people seeking support. The data further highlights that mental health was the dominant response across all three priority issues, with mental health recording 42.86% and 27.7% as a second and third priority respectively. These findings are congruent with the Southern Metropolitan Regional Youth Affairs Network’s (RYAN) 2010 survey of which youth service providers identified mental health as being a priority issue for young people in the region. 36.4% of survey respondents listed mental health as one of their top three issues facing young people.

Further analysis of the data, highlights mental health in the context of anxiety, depression and body image as the key presenting concerns for students; however no gender distinctions were recorded in relation to the issue of body image. In relation to reports of depression and low mood, links were drawn to trauma, grief and loss and relationship issues. Also recorded were reports of heightened levels of stress and a perception of diminished resilience. Whilst not as commonly reported, some schools did cite suicidal ideation and self harm.

Family

The context of family and its impact on student wellbeing ranked second highest at 10.77%, notably, of equal rank to ‘bullying’ and ‘education and employment’ concerns. Secondary school personnel cited family issues, extending to include, family violence, conflict and separation as having considerable adverse affect upon student’s mental health and overall demeanor and wellbeing.

Bullying

Overall, bullying rated at 10.77%, encompassing both, direct, face-to-face bullying, or what might be considered the traditional form of ‘school yard’ bullying; and cyber bullying. The traditional definition of bullying is often described as an act of incessant, aggressive behaviour in order to intentionally hurt another person, physically or mentally. By comparison, cyber bullying is likely to involve using the internet and related technologies to harm other people in a deliberate, repeated and hostile manner. So how did the two types of bullying compare when dissecting school survey responses? Three quarters of respondents, identified the traditional form of bullying, whilst the remaining quarter, nominated cyber bullying as a matter of increasing concern. However, in relation to emerging issues, cyber bullying did feature prominently. Interestingly, by contrast ‘bullying’ ranked higher amongst young people, at 13.4% than school personnel respondents, with young people apportioning both types of bullying fairly equally.

International quantitative research shows a significant magnitude of cyber bullying among students, although specific results vary considerably across cultures and across studies. However, what both school personnel and young people’s responses highlight in relation to this survey, is its pervasiveness, including how this form of bullying transcends beyond the domains of home and school, making young people’s exposure, at times, unremitting. Associated challenges, of what can be best described as a ‘technological chasm’ that exists between young people and their parents, and often educators is growing, with many teachers and parents not keeping pace with young people’s proficient use of such technologies. This divide is further challenged by an ever-evolving technological landscape.

Education and Employment

Issues relating to the educational and employment needs of students also ranked equal second in importance. The associated costs of education including, school fees, books, uniforms and excursions were seen as costly for many families, exposing them to undue financial pressures. In terms of social disadvantage, the municipality of Greater Dandenong has a SEIFA (Socio Economic Indexes For Areas) Index of 894, placing it amongst the two per cent of most disadvantaged municipalities in the state.

Other reported issues in relation to education included increasing levels of disengagement from school, truancy and school refusal. Truancy and school refusal are two discrete forms of student non-attendance at school. Truancy tends to be characterized as opportunistic, spontaneous and often in the company of antisocial peers; and unlikely to be motivated by anxiety or fear. By contrast school refusal tends to involve acute emotional stress about attending school, may include heightened anxiety and depression or somatic issues. Of note, with school refusal there is an absence of significant behavioural or anti-social problems. It is often parent condoned as the child persuades their parent for permission to stay at home. Whilst school respondents did not articulate in detail as to some of the causal, underlying factors, school refusal can be indicative of bullying, family issues, stress, learning difficulties and mental health concerns.

School and study problems were also noted, with specific reference made in relation to the learning needs of CALD, refugee and newly arrived young people. Congruent with the findings of the CALD Youth Inclusion Project, ‘a one size fits all’ approach to delivering curriculum; as well as placing students in school according to age and not academic ability in mainstream education settings, is challenging for young people that have experienced limited education, or where it has been intermittent, and disruptive.
This is not a unique challenge facing Greater Dandenong, but is systemic in nature.

In relation to employment, specific issues of note related to work readiness, including resume preparation, interview skills as well as difficulties in securing part time employment; and familial pressures upon young people to work part time concurrent to their studies.

Education and employment conditions are relatively unfavourable for young people in Greater Dandenong city. 13% of young people in Greater Dandenong leave school before Year 11, compared with 10% across Melbourne. Unemployment rates among young people in Greater Dandenong are relatively high, reaching 14.5% in Greater Dandenong, compared with 10.8% across Melbourne.

Other Identified Priority Issues - Schools
Beyond the scope of school respondents identifying their top three issues, the on-line survey also prompted respondents to record any other issues constituting matters of concern, whether they be pre-existing issues, or issues on the rise. Challenging behaviours, encompassing, anti-social or risk taking behaviours, verbal and physical aggression and violence was raised by 6.25% of respondents. This feedback corresponds with anecdotal reports received by youth workers through the Greater Dandenong Youth Network, where practitioners have voiced their concerns, and similarly interest in accessing training and support ‘in how best to manage clients presenting with challenging behaviours’.

Issues relating to housing, alcohol and other drugs and relationships were comparable in ranking of priority status at 4.7%. Further scrutiny of the data, highlights that housing issues were indicative of students’ unstable or insecure housing arrangements whether that is through family break down or tenuous child-parent relationships. Housing issues, were also referred to as ‘transient’ whereby students were ‘couch surfing’, that is staying at friend’s houses when tensions flared at home and living arrangements became untenable.

Reports relating to alcohol and other drugs were linked to alcohol consumption and ‘binge drinking’ whilst references to illicit drug use, prominently featured cannabis.

Underlying issues relating more broadly to the theme of ‘relationships’ was generally defined by challenges in students’ difficulties in negotiating ‘peer and friendship issues’, intimate relationships, tenuous relationships within the context of family, whether that be child-parent or sibling conflict; and loneliness and isolation. A small number of respondents also referenced a lack of positive role models in young people’s lives.

Emerging Priority Issues - Secondary Schools

Emerging Issues - Schools
Cyber Bullying

As depicted in the graph on page 19, 25.93% of survey respondents identified bullying as the most prominent of all the identified new and emerging issues. Further appraisal of the data, highlights that under the broader category of bullying, cyber bullying was frequently cited as an issue of increasing prevalence.

‘Use of Facebook and other electronic media [relating to] bullying and harassment issues is on the rise’.
‘Cyber bullying is rampant’

Multicultural issues

The next most significant of emerging issues were responses categorised under the broad theme of ‘multiculturalism’ at 22.22% which encompassed tensions between different cultures and ethnic groups, racism, intergenerational cultural conflict, settlement issues, gaps in CALD specific services and cross cultural understanding.

Sexual Relationships

A further 14.81% of respondents identified that a growing area of concern were issues relating to young people’s sexual relationships and sexual behaviours.

‘Onset of sexual activity at an increasingly younger age’,
‘Sexualisation of young girls’
‘Higher number of teenage pregnancies; and misinformed sexual behaviour’.

Concordant with school respondents reporting a higher number of teenage pregnancies, data indicates that in 2009 there were 69 births to women aged 15-19 years in the City of Greater Dandenong, representing a birth rate of 14 per 1,000 women in this age range. By contrast, the birth rate among teenage women across Melbourne was 7 in that year. Thus, local birth rates among teenagers were twice the corresponding metropolitan rates.

When cross referenced with average rates for the most and least affluent five municipalities across the state, in 2009, the following results were sourced: In the least affluent five municipalities: average teenage birth rate – 12 per 1,000 women of that age range. Most affluent five municipalities: average teenage birth rate – 1 per 1,000 women of that age. Thus, as it would appear, contemporary patterns of birth are strongly associated with broader social conditions, such as income levels, educational levels and outcomes, and employment rates.

Programs and Services Used to Address Priority Issues

Mental Health

To address issues pertaining to mental health, schools reported that they linked in with; and engaged local agencies to facilitate targeted programs for students; as well as accessed the following services for a range of supports.

