



## Western Australian Youth Survey

### Brave Foundation's response

#### About Brave

Brave Foundation (Brave) is Australia's first national not-for-profit dedicated to assisting expecting and parenting young people. With a decade of experience, Brave has assisted many young parents to create happy, healthy, and connected families.

Brave's flagship program is the Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT) program, an evidence-based mentor service co-designed with young parents. SEPT provides mentoring, educational, and support services to parents aged 25 and under who had their first child in their teenage years. SEPT Mentors work closely with participants, focusing on personalised goals spanning areas of education, employment, health, financial stability, parenting skills, and social connection.

The terms 'participants' and 'mentors' were decided on by young parents following consultations.

We have also extracted information from recent consultations with young parents that respond to the questions asked by the consultation paper.

#### Consultation questions

##### 1. What goals do you have for your future?

Current and past Brave participants in Western Australia have shared their future goals and the responses were varied. Some spoke about career goals, such as becoming a house painter and others were focused on life goals such as securing stable housing or owning their own home.

"My goal is to live in my own house with my family and be happy and healthy and stress free."

Brave's mentor based in WA reflected on this question too and highlighted that young parents in the state benefit from being linked to a supportive person who can:

- help them navigate multiple aspects of their life
- adapt to their needs as challenges arise and circumstances change
- access funding to meet the needs of challenges that arise or are barriers to achieving goals.

Financial barriers to achieving goals include costs associated with transport, to study at TAFE or school, driving lessons and costs of uniforms to name a few. A mentor can sometimes be the only positive influence in their life or the only person to encourage them to have goals and supports them to achieve them. The impact of the mentor can have a ripple of positive effect to break intergenerational trauma and/or, poverty.

In our consultations with 47 young parents from five states, all participants aspired to pursue education and employment goals to further themselves and to provide a safe, healthy and stable life for their children. However, one key theme stood out and that was 'young parents want to work but they are parents first and foremost.'



# BRAVE

## 2. What do you think is helping young people thrive and achieve their goals (and why)?

When participants were asked this question, they highlighted that the support of community and local organisations helped them to reach their goals. Brave was named as one of the organisations that supported participants to ‘come out of (their) shell and try new things’ as well as ‘branch out’. Community Links and Networks was also highlighted as a key organisation that helped ‘build relationships with family and make friends.’

Participants referenced the village of support, including peers ‘cheering them on’, that encourages young people to believe in themselves and their goals.

## 3. What gets in the way of achieving your goals?

Young parents have false hope and negative interactions with government agencies as barriers in achieving their goals is both false hope and negative interactions with government agencies. Participants spoke of times that government agencies being unable to deliver promised support broke trust and created an additional barrier to seeking government and professional assistance again. Community stereotypes of young parents being ‘irresponsible and unreliable’ was also highlighted as a barrier to achieving goals.

Other barriers for young parents include financial restrictions including lack of remaining money after paying for living and family expenses to invest in personal goals (such as money to pay for transport to get to education, training or employment or to pay for driving lessons to be able to independently travel in the community).

In our broader consultations, young parents told us that transport options are limited, and the stigma young parents experience public transport which causes stress and anxiety.

## 4. What do you think would be the most positive outcome or change the Action Plan could make young people in WA over the next three years?

One participant suggested that additional resources to ensure social and affordable housing was available for adolescent and young parents and their families would be beneficial. An additional suggestion was more investment in services which provide a holistic approach to individuals, and young parents in particular, to achieve their goals.

## 5. How can the WA Government support youth sector stakeholders to help young people build their leadership skills and be influential and effect change in and for their communities?

The phrase ‘nothing about us without us’ is critical to youth stakeholder engagement – there must be opportunities for young people to have accessible ‘seats at the table’ to influence decision making. For young parents, this includes ensuring barriers are addressed to ensure they can be present, including day-care funds available or meetings at a suitable time of day. We also recommend that when young parents are representatives of their cohort in consultations, they are given the opportunity to be supported by a peer to ensure they are confident to speak frankly about their needs and experiences, and do not feel isolated.

Accessible opportunities for professional development and growth for young people is also essential in youth stakeholder engagement. Brave participants often go on to work in professional fields that support their communities such as aged care, social work, and the community development sector.



# BRAVE

It is critical that there are opportunities for young people to get the training to give back to their community in a way that suits them and their goals.

## **6. What role can you or your organisation play to improve the lives of young Western Australians?**

Brave provides a wrap-around service expecting and parenting teenagers as early intervention to ensure expecting and parenting young people are equipped with access to tools and resources they need for themselves and their family to thrive. This approach supports intergenerational change by allowing young parents to set goals for themselves and have the support of a mentor (over a 12-month period) to set up a pathway plan to reach those goals. We currently support 16 Western Australian young people however with additional program to many more.

Brave has a strong Model of Participation which guides youth participation in our Empowering the Voices of Young Parents (EVYP) Advisory Group, comprising of former participants of the SEPT program. The group works on projects to enhance the future delivery of the program and is a key function of the organisation's continuous improvement activities.

Brave is committed to centring the lived experiences of the expecting and parenting young people in all it does. Accordingly, for the purpose of this submission we asked current and past participants to respond to these questions as well as our professional mentor working on the ground in WA.