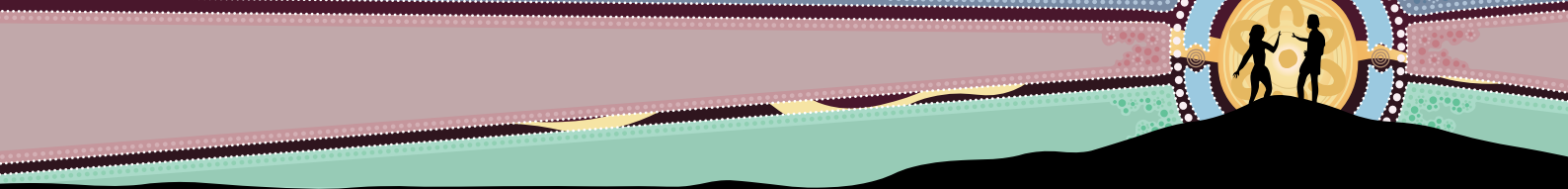


SNAICC
National Voice for our Children



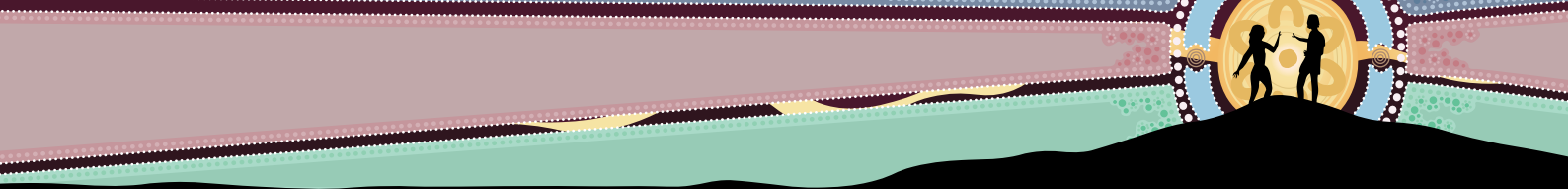
**Youth Voice
Engagement**

REPORT



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Acknowledgements

SNAICC acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to land, waters and communities. SNAICC head office is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, and SNAICC operates nationally. SNAICC acknowledges Traditional Owners of all lands and waters across this continent, and pays respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect their continued connection to Country, care for community and practice of culture for generations uncounted.

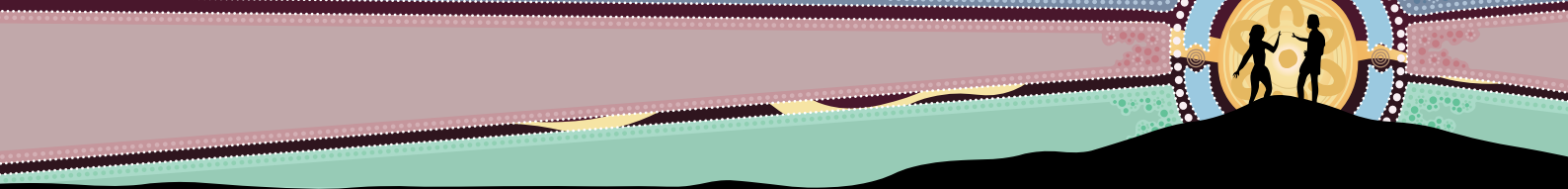
We thank every person, group and organisation who participated in Youth Voice engagements to develop the proposal. Every contribution included an invaluable wealth of knowledge and experience which is a testament to people with lived experience, communities, and the sectors working to elevate the voices of young mob.

Artwork



Artist: Tovani Cox. Bunuba, Gija and Karajarri peoples across the Kimberley region.

Description of artwork: In this piece, two silhouetted figures represent young people from different places who have each made a journey—walking across Country to meet at the top of a hill or mountain. The peak represents clarity, courage, and perspective. As they meet in the middle, they begin an important conversation, ready to look ahead and unlock new possibilities together. It symbolises young people rising, connecting, and stepping into a shared space to start shaping change together. Their meeting in the middle reflects unity, leadership, and the power of coming together from different backgrounds to create a stronger future. The surrounding elements reflect connection to land, culture, and community, with layered textures and colours symbolising the diversity of voices and Nations involved.