- Early in Life Mental Health Services (ELMHS) formerly, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Stepping Stones
- Eastern Region Mental Health Association (ERMHA)
- Foundation House
- City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services, counselling team

Schools also reported drawing upon a variety of internal measures to address student mental health concerns, including:

- Individual counselling
- Internal group work
- Pastoral care
- Referral to school psychologist
- Small group work and programs to address low self-esteem.

Education and Employment

Schools reported that individual learning plans, transition programs to re-engage students to school; and referrals to South East Youth Connections were utilised to address issues relating to student’s education and employment.

Family Issues

For family issues, school staff reported that they referred students and their families to agencies such as CGD Youth Services’ counselling team, and that a ‘wrap around approach to care meetings, pastoral care, and counselling by wellbeing team members was also provided.'
Bullying / Cyber Bullying

Many schools described investing in multifaceted approaches to managing issues associated with bullying. Such approaches included policy reform and development; and instating programmatic responses. Some schools described adopting new anti-bullying policies and processes for managing bullying incidents. The introduction of programs such as ‘Secret Girls Business’ to whole year levels to combat and address bullying was also raised.

Other approaches extended to include the use of ‘in school programs’ and ‘workshops’ where experts were invited to address parents/carers and their children on the topic of cyber bullying.

Challenging Behaviours

School efforts to address and manage challenging behaviours extended to include facilitating anger management classes ‘in house’; and where appropriate has involved referring students to professionals outside of school for assistance.

Reference was also made to the Martial Arts Therapy (MAT) program; and use of counselling to address challenging behaviors such as violence and aggression.

Services, Supports and Strategies used to Address Emerging Issues

In response to described multicultural issues, schools reported engaging external agencies such as the Islamic Women’s Association and Australian Islamic Women’s Centre to work directly with young Muslim girls to help address issues relating to new and emerging ‘cultural and diversity issues’, particularly young people reconciling their Muslim culture with the Australian way of life.

Other initiatives such as Cultural Comprehension were introduced at the whole school year level in an effort to foster harmony and promote increased cultural understanding and awareness.

Schools nominated the following services and agencies that they sought assistance from in addressing presenting issues.

- Albert Road Clinic
- Andrews Centre, Endeavour Hills
- Anglicare
- Adolescent Recovery Centre
- Berry Street
- Caulfield Community School
- Catholicare
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services
- Connections – Windermere
- Department of Human Services, Child Protection
- Child First
- Department of Human Services - Federal, formerly Centrelink
- Disability Client Services
- Embrace Education
- Private Psychologists
- Family Counsellors
- Family Life
- Family Mediation Centre
- Family Relationship Counselling Services
- Foster Street Clinic
- Foundation House
- Greater Dandenong Community Health Service
- Hanover Support Services
- Kids Help Line
- Legal Aid
- Lighthouse Youth Services
- Mission Australia
- Oakwood School
- Operation Newstart
- Ozchild
- Referrals to GPs for mental health care plans
- Refugee Minors Program
- Salvation Army
- SEADS – South East Alcohol and Drug Service
- SECASA – South East Centre Against Sexual Assault
- SELLEN – South East Local Learning and Employment Network
- Shine for Kids
- Smith Family
- Southern Health Youth Services
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Swinburne University
- Victims Support Agency
- Victoria Police
- WAYSS - Youth Accommodation
- WHISE – Women’s Health in the South East
- Young Carers
- Youth Links (Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau)
Secondary schools nominated accessing the following programs in addressing presenting issues.

- Fit2Drive
- GRIPP Program
- Headspace
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies
- Martial Arts Therapy
- Respect, Protect & Connect
- State School’s Relief Fund
- Stepping Stones

What could be used to address youth issues and needs?

Only a small number responded to the question: ‘what types of programs, services and activities could you employ to address each of the top three priority youth issues, and new/emerging needs, that you have identified?’ Those who did respond to this question did not necessarily make direct links to the priorities they identified. Nevertheless, what was offered in response to this question were useful insights into what could be done to address youth needs and issues.

Schools identified the need to adopt a multifaceted approach to student wellbeing that is whole-school focused, i.e. targeting students, staff and parents; as well as strategies that deal with systemic issues.

Experiential and hands-on programs that help address student issues and needs included use of sports and recreation activities, social skills and life skills programs, training for students, guest speakers, engaging real presenters from the workforce, visits to university/tertiary institutions, and more school based activities that link and connect students to their broader community.

Therapeutic interventions proposed included support groups for students working through family breakdown, mindfulness education programs, self esteem programs, individual counselling and group counselling. It was also suggested that schools could better engage and utilize youth workers and psychologists within the school environment.

Secondary schools suggested that therapeutic interventions should extend to include ongoing wellbeing workshops at each year level, ‘more extensive small group programs, school re-engagement programs, art and music programs; and to implement evidence based programs for all year levels.

Survey respondents suggested that to better equip staff to deal with student issues and needs, what was needed was increased access to staff training and professional development opportunities for staff to deal with issues as they arise, including professional development that would enable staff to become more aware of local services.

What else has been useful in addressing student issues/needs?

When asked ‘what else has been useful in addressing students issues/needs?’ The most frequent response was staff, parent and student training/professional development. Listed below are some other strategies, practices, and interventions, schools found to be useful in addressing student issues/needs.

- Resilience Ambassador Program (focused on student centered project to improve school culture)
- Individual case management
- Close liaison with parents
- Staff team work and collegial meetings
- Good relationships with external providers
- Research on the internet and government website for the different issues
- Guests speakers from community groups
- Multicultural police
- Involving students in community work
- A Youth Worker employed by Southern Health has attended the VCAL classes 1 day each fortnight providing students with a professional to talk to who can then link them into other services
- Adopting a whole school approach
- LGA Youth Services - programs and counselling
This section of the report presents the key findings from surveys completed by youth agency personnel.

A total of 68 online surveys were received from youth agencies in the City of Greater Dandenong. Of the 68 surveys received, respondents were representative of both practitioner and management levels, from a cross section of professions including but not limited to, Youth Work [including Multicultural], Social Work, Psychology, Counselling [including AOD, Careers, Family], Community Development, Health Promotion, Disability and Policing [including Multicultural Liaison, Youth Resource Officers].

**Priority Risk Factors**

Risk factors are factors in a young person’s environment which increase their vulnerability to social, behavior and health problems.

The following graph depicts, online survey responses of the key areas of wellbeing concern as raised by youth agency personnel, relating to young people who have/or are accessing services within the City of Greater Dandenong.

**Top 3 Priority Areas of Wellbeing Concern - Agencies**

![Graph showing priority areas of wellbeing concern for agencies]
## Categorisation of Wellbeing Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition of Theme Presenting Issues/Underlying Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Education &amp; Employment</td>
<td>Access to affordable or appropriate education and educational supports, school refusal, truancy, disengagement from learning, unemployment, work readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mental Health</td>
<td>Anxiety, depression, stress, grief and loss, low self esteem, body image, suicidal ideation, self harm, diminished motivation, sense of hope and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Housing</td>
<td>Access to safe, stable and affordable housing, transient housing e.g. couch surfing, homelessness                                                                avery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Access to Services</td>
<td>Access to programs and services including, free to low cost activities, recreation, sport or personal development, out of school or in school activities, transition programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Family</td>
<td>Separation, divorce, family court proceedings, family issues, family violence, break-down in family structure, tenuous relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Finance</td>
<td>Financial debt, generational poverty, inability to pay for basic necessities e.g. food, utilities, rent; issues with budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Alcohol &amp; Other Drugs</td>
<td>Alcohol or other substance misuse, including both licit and illicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Relationships</td>
<td>Peer and friendship issues, tenuous parent – child relationships/siblings, student-teacher, partner relationships, loneliness and isolation, a lack of community connection and positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Challenging Behaviours</td>
<td>Anti-social or risk-taking behaviours, verbal or physical aggression, violence, physical fighting, criminal behaviour, court orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Multicultural Issues</td>
<td>Tensions between different cultures and ethnic groups, racism, intergenerational cultural conflict, settlement issues, gaps in CALD specific services, cross cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes overall ranking of top 3 reported priority issues, ‘education and employment’, ‘mental health’ and ‘housing’.
Education and Employment

Agencies were asked to nominate, what they considered to be the top three priority issues facing young people they provided assistance with over the previous 12-months. As the graph on page 23 and corresponding table on page 24 of priority issues highlight, education and employment concerns presented as the primary driver for young people seeking support at 21.76%. Of these two identified areas, respondents apportioned them at 43% and 57% respectively.

