



Time to Talk

Alice Springs

2017 NT Youth Round Table

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Please note:

The NT Youth Round Table is an independent advisory body. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and are not necessarily reflective of those of the Office of Youth Affairs or the Northern Territory Government.

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- HYAG, Speaking with us about what they feel needs to be changed, and how it can be made possible.
- NTYRT, supporting us and providing insight.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definitions
OYA	Office of Youth Affairs
NT	Northern Territory
ASTCYAG	Alice Springs Town Council Youth Action Group
HYAG	Headspace Youth Advisory Group
TTT	Time to Talk
YAM	Youth Art and Music
NTYRT	Northern Territory Youth Round Table
TF	Territory Families

Executive Summary

The objective for Time to Talk was to get opinions from young people from across Alice Springs to understand what they feel needs to be changed in the community. Throughout our project, we were able to get a large range of quotes from a diverse group of youth. These are listed in the report.

We collected this information through attending events that were held for youth, and by approaching youth on the street. One of our major observations while approaching youth was that they were excited to have someone consult with them and to listen to what they had to say.

During this project, we had a few major findings.

- Youth feel there is a negative perspective of young people by members of their community.
- Young people feel they don't have a voice or a way to express their concerns and that they are not consulted with or listened to when major decisions are made for them.
- There are a lack of activities and role models for young people.

Based on the feedback we received from young people, we recommend that a forum for young people is held to discuss decisions currently being made that will affect them. We also recommend that more activities be running for young people throughout the evenings that they can attend and express their opinions and thoughts.

We believe that if young people have these opportunities to have a voice and to make a difference they will feel more empowered and valued, in return resulting in a positive change of attitude and behaviour.

Introduction

Time to Talk (TTT) is a program that has been co-created by the 2017 NT Youth Round Table Members Cassie Boyle (19 years old) and Brooke Johnson (16 years old) from Alice Springs to affect change in our community. There has been an increased focus on the youth of Alice Springs after a spate of crimes in early 2017. Since then our community has been the focus of debate and a lot of attention about young people causing trouble. In Alice Springs there are a wide variety of different problems that we are facing, such as:

- Substance abuse;
- violence; and
- property damage

It is our belief that young people have a big part to play in all of these areas. After thinking long about solutions we realized that the older generation of our town are deciding what needed to be put in place for young people. We believe that there are limited opportunities for young people to have a voice in our community. It is our belief that young people should be a part of the big discussion of how to keep them off the streets, ultimately to be a part of the solution.

To start our project, we decided to start small and expand later after testing our project. After brainstorming some ideas of how we could get the young people of Alice Springs opinions, we came to the conclusion that we were going to do it old school and just go out and speak to everyone and anyone that we could find. This gave us the opportunity to collect a diverse range of data in the form of direct quotes from young people. By doing this it meant that we were able to gain first- hand information from the youth affected by these issues. It also gave us the great chance to ask the young people who are committing these offences. We asked young people the following questions:

- Why are you doing the things you're doing?
- What can we do to help you?
- Do you feel like you can voice your opinion?
- Do you feel connected to the community?

These questions were extremely important as we wanted to be able to use this information to effect the change that everyone is seeking.

We met with and interviewed over fifty young people in Alice Springs. We got a diverse mix of young people from the following events and activities:

- YAM Festival
- CREATE Youth Advisory Group
- Headspace Youth Advisory Group Committee Meetings
- Alice Springs Town Council Youth Advisory Group Committee Meetings

- Territory Families Halloween Party
- NT Youth Round Table Meetings
- Heritage Week Youth Forum

Discussion

After we captured the quotes from young people from the Alice Springs community we discovered that there were a number of key themes that the majority of young people interviewed focused on.

The themes we identified were:

- Young people feel that adults and the community have a negative view on all youth.
- Young people feel that they don't have a voice or agency to make a difference and that they are not consulted.
- There is a lack of activities or role models for young people.

Below are some of the quotes from the young people we spoke to. We identified these quotes as 'Key Quotes' as we felt that they gave us an insight to the thoughts of other young people throughout the community.

Negative view of youth:

- "The older generation of Alice Springs generalize all young people giving them a bad name. I feel like when I walk into a store or even down the mall *I constantly am being watched* because everyone thinks I am going to do something wrong."

17yo Girl

- "All the adults in this town see all the bad we do, but what about the good? We get *more attention from mucking up* and that's why we keep doing it. If we got credit for school and stuff we wouldn't play up all the time."

14yo Girl

- "If they were in our shoes how would they feel? *They don't know what we go through*. If they want to make a good decision they need to be like us more."

17yo Boy

- "I once fell over my bike a while ago and the big kids laughed at me, and *that's how I see the adults. They like when we fail.*"

15yo Boy

- "*I don't think they care about us.*"

10yo Boy

- “They always see what we do wrong, and punish us. *But they don't ask why we do it or explain why it's wrong.*”

14yo Boy

Lack of a Voice or Agency:

- “I don't think that I have a voice in the community, *no one asks me what I need help with.*”

14yo Boy

- “I don't feel like the people of Alice Springs want me to be involved.”