Executive Summary

SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC) is the national community-controlled peak body for the rights, development and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Established in 1981, SNAICC represents a strong membership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and advocates for systemic change to improve outcomes for children and families.

SNAICC's Youth Voice initiative aims to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's perspectives into national decision-making, ensuring their voices influence policy, programs, and advocacy that directly affect their lives. This initiative reflects the fundamental right of all children and young people to participate in decisions that affect their lives. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, this right is deeply connected to culture, community and collective wellbeing. When young people are acknowledged as experts in their own lives and supported to lead solutions, this drives better policy reforms, stronger youth programs, and a national discourse that is informed by lived experience.

Our engagement

Between February and June 2025, the SNAICC Youth Voice team undertook a comprehensive national engagement process to inform the design of the Youth Voice initiative. This process involved engagement with:

- over 150 individuals
- 45 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and other non-government organisations (NGOs)
- Governments across Australia, including Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates for children and young people at the national, state and territory levels (with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific positions wherever possible).

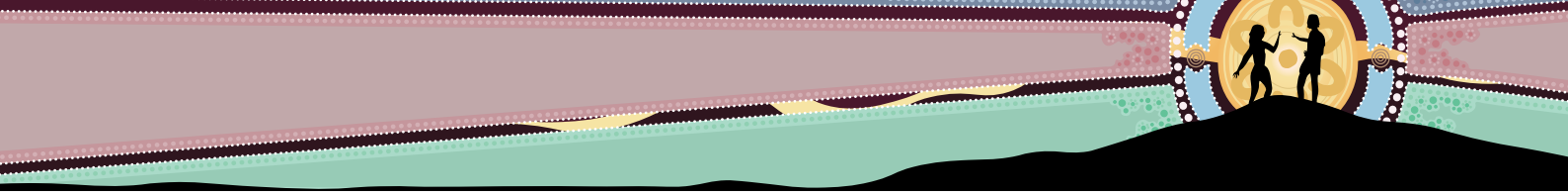
Engagements spanned 13 locations across remote, regional and urban Australia. Engagement methods included in-person consultations, virtual meetings, co-design workshops, written submissions and facilitated youth gatherings.

What we heard

The national engagement process provided clear guidance for designing a culturally grounded and community-led model for an ongoing Youth Voice function embedded within SNAICC.

Key themes that emerged included:

- The need for authentic youth representation and inclusive governance
- Concerns about the potential for tokenism to hinder the effectiveness of the Youth Voice, as young people had observed in government-led advisory models
- Calls for flexible, culturally safe engagement pathways
- Emphasis on community-driven leadership, mentorship and long-term sustainability.



These insights directly shaped the proposed Youth Voice model, which was endorsed by the SNAICC Board and Council, and includes the following components:

- A Youth Sub-Committee to the SNAICC Council – up to 16 members representing all jurisdictions, with gender balance and urban/regional/remote diversity.
- Jurisdictional youth networks – connecting local voices to national advocacy and strengthening collaboration with existing youth structures.
- Ambassador roles – amplifying young voices and connecting them with major national policy reform and advocacy initiatives which enables young leaders to influence systemic change and represent their communities on critical issues.
- Annual youth gatherings to strengthen national connections and identify key priorities for the Youth Voice team and Youth Sub-Committee to take forward each year.

These components, and how they reflect the advice we received through our engagements, are discussed in detail in the body of this report.

The resulting Youth Voice framework reflects the aspirations of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure their voices are heard, respected, and central to decision-making at all levels.



Part 1: Overview

1.1 Background

The SNAICC Youth Voice proposal was informed by extensive consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, Communities and organisations across Australia. Engagements included one-on-one yarns, regional and national meetings, written submissions and facilitated workshops, ensuring a broad and inclusive evidence base.