Breakdown Education & Employment - Agencies

Analysis of the findings shows that the onset of early school leaving is occurring in increased numbers of young people under 15 years. Causal factors extended to include challenges faced by refugee and newly arrived young people, including disrupted learning, language barriers, lack of awareness of the Victorian education system, lack of parental engagement in learning, [which is evidenced across all cultures].

Precursors such as low literacy/numeracy, low sense of achievement, low socio-economic status and lower levels of education within families can predispose some groups of young people from leaving school early. In addition, statistics show that males are over-represented in relation to early school leaving9.

Many respondents articulated that their clients felt disillusioned by school, that they have disengaged from their learning, were disinterested or expressed low levels of satisfaction and/or achievement. Other factors such as learning difficulties, teenage pregnancy, unstable home life and drug and alcohol issues had contributed to their disengagement from school, family and community.

Disconnection from school – ‘Could be because of the traumatic experience some young people have faced, making it hard for them to go back to school on a regular basis’.

The issue of early school leaving is further compounded by the mandatory requirement that all young people in Victoria participate in schooling (meaning in school or an approved equivalent) until they complete Year 1010. For those young people who express a dislike or an inability to fit into mainstream schooling this poses further risk, as there are limited alternative education options available to young people under 15 years. These factors, coupled with an inflexible education system which doesn’t account for individual needs or learning styles further alienates young people from mainstream schooling.

‘Lack of understanding from educational institutions of the barriers some young people face – a lack of flexibility to be responsive to young people’s needs’.

Consistent with responses provided by school personnel in relation to education, absenteeism also featured among youth agency responses.

‘Some families don’t recognise the importance of regular attendance at school’.
Over the last five years, the percentage of early school leavers in Greater Dandenong has increased by 8.7 percentage points, from 21.4 percentage points in 2006 to 30.1 percentage points in 2010. Furthermore, Greater Dandenong ranked 3 out of 65 LGAs in terms of the percentage of early school leavers who were looking for work in 2010. Ranks were not assigned to areas where the number of early school leavers was less than five.

‘…Consistent with other research evidence, a number of indicators suggest that engagement with learning for some young people declines in the middle years of schooling, particularly in year 9.’

Respondents also articulated that for many young people of refugee and newly arrived backgrounds it is difficult to gain entry into the workforce due to low levels of education, or disrupted learning. Respondents expressed that many of their clients have had limited education prior to commencing their schooling in Australia, so they face significant barriers in acquiring a job as they don’t possess an education that is Year 10 or equivalent, nor are they work ready. Intensive support in preparing young people for the workforce through resume preparation, interview techniques, basic literacy and numeracy is therefore essential.

Other comments made by youth agency respondents in relation to education included:

- ‘There is an acute shortage of alternative education options available to young people under 15 years, they either attend school or not’.
- ‘Education bridging – young people who have not had western education early in life need support via bridging courses to assist their transition into mainstream education’.
- ‘There needs to be ongoing support from schools for students disengaging from education’.
- ‘Young people are disengaging from education and re-engagement is difficult where the school community does not understand trauma related behaviours’.
- ‘There is a need for increased English learning support’.
- ‘Building or strengthening links between points of transition e.g. primary to secondary school’.
- ‘Alternative pathways and training opportunities’.

Mental Health

Mental health ranked second in priority status at 16.67%. Analysis of the data revealed congruence with feedback provided by school personnel in terms of the underlying casual factors impacting upon young people’s mental health. High prevalence disorders such as anxiety and depression [both non diagnosed and diagnosed], poor self esteem, diminishing levels of resilience and social isolation were reported.

Housing

Issues pertaining to housing ranked third in priority status at 10.65%. As referenced in the ‘categorisation of priority issues’ housing has been defined as access to safe, stable and affordable housing, including transient housing e.g. couch surfing; and homelessness. Overwhelmingly, respondents commented on the acute shortage of local housing; and its suitability. Homelessness for young people in the area seems evidenced as couch surfing between friend’s places or staying with friends or relatives in unsuitable arrangements or unhealthy relationships. In relation to primary and secondary homelessness, a significant proportion of this cohort’s living arrangements fall under the continuum of homelessness ranging from inappropriate housing to outright homelessness. Furthermore, the cohort also evidence acute substance issues which pose serious, adverse effects on their health and functioning.

Other comments submitted by youth agency respondents in relation to housing are referenced below.

- ‘Young people exiting from ‘Out of Home Care’ have limited housing options’.
- ‘There is a need for stable, clinically-supportive accommodation for young people with mental health needs’.
- ‘Young people who exit DHS care face a lack of housing options’.
- ‘Young people accessing our service are without immediate access to any form of accommodation’.
- ‘Inability to secure affordable and appropriate housing for clients’.
- ‘Lack of affordable housing, plus discrimination that is ageist and racist’.
Other Identified Priority Issues - Agencies

Beyond the scope of school respondents identifying their top three issues, the on-line survey also prompted respondents to record any other issues constituting matters of concern, whether they are, pre-existing issues, or issues on the rise. Access to programs and services ranked fourth in terms of prioritization, at 8.33%. Respondents spoke of barriers relating to young people’s access to activities and services, or the need for more activities, including more mentoring initiatives which promote positive role modeling to young people, increased access to recreational activities including events that are affordable, diverse and inclusive.

Similarly, family issues ranked at 8.33% among youth agency respondents. Corresponding with feedback from school respondents, concerns related to family break-down, family conflict and family dysfunction. In the context of family issues, the category of ‘challenging behaviours’ is also inextricably linked, particularly in relation to young people identified as perpetrators of violence in the home.

Emerging Priority Issues - Agencies

Emerging Issues - Agencies

With respect to family violence, the City of Greater Dandenong has seen a significant increase between 2006-07 and 2010-11 with the number of police call outs doubling from 595 to 1205. This rate of increase in Greater Dandenong far exceeds the increases witnessed in other LGA’s or Melbourne as a whole.

The other key areas identified by respondents included, finance, that is, an inability to meet the cost of basic necessities including rising rental costs, food and utilities; as well as increasing numbers of young people presenting with substantive debts, including unpaid fines and infringements.

In relation to AOD concerns, polysubstance use / dependence, young people being ostracized by their community for alcohol misuse resulting in further isolation, increased incidence of young people presenting with illicit substance issues, chroming; and a pressing need to increase young people’s awareness of the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol were identified.

The DEECD, 2011 Adolescent Community Profiles indicates that 8.9 per cent of adolescents aged 12-14 years in Greater Dandenong had sniffed glue or chromed. This was higher than, but not significantly different to the proportion of adolescents aged 12-14 surveyed in Victoria, 7.9%.
**Multicultural issues**

The most significant of all identified emerging issues highlighted by youth agency respondents was multiculturalism. This directly correlates with school personnel responses, which also identified challenges associated with multiculturalism and assimilation. Comments covered the breadth of issues described by schools, however were more extensive. Youth agency respondents highlighted concerns such as cultural conflict, cultural inclusion, inter-cultural understanding and interaction, including amongst different ethnic groups, racism, a lack of cultural competency among workers and equally the need to build workforce capacity in this area. Respondents went on further to describe intergenerational conflict as captured by the quote below.