15yo Boy

- “Young people in this town don't get a say in what happens *and if we were listened to, we would be happier and behave better.*”

15yo Boy

- “*If young people were consulted before decisions were made in our community we would respond better to them.*”

17yo Girl

- “*Adults need to listen, then they will understand.*”

15yo Boy

- “If you look at it from our view, there isn't anyone talking to us about what we want. *How are we going to find solutions if they don't understand what the problem is.*”

18yo Girl

- “*My dream for Alice Springs is to have kids running kid activities. Adults don't get it.*”

12yo Boy

- “The adults in town don't know what's best for us or what we need or want. *They gotta learn to listen. All they care about it money and being popular.*”

16yo Girl

- “If people just asked us what we needed we would talk to them, but *they just don't care enough, and we can see that.*”

18yo Girl

- “I want them to talk to us more. *I want us to be consulted with decisions.*”

17yo Girl

- “It isn't fair if they make decisions for us and *don't even listen to what we want.*”
13yo Girl

Young People identify some of the issues:

- “There's a lot of pressure on us to be perfect *but we never got told how to behave*, mum use to make me steal food for us, and I always thought it was ok. Now I'm grown up I know it's wrong but it's a habit now.”
17yo Boy
- “Us community kids *need more education* about mental health and sexual health and we don't get that so we always make bad choices and do silly things.”
16yo Boy
- “My sister [15] just had a baby and now she can't see the baby because they [Police / Territory Families] decided she couldn't look after it. They did the same thing to my daughter.”
17yo girl
- “I grew up in care and I never had as much support as other people and so *I never got the proper role model to tell me right from wrong* and now I get confused.”
13yo Boy
- “My dad use to always drink and smoke gunja, *and he was my role model so now I do all that.*”
15yo Boy
- “I think there needs to be more places for young kids to go when they *don't/can't go home to their families.*”
14yo Girl
- We're bored.”
14yo Boy
- “I think that a lot of us community kids see and experience really bad behaviour from our families and friends so it makes us *follow their actions because we don't know anything else.*”
16yo Girl
- “It comes down to opportunities. There *aren't enough opportunities for young people to shine*, and the opportunities are quite often for non- aboriginal people.”

13yo Girl

- *"I'm scared* sometimes when I go to town, but everyone else does and so I think its ok."

8yo Boy

- "All them kids run amuck in town and smash cars and stuff and they know it's wrong but *there's nothing else to do.*"

13yo Boy

- "We are so *bored and there's nothing in town or at home* to do so we make our own fun."

16yo Girl

- "All the little kids always copy us and run a muck and we tell them not to but they do and then they get us in trouble."

17yo Boy

- "If one thing could change about us youth, *I want us to be able to learn what is right and wrong.*"

16yo Girl

- "I think it's sad when I see kids in town at night. *They need something else to do, something positive they can channel their energy into.* I believe a specific graffiti wall or something like that would help. Otherwise getting us to paint the youth centre or something or do bands would be good."

15yo Girl

All these quotes give an insight to how the young people of Alice Springs think. It is so important that their voices get heard because young people know what young people need.

Conclusion

One of our major findings was youth feel there is a negative perspective of young people by members of their community. A lot of the young people commented that they are being judged and not being recognised for the good things they are doing. They feel that they need to have more praise on the positive things they achieve. Positive reinforcement is scientifically proven to change the perspective of a young person.

We also found that young people feel they don't have a voice or a way to express their concerns and that they are not consulted when major decisions are made for them. Young people would like a place they can go to, or a person they can contact, without judgment, and express their opinions and concerns.

The youth of this generation will be the leaders of the next generation so we need to encourage them to step up and take responsibility and express their opinions in a positive way.

Our final key finding was that there were a lack of activities and role models for young people. There are youth hubs in Alice Springs that young people can go to, but there isn't a point if there are they are not running activities. The Saturday night disco is a prime example. More than 50 youth attend the disco and it is only after the disco that the issues arise. If we had activities such a football after school that went to 6pm, then kids could catch youth buses home which we believe would leave to a positive result.

From the above data and the information we gathered from speaking to young people in Alice Springs, it is clear that young people want:

- An opportunity for young people to be heard
- More activities and role models
- For people to see the good in young people not just the issues

Our project objective was to get the young people of Alice Springs to express their opinions, and we were able to record their responses. From these results we were able to develop our personal opinions. We feel that if young people were given more of an opportunity to excel, they would step up to the challenge.

Recommendations

We strongly recommend that young people are consulted before major decisions that directly impact their life are made. It is our recommendation that the leaders of Alice Springs provide opportunities for these young people to speak up and help make a change.

Young people need to feel that they are accepted and being listened to. We will not see any positive change unless young people are being heard. There are no better people to understand the issues that young people face, than young people. Based on the feedback we received, we recommend that a forum for young people is held to discuss decisions currently being made allowing Alice Springs youth the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts.

We also recommend that more youth events and programs are held to allow young people the opportunity to be positive role models, and to be mentored in a safe and judgment free environment.