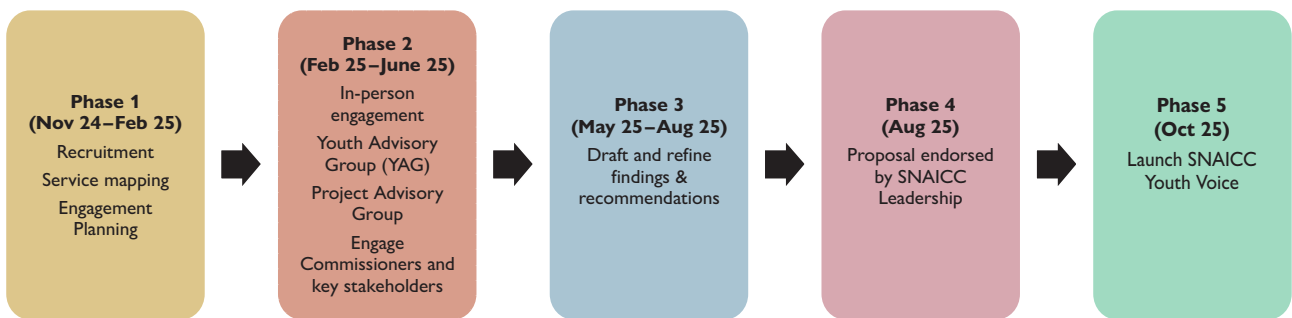
Project governance structures, including the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) played a pivotal role throughout the development of this proposal. The YAG reviewed national engagement outcomes, co-designing key recommendations and provided strategic direction to the Youth Voice team across all stages of the project.

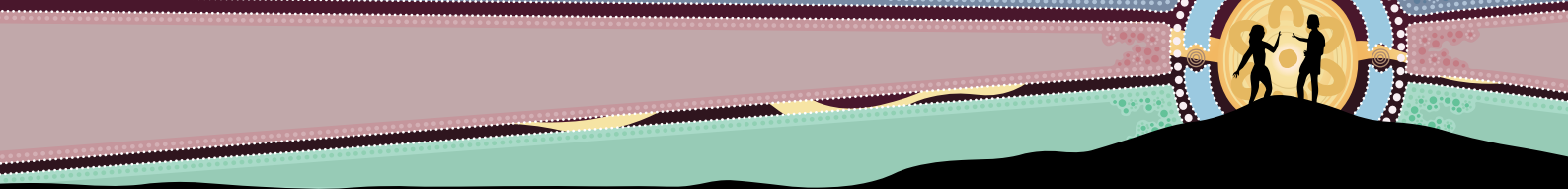
Through this process, clear and consistent themes emerged. Communities and young people expressed a strong desire to move beyond advisory only roles towards action-oriented structures that **amplify youth voices, enable shared decision-making, and deliver tangible outcomes** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

As shown in the figure below, the Youth Voice project followed a five-phase approach:

1. Project initiation and planning
2. Establishing project governance
3. Direct engagement with stakeholders and producing an outcomes report, which included recommended model to include young voices
4. Seeking SNAICC Executive and Board approval to establish the ongoing project
5. Launching the project.

Figure 1. SNAICC’s approach to developing the Youth Voice proposal.





1.2 Governance

The development of the SNAICC Youth Voice proposal was guided by a robust governance framework that recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as the experts in their own lives. The governance structure ensured that decision-making remained community-led, culturally safe, and informed by the lived experiences of young people.

Three main governance streams were established to guide this work:

1. Youth Advisory Group (YAG)
2. Project Advisory Group (PAG)
3. SNAICC internal governance.

Together, these groups supported the project team to center Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices throughout the design and development process.

Youth Advisory Group

The Youth Advisory Group played a central role in shaping the SNAICC Youth Voice proposal. The group comprised 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, who participated in two in-person workshops and six online meetings between February and June 2025.

Youth representatives were nominated by SNAICC Council members from each jurisdiction, ensuring broad geographic and cultural representation. The YAG provided critical insight, co-analysed national engagement data, and co-designed key themes and recommendations with the project team.