> ‘CALD children and their parents in conflict about issues such as the child’s behaviour, values and social interactions, as these are perceived to be in conflict with ‘cultural values and norms’.

Some further commentary is provided below in relation to multicultural issues as identified by youth agency respondents.

- ‘Unaccompanied minors [are] not being referred into community by DHS early enough and once young people exit DHS there is lack of funding and resources to deal with their often complex issues’.
- ‘Lack of service knowledge regarding CALD specific support and resources’.
- ‘Females, 18 years and younger, arranged by family to marry family members living abroad’.
- ‘Impact of detention on young refugee people – those in both remote detention and community detention’.
- ‘Integrating young refugees into mainstream schooling or work based training – necessitates bridging programs to aid with transition; and to increase young people’s skill development and working abilities’.

**Programs and Services Used to Address Priority Issues**

**Education and Employment**

For issues relating to education, such as access to affordable or appropriate education, truancy and school disengagement, it was reported that youth agencies referred to alternative education institutions such as Oakwood School. The support and services provided by agencies such as South East Local Learning and Employment Network (SELLEN), the Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program Inc, AMES Education, and Centrelink were also drawn upon. There was specific mention of programs such as the ‘Ucan2 program’, the Learning Enrichment and Extension (LEEP) program and the ‘Earn to Learn’ program. Supports accessed included, ‘brokerage for out of home clients’ (to help with costs related to education), Wellbeing and Guidance Officers; and Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams (Child FIRST). Some of the strategies employed included ‘organising specialist instructors to conduct workshops for young people’, and ‘liaising directly with schools’.

To help address employment related issues such as sourcing work, resume writing and interview skills, a range of agencies, services and programs were reportedly used by agencies. Those specifically mentioned included Paramount Personnel Cert 1 in Employability Skills, Link Employment, WISE Employment, Jesuit Social Services (JSS) and Centrelink.

**Mental Health**

The key agencies and services accessed in relation to mental health included General Practitioners (GPs), Student Support Services Officers (SSSO), generalist youth and family counselling services, counselling teams, CGD Youth Services, Early in Life Mental Health Services (ELMHS), ERMHA, Greater Dandenong Community Health Service (GDCHS), Headspace, dual diagnosis services, and private psychologists.

Agencies reported using the following programs and strategies to improve young people’s mental health outcomes.

- One off mental health presentations to schools, in an effort to improve outlook, internal focus and control, and relationship skills.
- OnPsych Psychologists – provision of weekly sessions with individuals / groups
- Intensive one-to-one support, including encouragement and building relationships of trust with the young person.
- Referral to gender specific programs e.g. Girlz unlimited, CGD Youth Services – a personal development and self defence course for young women; and Girls on the Go run by Southern Health
- Team based responses including schools, therapists, carers and other professionals.
ERMHA – Origins Program
Individual counselling for children and young people, feedback sessions provided to parents and an increased focus on ‘case management’ including referring parents to other services.
The Supporting Children after Separation Program
Engagement programs that provide opportunities for linking young people to broader therapeutic programs.

Housing
Access to safe, stable and affordable housing was a priority need for a number of young people that agencies work with. Homelessness, transient housing ‘couch surfing’ were some of the issues that agencies note as priority youth issues. In relation to these issues and needs, agencies reported that they liaised with accommodation support agencies such as WAYSS, Hanover, OzChild, and the Lighthouse Foundation. Agencies referred young people to programs such as the Housing Club program, which runs at MRC and assists clients in looking for private rental. They also worked to address housing issues by linking young people into temporary accommodation services.

Finance
Agencies that did not provide programs and services specific to financial issues, referred to those agencies that did. One survey respondent noted that agencies such as CMY, SELLEN and SCAAB, provide programs and services to address financial issues such as financial debt, poverty, issues with budgeting, or difficulties paying for goods and services.

Other services and supports identified by agencies included:
- Counselling and support services provided by the City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services
- Scholarships provided by Chisholm Institute
- Salvation Army for financial assistance, support with everyday budgeting, providing brokerage to assist payments for educational materials including fees, uniforms etc.
- Centrelink loans
- Carer brokerage funds provided by the Commonwealth Carelink & Respite Centre

Family
Survey respondents reported that family issues such as separation, divorce, family court proceedings, family violence, break-down-in-family-structure and tenuous family relationships were addressed by using the following strategies, services and programs:
- Family dispute resolution
- Parent and adolescent mediation
- ‘Supporting Children after Separation’ Program
- Odyssey House, the Eclipse Program
- Psychologist/family therapist
- Family work or referrals to Child First
- General counselling services through the local government youth service
- Family mediation programs
- Gain Respect and Increase Personal Power (GRIPP), anger management program
- Early intervention programs
- The Family Mediation Centre’s (FMC) ‘Child Inclusive Practice’ component offered to parents undergoing mediation to assist them to understand the needs of their children.
- Other programs at the Family Mediation Centre that offer both post separation parenting programs; and parenting sessions to cover some of the more basic issues associated with how to improve how children and young people cope with family separation.
One survey respondent reflected that,

‘Caseworkers have not been able to successfully refer young people and families for counselling for conflict resolution as it has not been appropriate or accepted by the young person. Staff have played a neutral role of support where possible’.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

In relation to alcohol and other drugs, strategies employed include, therapeutic interventions, engagement through youth programs that incorporate arts, music and/or dance; and youth led/developed educational initiatives such as ‘Get the Facts DVD’, and the online game ‘Good Choices – the Bad Choices’ through youth participation initiatives with CGD Youth Services. One respondent said that they used ‘mentoring by abstinent role models; and distribution of resources/information about substance addiction’.

Agencies and services referred to included, AOD withdrawal/rehabilitation services, Windana, SEADS, YSAS, PenDAP, Birribi, DasWest and Moreland Hall.

Relationships Issues and Challenging Behaviors

To address the issue of relationships and peer pressure, one survey respondent reported that they linked Grade 6 students into a transitions program that focused on peer pressure, and which was delivered by youth mentors/leaders.

Some agencies and programs reported referring to the following programs in relation to challenging behaviours including, the City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services’, ‘Gain Respect and Increase Personal Power’ (GRIPP) anger management program; and Wesley Mission. Referral to legal services was also cited. As one survey respondent commented:

‘Legal aid has been a means of support to many of the young people who have had court cases. Also, I have been liaising with other youth networks across the City of Greater Dandenong and Casey for support with youth activities’.

Multicultural issues

There were a range of issues categorized as ‘multicultural issues’ and encompassed integration, cultural inclusion, inter-cultural understanding; conflict/tensions between different ethnic groups; racism; workers/services not knowing how to work with or deal with a particular CALD group; and the need for CALD specific services. For these issues, a variety of services, programs and agencies were referred to, some of which are captured below.

Settlement Grants Program (SGP), Drop in program, life and work skills programs, Earn to Learn program, Respect/Connect Program at Mt Hira Secondary and REACH at Isik College, school holiday activities; Foundation House counselling and advocacy service, programs provided by local government youth services and local agencies, including SEAAC, Youth Links, MRC which cater to the needs of young people who are exiting the Refugee Minor Program (RMP). Other agencies referred to included Springvale Monash Legal Service, Foundation House and local government youth services.

Services, Supports and Strategies used to Address Priority and Emerging issues

In response to the question of which agencies were connected with, to collaboratively address priority and emerging issues, agencies cited the following.

- Adolescent Forensic Health Service (AFHS)
- Adolescent Protection Team (DHS service)
- Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES)
- Afghan philanthropic organisation
- African Holistic Social Services
- Australian Childhood Foundation
- Berry Family Lawyers
- Berry Street – Intensive Case Management Team
- Berry Street – Residential Care Teams
- Brosnan Youth Services
- Casey Youth Services
- Catholic Care
- Catholic Education Office
- Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)
- Centrelink
- Child First (DHS service)
- Child Protection (DHS service)
- Chisholm Institute of TAFE
- Church groups in Dandenong
- City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services
- City of Monash Youth Services
- Community Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (CVCAL)
- Concern Australia
- Connections (at Uniting Care)
Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-Operative Limited
Dandenong Oasis Leisure Centre
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)
Department of Human Services
Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD)
Disability Services (at DHS)
Early in Life Mental Health Services (formerly Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)
ERMHA
Family Life
Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program (FRMP)
Foundation House
Frontyard Youth Housing Support
General Practitioners (GPs)
Greater Dandenong Community Health
Hand Brake Turn
Hanover
Headspace
Legal Aid
Mckillop Family Services
Mission Australia
Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLO’s at Centrelink)
National Job Core Australia
OnPsych Services
Parkville Youth Residential Centre
Pearsons Lawyers
Peninsula Youth and Family Services (PYFS)
Places Victoria (formerly VicUrban)
Recovery and Prevention of Psychosis Service (RAPPS)
Refugee Action Program (Delivered by MRC and SCAAB)
Refugee Minor Program (RMP)
Salvation Army
Smith Family
South East Local Learning and Employment Network (South East LLEN)
South East Youth Connections (A partnership between Mission Australia, Link Employment and Training, Southern Health, TaskForce, and William Angliss TAFE)
South Eastern Alcohol and Drug Service (SEADS)
South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA)
South Eastern Region Migrant Refugee Centre (SER MRC)
Southern Ethnic Advisory and Advocacy Council (SEAAC)
Southern Health
Southern Health Mental Health Services
Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB)
Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program Inc.
Te Waka One Ocean program – Greater Dandenong Community Health Services
The Dalgarno Institute
The Song Room
Victoria Police
WAYSS Housing and Support Services
Windana Drug and Alcohol Recovery
WISE Employment
YAP housing
YMCA
Youth Info centers
Youth Justice (YJ)
Youth Justice Mental Health Initiative-Forensicare
Youth Links – Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB)
Youth Stop (YStop)
Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)
Youthworks Victoria Inc
In response to the question of which schools were linked in with, in order to address priority and emerging issues, most secondary schools in the City of Greater Dandenong were nominated; and the following secondary schools were specifically mentioned (including some which sit geographically outside of the municipality).

- Carwatha Secondary College
- Caulfield Park Community School
- Dandenong High School
- Emerson School
- Hallam Secondary College
- Isik College
- Keysborough College (3 campuses)
- Killester College
- Lighthouse Christian College
- Lyndale Secondary College
- Mt Hira College
- Noble Park English Language School
- Noble Park Secondary College
- Oakwood Alternative School
- St John’s Regional College
- Westall Secondary College

What Else has Been Useful in Addressing Youth Issues/Needs

The vast majority of respondents identified professional development/training opportunities; and opportunities to network and work collaboratively with agencies/schools, to pool resources and expertise as useful for addressing youth issues and needs. Some other measures agency staff have found useful are captured in the following comments.

- Innovative and flexible programs, accessibility and inclusion
- Youth forums/workshops
- Cultural awareness
- Long-term connection and relationship with service
- Community resources such as the Quick Flip Guide
- Good engagement skills and using relationships as a basis to challenge young people’s beliefs about themselves and society in general.

What Could be Used to Address the Priority Issues Identified

The following programs, services, activities, and actions, were identified by agency personnel as prospective measures to address current and emerging issues.

Education and Employment

It was suggested that having youth workers based in schools would be beneficial to those young people who are disengaging or struggling to cope with mainstream education. It would be particularly helpful for young people who are facing multiple barriers to doing well in their education, such as family violence, poverty, and mental health issues to have direct access to youth workers.

In response to young people who were ‘at risk’ of disengaging from school, survey respondents identified the need for more alternative education settings such as Oakwood School, as they have the capacity to provide more intensive, one-on-one support; and individualized learning plans, particularly needed for those under 15 years of age; and for alternative education streams to be ‘more widely available in mainstream schools’. One survey respondent commented that there was a need for ‘more engagement activities and programs that are accessible for ‘at risk’ young people’, such as ‘young people in care’ and ‘disengaged from school’.

‘There is a need for mentoring/homework assistance and flexible options for young people who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from school’.

Some other strategies and interventions for school related issues included reference to the ‘UCan2’ program, which provides additional support for young people, 16–24 years who are newly arrived to Australia and from a refugee background, as they make their way through the post compulsory school, training and tertiary sectors. The program has the ‘specific goal of increasing education, training and employment opportunities for young refugees in the first 15 months of the resettlement, recovery and integration processes.

The strategies and interventions that were suggested to improve education, training and skill development opportunities for young people and thus employment outcomes were:

- Providing more work mentor relationships and increase personal skills
- More resources for Cert 1 Employability Skills to enable the course to be delivered in more schools
- Information bank of further education options for early school leavers.
- Low intensity study-work programs with employment-traineeship outcomes
- Training - continue to provide a high quality standard of training as identified by young people via the event committees.
Development of programs aimed at delivering information and skills to young people to understand their employment and educational opportunities. Could be a joint program with local employment agencies, Centrelink, secondary schools and youth services and delivered in schools.

The services and interventions suggested by staff aimed at addressing the difficulties experienced by young people in securing or maintaining employment, and to help address the issue of youth employment, were:

- Support community enterprises and support young people to create their own employment opportunities
- Workshops involving new ideas on alternative pathways and camps that are both interactive and fun
- Continued funding of Disability and Employment Services (DES) employment programs
- Working with families, school and training institutions; and collaborative partnerships with key CALD services, state government and commonwealth agencies, were also considered important in addressing issues related to young people’s education and employment.

**Mental Health**

To help address mental health issues, agencies suggested that what is needed is:

- A greater focus on ‘whole school approach’ to student mental health and wellbeing
- Increased collaboration and partnership opportunities with ELMHS
- Resources aimed at supporting mid-range mental health concerns for young people
- Youth based projects to address mental health and wellbeing
- Theatre and other creative based mediums to enable young people to explore and share their experiences and their strategies for addressing mental health concerns
- Consolidation of partnerships between Southern Health and CGD Youth Services for greater cross referral work and co-delivery of services and programs
- Development of simple non-obtrusive whole school systems – Ideally, both primary and secondary to use same systems
- Less reliance on cognitive and behavioral approaches and more on emotion focused approaches such as PEEFT (Process Experiential Emotion Focused Therapy)
- Counselling and support services and initiatives that develop greater community awareness of mental health
- New programs that address self esteem, including group programs that are gender specific
- Greater or more intense use of psychologists in a wrap around support structure for young people
- Long term mentors that can inspire young people through tough times
- Continuation and expansion of the ‘Girlz Unlimited’ program, which engages young women in self development, self awareness, and physical activity
- Services in the mental health area that are accessible to those willing to follow up on treatments, counselling etc.’
- Innovative engagement programs

Mental health issues could also be better addressed by ‘determining what avenues’ young people use to access information on mental health’ and then ‘utilizing these points for health promotion and connection’; and by ‘working with schools’ on mental health issues ‘through group programs and community capacity projects’. Also reported useful for addressing mental health concerns, is Headspace’ (the National Youth Mental Health Foundation).

**Housing**

Agencies suggested the following in an effort to address housing issues:

- A greater investment in affordable housing
- More options for affordable housing
- Additional housing services for young people
- Enhancement of the WAYSS accommodation program
- More continuing care units (CCUs) need to be considered
- More programs with real estate agencies to reduce prejudice; and increased advocacy for young clients
- Early intervention regarding family breakdown to prevent the young person from having to leave home.
**Family**

Listed below is what agencies suggested was needed to address family issues including family relationship breakdown, family violence and conflict; and family separation.

- Intensive family support services
- Greater focus on building and strengthening families – any programs associated with this is needed
- Increased availability of family workers/family therapists or programs to address concerns for both young people and their parents

One survey respondent stated:

> ‘What is useful for addressing family issues, such as the challenges experienced by young people in out-of-home-care, is the CREATE Foundation which provides advocacy, programs and events for these young people, and supports them into their adult lives’.