Through their leadership and guidance, the YAG ensured that the design of the Youth Voice model was grounded in the realities, aspirations, and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Project Advisory Group

The Project Advisory Group (PAG) provided expert advice and organisational oversight from within SNAICC. Members were selected through an internal expression of interest process to ensure broad representation across SNAICC's three Business Units.

The PAG played a key role in ensuring that the design of the Youth Voice proposal was based on insights from national consultations that could be effectively embedded and operationalised within SNAICC's existing structures and partnerships. The PAG helped identify existing mechanisms to amplify young voices and highlighted opportunities to strengthen advocacy so that what was heard from young people and communities could be acted upon at national and policy levels.

Key contributions from the PAG included:

- Ensuring the proposal considered all aspects of SNAICC's work
- Advising on community engagement, approaches and place-based engagement protocols
- Supporting cross-organisational alignment and buy-in for the Youth Voice initiative
- Advising on the scope, objectives and the integration of engagement findings, with SNAICC's priorities and governance



Part 2: Engagements

2.1 Engagement methodology

SNAICC undertook a comprehensive national engagement process to inform the design of the Youth Voice initiative. This process centred on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, communities and ACCOs, recognising their lived experience and cultural knowledge as critical sources of guidance and expertise. Drawing on the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations was critical to shaping the purpose, remit and structure of the Youth Voice.

Engagements were conducted at a national level through a combination of in-person consultations, virtual meetings, youth gatherings, workshops, and written submissions. These were supported by local partnerships with ACCOs, ensuring that the process remained community-led, culturally safe, and responsive to place-based contexts.

All consultations were guided by SNAICC's Engagement Principles (see Appendix 1) and aligned with the project's key research themes (see Appendix 2). This approach ensured that every engagement was inclusive, trauma-aware, and grounded in respect for local protocols and cultural authority.

2.2 Data snapshot

In the early stages of the project (November 2024 – February 2025), the primary focus was on establishing strong governance to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were directly involved in guiding the development of the Youth Voice model.

Consultations were thereafter conducted between March and July 2025, involving participants across 13 locations representing remote, regional and urban communities. Engagements included over 150 individuals; 45 ACCOs and NGOs; selected State, Territory and Australian Government agencies; and Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates across multiple jurisdictions.

The figure on the following page provides a snapshot of engagement activities and participants that informed the design of the Youth Voice initiative, which continues to evolve as an ongoing space for young people to contribute to national policies and programs.

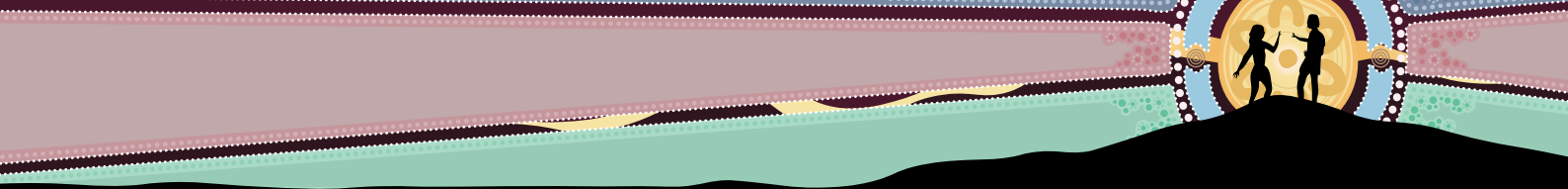
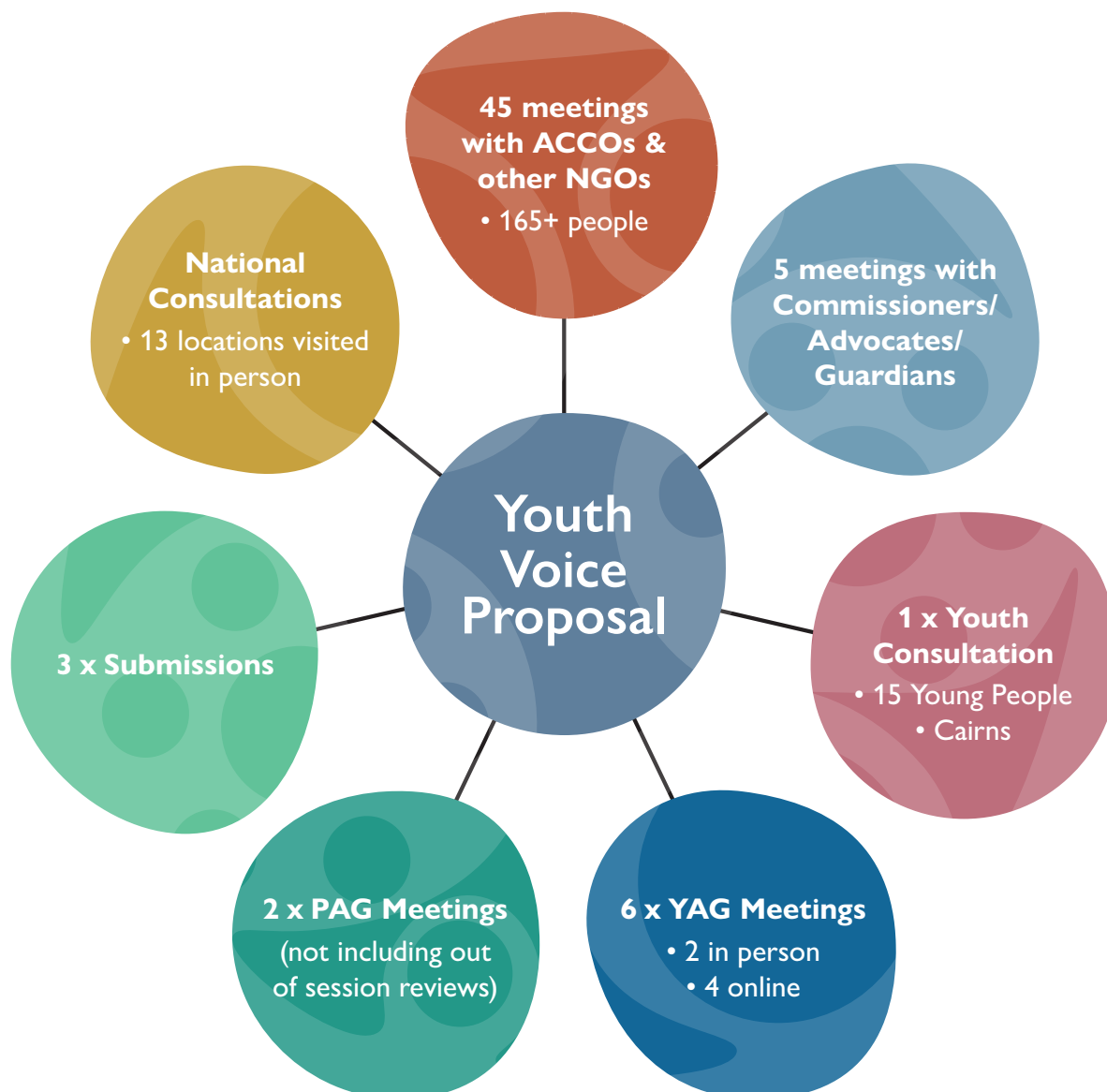