Another respondent commented that

> ‘the issue is with the lack of service’ for young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, ‘so a systemic approach by government’ is what is required.

**Alcohol and Other Drugs**

Agencies suggested the following is needed to help address alcohol and other drug issues:

- Collaborative work with relevant service providers
- Additional funding to be able to employ more staff to provide more intensive and meaningful support
- Additional community education programs
- Informative workshops within schools, possibly on ‘health days’
- More linkages and joint programs between Youth Services, and services such as YSAS and SEADS, to address issues and needs.
- Abstinence based substance abuse education (especially ‘Values For Life’ School Seminars)

**Challenging Behaviors**

To address challenging behaviors such as ‘anti-social’, violent and aggressive behaviors, respondents suggested the following:

- The development of a female specific violence prevention program
- To extend the ‘Gain Respect and Increase Personal Power’ (GRIPP) anger management program to young females, as it is currently only available to young men.
- Education programs to raise young people’s awareness about the consequences of their anti-social behaviour.
- Secondary consult for practical assistance for young people displaying anger/aggression and more options for young people outside of the City of Greater Dandenong.
- Young men’s self awareness and life skills program to enable young men to face life challenges head on. This would deal with self awareness, party safe, positive decision making etc

One survey respondent who reported:

> ‘Most of my clients (youth I work with) have/ have had problems with the police in the past for they have court cases still pending. I refer them to legal aid for legal assistance’.

It was suggested that more workshops focused on developing young people’s understanding of the Australian legal system were needed. Further to this, cultural awareness workshops, involving both agencies and young people from newly emerging communities were needed, to help prevent young people getting into trouble with the police and ending up in court.

Another respondent suggested that:

> ‘Programs to assist young people engage with the police’ could be useful in tackling conflict and tensions between police and young people.’
What could be used to address issues/needs relating to activities and services?

There were several issues and needs relating to access to activities and services, and problems with service provision, that were identified by agencies. These included issues such as a lack of programs outside of school hours that young people can link in with; the lack of flexibility to be responsive to young people’s needs; the need for more opportunities for recreation activities and outdoor experiences; and the need for better (or more services) specific to the needs of young people. Respondents provided the following suggestions to address such issues:

- More opportunities for young people to be a part of building/designing spaces and programs/activities
- Increase the number of recreation activities available to disadvantaged young people
- More youth specific settlement services/projects
- Flexible case-management with assertive outreach
- Conduct event and program survey with young people to develop new and innovative events and programs.
- Inter-agency life skill programs

One survey respondent suggested that skill development programs were needed, and said that the nature of such a program ‘would depend on what skills the young people are looking at developing.’ Further to this point, the youth worker noted that:

‘A range of programs already exist to address some of the skill development areas. A needs analysis should be undertaken to see where there are gaps in skill development opportunities are for young people… Perhaps a mentoring program would work as this could cover a much broader spectrum of skills than a tailored program would’.

Relationships

The category of relationship issues covers a broad spectrum of issues related to social and community relationships, and is inclusive of: peer and friendship issues, peer pressure, tenuous student-teacher and romantic partner relationships, loneliness and isolation, issues pertaining to social inclusion, community connection/engagement, and the concerns about the lack of positive mentors for young people in the community.

For the issue of peer pressure, an agency worker suggested that ‘workshops within a school setting’ could be useful for young people to help them resist peer pressure.

To address issues of social inclusion, community connection and engagement, survey respondents suggested there was a need for:

- ‘Fun and informative activities, organized by mainstream service providers to encourage young people to positively get involved in community activities’
- ‘Support groups for young women’ to help them connect and engage with the wider community’.
- ‘Family and youth friendly events that are culturally friendly and inviting’.

Multicultural issues

Multiculturalism refers to a spectrum of issues which include issues pertaining to culture-conflict, integration, cultural inclusion, inter-cultural understanding and inter-action, conflict/tensions between different ethnic groups, racism, workers/services not knowing how to work with or deal with a particular CALD group, CALD children and their parents in conflict about issues such as a child’s behaviour, values and social interactions (as these are perceived to be in conflict with certain ‘cultural values and norms’) and concerns about the need for CALD specific services. Some of the suggested ways in which these issues could be addressed included:

- Consistent, whole day support programs and case workers for Pacific Island young people
Build partnerships between communities and agencies to engage ‘multicultural youth’ in suitable and affordable events that are diverse and inclusive.

Increasing the number of proactive programs which foster social inclusion.

Working with community leaders from new and emerging communities to raise awareness and understanding on the complexity of cultural and ethnic challenges.

Ongoing advocacy for further programs for free migration advice.

Multi-school days where students from different schools (and who are from different backgrounds) can get together, interact and play to get to know one another. This would help to address tensions between the different ethnic groups in schools.

One survey respondent observed that ‘some newly arrived young people are experiencing emotional pressure to financially support family who remain overseas’ and what was needed to address this issue was information and resource sharing ‘across agencies that support young people with these issues, and support to schools’ who are working with the young people who have this financial burden.

Another noted that community and remote detention has a psychological impact on newly arrived young people, and specialized services that ‘understand the impact of detention’ are needed to assist these young people.

An emerging issue identified by one survey respondent highlighted that there is a ‘divide between recently arrived young people’ and the more established cultural communities. It was further explained that, young people ‘are being shunned by their community for drinking etc’ furthering their experience of isolation.

Bullying and Cyber Bullying

To address bullying in schools, respondents suggested that anti-bullying and anti-violence programs need to be embedded in school curriculum and policy development.

Issues relating to the use of new media include issues such as ‘cyber bullying, young people posting inappropriate material on the internet and not understanding legal ramifications, and the misuse of recording devices on mobile phones’. On this issue a survey respondent observed that:

‘Issues related to online and mobile phone / recording use is a difficult one to tackle. There is a lot of information out there for young people to access about this, although I believe flyers, cards, online information about this subject is not the way to get the information through to the young people. A mix of group work and presentations from experts like Victoria Police would assist the information to resonate and the consequences of inappropriate online / mobile phone activities taken seriously. Young people could also do with information and skill development on how to keep them safe online’.

Another agency representative reported that ‘Facebook can open the young person up to unmanaged personal contact that can be very damaging’ it was further suggested that there needs to be on-going work with other agencies, and Child Protection in particular to keep examining the role of the Courts on this issue.
8. YOUNG PEOPLE

This section of the report presents the key findings drawn from surveys and direct consultation activities with young people. A total of 100 surveys were received from young people in the City of Greater Dandenong. A total of 500 young people were engaged as part of the needs analysis’ consultation activities, which included survey responses, the youth summit; and focus groups. Unlike school and agency responses, youth surveys were administered through young people’s direct contact with youth services’ staff, or through their attendance at a CGD youth service program or activity.

Consultation Activities with Young People

To coincide with National Youth Week, CGD Youth Services held a successful youth summit where responses elicited from participants of this event have been incorporated within the findings of this report. Complementary to the youth summit, youth services also facilitated a number of small, targeted focus groups with a diversity of young people, the findings of which are also included herewith.

Priority Risk Factors

Risk factors are factors in a young person’s environment which increase their vulnerability to social, behavioural and health problems.

The graphs and associated findings of young people’s responses provided on the following pages are presented as follows:
1) Analysis of the findings drawn from each discrete consultative mechanism i.e. the youth summit; and the youth surveys/focus groups; and
2) A comparative analysis that includes the findings from both youth surveys, focus groups and the youth summit.

This further analysis is provided to assist the readers’ understanding of the distinctions between responses provided by young people at the youth summit, (primarily Year 9 students); and youth survey/ focus group findings which are indicative of a broader cross section of young people, aged 12-25, representative of a diversity of backgrounds.
8.1 Findings - SpeakOUT Youth Summit

The CGD Youth Services SpeakOUT Youth Summit was held in April 2012 to coincide with National Youth Week (NYW). Approximately 200, Year 9 students accompanied by their teachers attended the summit, representing ten secondary schools, including Government, Catholic and Independent. In line with the NYW theme of Create, Inspire, Imagine, students were involved in a number of activities during the course of the day including hearing from keynote speaker, Steph Lee, Oaktree Foundation, participating in small and large group question/discussion; followed by participation in a number of topical and interactive workshops held during the afternoon.