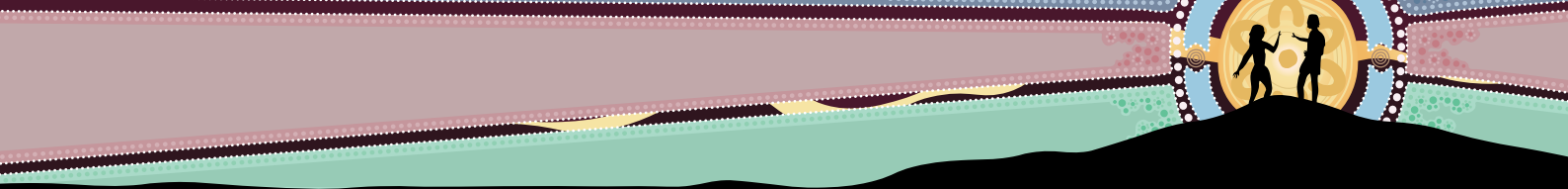
Figure 2. Consultation overview



2.3 Key findings

This summary outlines the key findings and recommendations for the development of the **SNAICC Youth Voice**, based on extensive consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and organisations. The Youth Voice aims to amplify young people’s perspectives, ensuring they are central to SNAICC’s work and national advocacy.

Consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and community partners revealed consistent themes and priorities that shaped the final Youth Voice proposal. Across all engagements, participants consistently emphasised the need for a model that is authentic, community-led, and action-oriented, shifting from tokenistic advisory roles toward structures that enable genuine shared decision-making and empowerment.



Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Safe, Inclusive and Flexible Youth Participation

- The SNAICC Youth Voice must go beyond engaging solely with ACCOs, to be open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, especially those with lived experience of government systems.
- Flexibility is essential. Young people should be able to participate through various methods, including one-on-one storytelling, school-based forums, and project-specific collaborations.
- Co-facilitation by trusted local workers builds safety, trust, and connection.
- Schools and community hubs can provide accessible, informal spaces for youth engagement.

2. Clarity of Purpose and Role

- The model must define whether the Youth Voice or YAG are advisory or have decision-making authority within SNAICC's work.
- A tiered than hierarchical structure is preferred, connecting local, regional, State and/or Territory-level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth groups to a national body.

3. Governance and Accountability

- Establish clear Terms of Reference (ToR) outlining expectations, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms.
- Ensure structures are youth-friendly, culturally safe, and inclusive of young people with lived experience and professional expertise.
- Address young people's concerns about mistrust toward systems: embed transparency and reciprocity, and follow through on feedback.

4. Relationships with governments

- Youth Voice members should be supported to engage with governments directly and advocate for meaningful action.
- SNAICC must model accountability by demonstrating how youth input influences its advocacy decisions.
- Ensure structures are enduring, not dependent on short-term funding cycles. Advocate for grassroots organisations to be resourced and represented in national decision making forums.

5. Supporting Youth Participation and Growth

- Provide wellbeing, cultural and mentoring supports tailored to local needs.
- Build pathways for skill development, including on-Country leadership opportunities.
- Remove financial and systemic barriers to participation.
- Support young people beyond individual engagement events, including as they transition out of youth programs.

6. Long-Term Vision and Sustainability

- Youth engagement must be ongoing and embedded within SNAICC's core structures.
- Maintain continuity of youth representation beyond terms of government or funding cycles.
- Commit to action and tangible outcomes following consultations.

7. Structure and Collaboration

- Governance structures should be strong yet flexible, with clear ToRs and responsive leadership.
- Enable multiple forms of engagement (e.g., online, on Country, and in community).
- Build partnerships with existing youth networks (e.g., the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) and the Healing Foundation's Youth Reference Group (HFYRG)) to strengthen collaboration and advocacy alignment and peer-to-peer learning.
- Foster solidarity between local grassroots initiatives and national youth representative bodies.

2.4 Youth Gathering Workshop

A face-to-face workshop was held in Gimuy (Cairns, Queensland) in partnership with Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good (DIYDG). The workshop aimed to gather insights directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to inform the design of the Youth Voice model from a culturally-grounded and youth-led perspective.