In relation to the morning consultative session, students were encouraged to discuss what they identify as the positive features and strengths of the Greater Dandenong community; and conversely what they understand to be the priority issues currently facing young people in the community.

The three key priority issues identified through discussion with Year 9 students participating in the youth summit included, bullying at 26%, relationships at 14%; and alcohol and other drugs at 13%.
### Categorisation of Priority Issues Wellbeing Concerns - Youth Summit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition of Theme Presenting Issues/Underlying Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Bullying</td>
<td>Encompasses face-to-face bullying, social exclusion, cyber bullying, misuse of social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Relationships</td>
<td>Peer and friendship issues, tenuous parent – child relationships/siblings, student-teacher, partner relationships, loneliness and isolation, community connection, lack of positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Alcohol &amp; Other Drugs</td>
<td>Alcohol or other substance misuse, including both licit and illicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Mental Health</td>
<td>Anxiety, depression, stress, grief and loss, low self esteem, body image, suicidal ideation, self harm, diminished motivation, sense of hope and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong> Health and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Overall physical health and wellbeing, nutrition, self care, personal safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Challenging Behaviours</td>
<td>Anti-social or risk-taking behaviours, verbal or physical aggression, violence, physical fighting, criminal behaviour, court orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong> Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Tensions between different cultures and ethnic groups, racism, intergenerational cultural conflict, settlement issues, gaps in CALD specific services, cross cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong> Education and Employment</td>
<td>Access to affordable or appropriate education and educational supports, school refusal, truancy, disengagement from learning, unemployment, work readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong> New Technology</td>
<td>Inappropriate use of mobile phone technology, including sexting, screen time, cyber crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong> Housing</td>
<td>Access to safe, stable and affordable housing, transient housing e.g. couch surfing, homelessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes overall ranking of top 3 reported priority issues, ‘bullying’, ‘relationships’, ‘alcohol and other drugs’.
Bullying

Overwhelmingly students participating in the youth summit identified bullying as the most pervasive of all the youth issues discussed. It was consistently raised both in small group discussions (of approximately ten students) and during the course of small groups reporting back to the larger audience. Students did not draw any clear distinctions between the definition of bullying and cyber bullying. In fact, students tended to use the two terms interchangeably. Students also identified a strong link between bullying and the experimentation/use of alcohol and drugs, challenging behaviours and mental health concerns such as depression and body image.

Students also spoke of ‘peer pressure’ being a focal point, and whilst this issue is categorised, for the purposes of this report, under the theme of relationships, students also drew links to bullying and alcohol and other drugs.

Relationships

Relationships, particularly ‘peer-to-peer’ relationships featured prominently in student discussion. In unpacking this priority theme with students, it was further identified that peer pressure is an important concern. Over 75% of the responses provided with respect to the priority theme of relationships were apportioned to peer pressure. Peer pressure was identified by students as being a contributing factor in the use of alcohol and other drugs, bullying and personal safety. Students also identified a correlation between peer pressure and challenging behaviours and personal safety.

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)

Ranked as the number three priority, at 13%, students strongly identified AOD as a major priority for young people in Greater Dandenong; and furthermore drew strong links between AOD, peer pressure and interestingly, bullying.

Mental Health

Mental health closely followed AOD in rank at 12%. Further analysis of the data, effectively indicates that students identified a strong correlation with body image issues, however in line with school personnel respondents, students did not make any gender distinctions. Students also considered self esteem as another underlying mental health concern facing their peer group.

Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing for the purposes of this needs analysis has been defined as ‘overall physical health and wellbeing, nutrition, self care, personal safety’. In relation to student’s ranking of health and wellbeing at 8%, the underlying factors considered pertinent to students was the issue of personal safety. Personal safety was raised in both the context of real and perceived, and extended to encompass issues such as street violence, racism and challenging behaviour. Young people went on further to discuss prominent places/landmarks within the municipality such as Dandenong Station and Hemmings Park that give young people cause for heightened concern for matters of personal safety.
In relation to gauging help seeking behaviours, students were asked who or where they would turn to for assistance in a time of need. 18.75% of students indicated that they would approach a family member for help in a time of need. Closely followed by ‘friend’ or a ‘trusted adult’ at 17.5%. Beyond family members, friend and trusted adult, student’s then indicated they would seek assistance from within the realm of their school community, identifying school teacher, 12.5%, school counsellor, welfare coordinator, chaplin or school nurse at 11.25%.

In relation to youth services and supports, counsellor and psychologist, community health, GP, coach, community leader, youth service, website and telephone counselling services such as Kids Help Line were identified.
8.2 Findings - Youth Survey / Focus Groups

Separate to the SpeakOUT youth summit, the views of young people were actively sought. A total of 100 young people completed a survey response, not on-line, but through direct contact with youth services’ staff, or through their attendance at a CGD youth service program or activity.

The survey administered to young people comprised of two-key questions. These questions sought to identify:

1. Priority areas of wellbeing
2. Service supports accessed (gauging young people’s help seeking behaviours – that is, the people and places a young person is likely to go to for assistance during times of need)

Several focus groups were also held with young people, the findings of which are integrated with youth survey responses as captured in the graphs and commentary provided on the following pages.

The three key priority issues identified through youth surveys and focus group discussions with local young people included ‘relationships’ at 18.5%, ‘health and wellbeing at 17.4%; and bullying at 14%.

![Top 3 Priority Areas of Wellbeing Concern](image-url)
Categorisation of Wellbeing Concerns - Youth Surveys / Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition of Theme Presenting Issues/Underlying Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Relationships</td>
<td>Peer and friendship issues, tenuous parent-child relationships/siblings, student-teacher, partner relationships, loneliness and isolation, community connection, lack of positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Health &amp; Wellbeing</td>
<td>Overall physical health and wellbeing, nutrition, self care, personal safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bullying</td>
<td>Encompasses face-to-face bullying, social exclusion, cyber bullying, misuse of social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Family</td>
<td>Separation, divorce, family court proceedings, family issues, family violence, break-down in family structure, tenuous relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mental Health</td>
<td>Anxiety, depression, stress, grief and loss, low self esteem, body image, suicidal ideation, self harm, diminished motivation, sense of hope and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Education &amp; Employment</td>
<td>Access to affordable or appropriate education and educational supports, school refusal, truancy, disengagement from learning, unemployment, work readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Tensions between different cultures and ethnic groups, racism, intergenerational cultural conflict, settlement issues, gaps in CALD specific services, cross cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Sexual Relationships</td>
<td>Sexual health, teenage pregnancy, unsafe sexual practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Alcohol &amp; Other Drugs</td>
<td>Alcohol or other substance misuse, including both licit and illicit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes overall ranking of top 3 reported priority issues, ‘relationships’, ‘health and wellbeing’, ‘bullying’.
Relationships
Yet again, peer pressure, and friendships were notable features of youth survey responses. Approximately 30% of all responses elicited in relation to ‘relationships’ were apportioned to peer pressure. Peer pressure is described as being influenced and choosing to do something you wouldn’t otherwise do, in the hope of feeling accepted and valued by others13. In the context of focus groups, young people expressed a strong desire to feel accepted among their peer group and at times compelled to partake in risk taking behaviours, contrary to their values and beliefs as a means of ‘fitting in’ or ‘conforming’ to friends’ expectations.
Peer pressure is strongest in early to middle adolescence, and research suggests that boys are more likely to give in to it than girls14.
Newly arrived young people engaged in direct consultation also reflected on the challenges associated with building relationships and establishing new friendships in Australia; and when questioned further struggled to identify prospective opportunities for meeting other young people and establishing new friends.