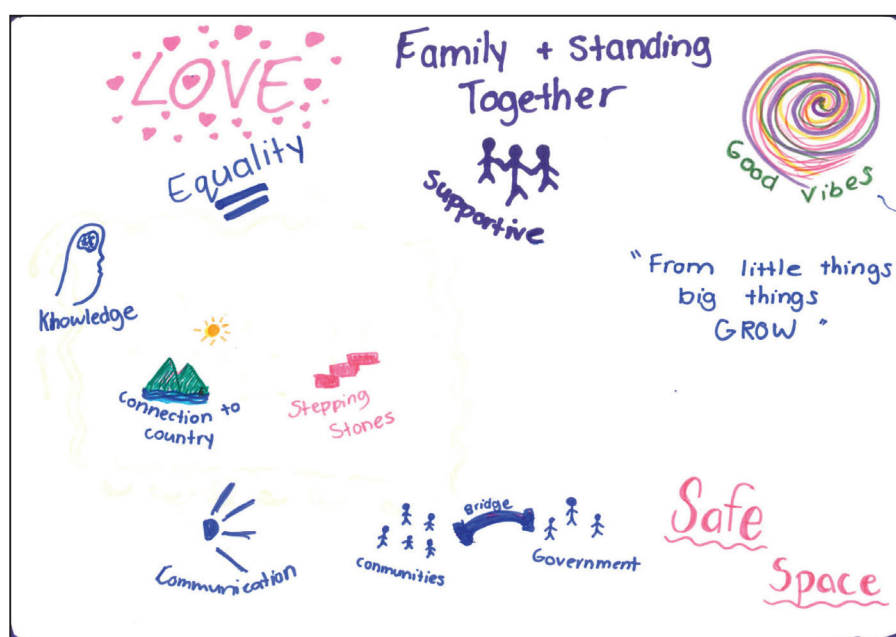
The workshop featured a series of youth-friendly, creative and interactive activities designed to create a safe and engaging space for participants to share their views. Facilitators used artwork, informal discussions, and small-group activities to explore key themes, including:

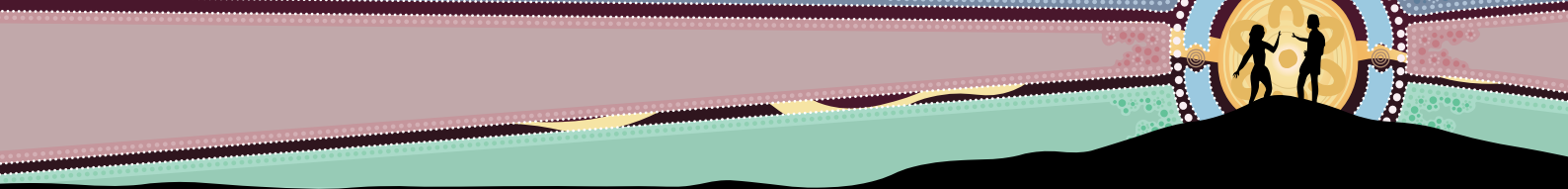
- Identity, personal values and community experiences
- Existing initiatives supporting positive change within communities
- Opportunities and design elements for young people to engage in national advocacy

Twelve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, drawn from DIYDG's regular youth program, participated in the workshop. They shared insights about their community experiences, local initiatives, and the challenges of ensuring young people's voices are heard at the national decision-making level.

Each participant's contributions were captured through facilitator notes, audio recordings and photographs of responses which were subsequently analysed to identify recurring themes and key insights that informed the development of the Youth Voice model.

Figure 3. Artwork from Gimuy Youth Workshop.





The success of the workshop reflected several key factors:

- The established trust between DIYDG staff and participants.
- Staff support that enabled participants to actively contribute throughout the workshop.
- Integration of the consultation within DIYDG's regular youth program, reducing additional responsibilities and avoiding overburdening participants.
- A physical environment that was comfortable, familiar and accessible to participants.
- DIYDG's commitment to coordinating participant's preferred pick-up and drop-off locations.
- Remuneration provided to young people for their time and contributions.

The success of this youth consultation was informed by factors that contrasted with previous youth-specific engagements, which had been constrained by sorry business, political elections, and other pre-existing commitments.

2.5 Submissions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members, representatives and organisations contributed submissions to this project. Their input informed the development of a representative, community-led mechanism that reflects the voices, priorities and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

The process included a set of optional guiding questions, designed to deepen the project team's understanding of the needs and priorities for a SNAICC Youth Voice and identify the key issues, challenges/barriers and solutions from young people's perspectives. These were based on the research questions shown in Appendix 2, which drew on our early desktop research and environmental scan work.