Health and Wellbeing
With respect to the theme of health and wellbeing, it ranked second in priority status at 17.4%. The pivotal focus of responses pertaining to health and wellbeing were associated with matters of personal safety. Focus group discussions highlighted that young people reported feeling unsafe in public spaces especially when people around them were visibly affected by drugs or alcohol. Racism was experienced by some young people and this made them feel unsafe, especially in public spaces.

‘Safety, especially in public spaces and when catching public transport, is a concern’.

Bullying
Survey respondents in particular identified bullying as the third priority issue at 14%. Bullying encompassed both face-to-face bullying and cyber bullying, with the latter constituting 49% of total responses. Bullying can take many forms including both direct and indirect.
In 2009, 45% of adolescents surveyed in Greater Dandenong were recently bullied. This was higher than the proportion reported across the Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR), 42.4%. Further, the proportion of adolescents in Greater Dandenong who were recently bullied was higher than the proportion reported across Victoria, 44.6%15.

Family
Issues relating to family ranked fourth highest of the identified priorities at 12.6%. The realm of reported family issues referred to separation from family members due to residency status and forced re-settlement, incidents of domestic and family violence, mental health concerns and tenuous relationships.

Mental Health
In relation to mental health, causal factors such as body image, anxiety and depression, sense of helplessness and acute stress were identified.
Focus groups, particularly among newly arrived and refugee young people discussed feeling a heightened level of stress and pressure in meeting financial responsibilities, coupled by securing employment. Finding the money to pay bills often invoked a sense of helplessness as many of the young people who identified ‘financial stress’ as an issue also reflected on the added burden of having to send money home to family and loved ones. Many of these issues are further exacerbated by the challenges associated with securing employment as many do not hold permanent residency, are still developing their English language skills, have experienced limited education as well as a lack of work experience.
Comparative Analysis, Priority Areas of Wellbeing Concern - Youth Summit, Youth Surveys, Focus Groups

Top 3 Priority Areas of Wellbeing Concern
Congruent with student responses concerning help seeking behaviours, young people questioned through the youth survey and focus groups also indicated that in the main they would approach a family member for help in a time of need at 19.95%. Again, consistently the pattern follows suit with a ‘friend’ or a ‘trusted adult’ identified as the second point of call at 17.55%. Beyond family members, friend, trusted adult, young people identified direct contact with a local youth service, school teacher, school counsellor, welfare coordinator, chaplin or school nurse at 8.63%. In contrast to student respondents, young people rated coach, community leader and telephone counselling services higher at 6.25% and 5.95% respectively.
Comparative Analysis, Gauging Young People’s Help Seeking Behaviours
- Youth Summit, Youth Surveys, Focus Groups

Services and Supports Young People Seek Advice from for Priority Areas - Student Comparison

- CHURCH OR FAITH GROUP
- COACH CLUBS/OTHER INTEREST OR COMMUNITY GROUP
- SCHOOL COUNSELOR/WELFARE/CHAPLAIN/SCHOOL NURSE
- KIDS HELP LINE OR LIFE LINE
- WEBSITE INFORMATION
- FAMILY
- YOUTH SERVICES
- COUNSELOR/PSYCHOLOGISTS
- DOCTOR/HOSPITAL/COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
- FRIENDS
- POLICE
- SCHOOL TEACHER
- OTHER (PLEASE STATE)
City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services

The City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services works with young people and their families, 12-25 years of age who live, work, study or have a connection to the municipality.

Youth and Family Counselling

CGD Youth Services provides free and confidential counselling for young people and their families. Young people can seek assistance on a range of issues, including, but not limited to; all types of violence, family conflict, relationships through to serious mental health concerns. Youth Services works closely with clinical mental health services, community services and the justice system and can facilitate assessments, referrals and links to pathways as required. Counselling and Support Staff are registered psychologists and social workers. No mental health plan is required to access service.

Gain Respect and Increase Personal Power (GRIPP Program)

GRIPP is a specialist clinical therapeutic program targeted at young male violent offenders who have been found guilty and/or charged with an assault or assault related offence. The program centres on individual and family therapy and works closely with the justice system in advocating for the client. The program works across Greater Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia and Frankston City. Please note: female violent offenders are seen in the youth and family counselling program, as are, victims of violence.

Young Mum’s Playgroup

Playgroup and support program for young mums who are pregnant or parenting and under the age of 25 years. Young mums are provided with a support worker in addition to the opportunity to attend a weekly playgroup where they can connect with other young mum’s whilst engaging in interactive activities and outings.

HEADS UP

Peer support program for young people who have a parent with a mental health issue. The program centres on identifying topics of concerns for young carers, support pathways and connecting with other young people in a similar situation.

L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program

L2P is designed to provide young learner drivers aged 16-21 years who face significant barriers to obtaining their Probationary Licence with access to driving practice under the supervision of a fully licensed volunteer driver. Significant barriers may include not having access to a supervising driver or license vehicle and not being able to afford professional driving lessons. This program provides access to a fully insured council vehicle.

Young Leaders Program

A 22-week leadership program open to young people aged 16-25 years looking to make a difference in their community. Participants gain skills in communication, public speaking, project management, community consultation and in the latter stages of the program develop local youth development projects in response to priority issues.

Holiday Program Leadership Committee

Due to the success and interest generated in the Young Leaders’ program, a second leadership program has been developed targeting young people aged 12-16 years. The Holiday Program Leadership Committee assists Youth Services staff to plan and develop term break holiday activities. Similar to the Young Leaders program, the Holiday Program Leadership Committee receives training.
Holiday Program

During school term breaks, CGD Youth Services offers a program of youth friendly activities that are provided free to low cost. Past activities have included horse riding, swimming with the dolphins, master chef cooking classes, sporting events and activities, beach visits and trips to well known landmarks such as the Melbourne Zoo.

Greater Dandenong Youth Network (GDYN)

The GDYN provides the opportunity for local government, youth related services, agencies and education providers to meet bi-monthly. The purpose of meetings is to share information on programs, services, new initiatives, access professional development opportunities, provide collegiate support; and identify issues affecting young people, their families and service providers. The GDYN 2012 meetings are held from 9:30am to 11:30am in the Dandenong Council Chambers on the first Thursday of every second month.

Events Committees

The City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services facilitates two youth events committees; Muso Network and Meltdown. The committees meet fortnightly at The Castle in Dandenong to plan and develop a range of live music and cultural events for young people in the municipality. The Muso Network committee focuses on live music including rock, metal, punk indie and acoustic. The Meltdown committee focuses on hip-hop, dance, all ability and cultural events. Both committees receive training in event management, technical production, hospitality, promotion and occupational health and safety. The events committees are open to all young people aged 12-25 who live, work, study or have a strong connection with the City of Greater Dandenong.

School Based Programs

Youth Services offers and facilitates a suite of school based programs that target areas of particular concern for young people. Programs extend to include bullying for perpetrators, transition between primary and secondary, personal development and social skills for at risk young women. In addition, Youth Services runs a number of workshops within schools that are aimed at targeted intervention including but not limited to; grief and loss, body image, self care, and cyber bullying.

Further, Youth Services has also posted two Youth and Family Counsellors to work a-half day per week at Keysborough Secondary College (Acacia and Banksia) to help support these two merger schools to respond to high rates of student welfare concerns.
1. The profile of young people in CGD has been prepared by Council’s Social Planning Unit. Information provided is based on Census Data 2011


5. SEIFA is a summary of people in an area and does not apply to an individual person or dwelling. Every area has a diverse range of different people and dwellings. The SEIFA indexes represent the general level of socio-economic disadvantage of all the people in the area in which a person lives, not the person themselves.

6. Haarman, George B., (2009), Who Can’t or Won’t Go To School, Page 3

7. City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services, Greater Dandenong Youth Network, Summary Planning Notes 2010


12. Ibid, Page 10