Submissions were made available in two formats:

1. A youth-friendly format
2. A standard version suited to organisations and sector stakeholders.

To be inclusive, participants could contribute via audio, video, artwork or other formats that best suited their preferences.

SNAICC Youth Voice received three submissions from:

- Jika Kangka Gununamanda, a Mornington Island ACCO, in the remote Gulf of Carpentaria, Lardil, Kaiadilt and Yangkaal country in Queensland
- Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation, based in South Australia
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, spanning the tri-state Central Desert region of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The submissions provided a range of insights, including from places the SNAICC Youth Voice team were unable to travel to during the co-design phase of this project. Submissions included practical recommendations and strategic approaches which directly informed the final design of the Youth Voice Proposal.



Part 3: From findings to recommended model

3.1 Thematic Analysis

The project team conducted a detailed analysis of the data to identify common trends, significant points, and unique perspectives. The YAG played a crucial role in this process, contributing their lived experiences and insights to ensure the findings authentically reflected the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Following a comprehensive review of the national engagement findings, three key themes emerged:

1. Culturally Safe, Non-hierarchical and Community-driven Model

This theme considers the structural foundations required to support youth participation in ways that are culturally safe, non-hierarchical and Community-driven. The key features and functions of the model must be defined by young people, remain adaptable and responsive, avoid duplication of existing frameworks, provide preventative resources rather than reactive measures, and embed safeguarding practices for all participants throughout the process.

“This should be a living project – it should evolve rather than being locked into a rigid structure.” – Yung Prodigy, Sydney (New South Wales)

2. Ethical, Youth-led Approach

Youth Voice must be guided by principles of accountability, transparency, and meaningful action. Engagement should be youth-led and with safeguarding measures in place to protect participants and ensure their contributions are respected and acted upon.

“We want to hear from young people – but is it safe [for them]? Or is it only if they agree (or align?) with the existing narratives? – Koorie Youth Council, Melbourne (Victoria)

3. Community Influence

Priority must be given to those directly impacted by policy and service delivery. Sustainable financial resourcing is essential and youth participation must be supported through the provision of basic needs. The relationship between government, community, and family must be clearly defined and understood across local, state, and national levels.

“Onus is on the listener, not the young person – seniors must be ready to engage with young people and adjust to their needs, rather than expecting young people to adapt to them.” – Aarnja, Broome (Western Australia)

“Focus on reaching those who’ve been failed by the system – not just those with positive service experiences.” – Mounty Aboriginal Youth & Community Services, Sydney (New South Wales)

Across all themes, the YAG reviewed the findings and unanimously agreed that culture must be the central foundation underpinning the model. Cultural identity, connection and safety are fundamental to the wellbeing and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples.



3.2 Model recommended to SNAICC Board

Following extensive workshopping of the Youth Voice model with the YAG, the Youth Voice team presented the following key recommendations to the SNAICC Board and Council in August 2025:

1. Establish a **formal Youth Voice sub-committee to the SNAICC Council**, composed of elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from across jurisdictions. The sub-committee provides strategic advice to the SNAICC Council and contributes directly to organisational decision-making, ensuring that young people's perspectives are represented at the governance level.
2. Adopt an ecosystem approach to engage young people through diverse modes of participation, supporting the sub-committee's work with the Council, the broader work of SNAICC and the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The **broader Youth Voice Ecosystem** will be a dynamic network of youth-led initiatives and participation opportunities, including jurisdictional youth groups, policy-specific working groups, ambassador roles, and annual national youth gatherings.

This two-tiered structure combines formal governance with flexible, youth-led participation pathways in order to create multiple, culturally safe entry points for involvement. It recognises the diversity of young people's experiences and the need to align with different strengths, aspirations, and community contexts.

The structure ensures that SNAICC Youth Voice is not a one-off consultation or advisory mechanism, but an evolving, community-driven framework. It will grow and adapt alongside the young people it represents while remaining responsive to their needs, grounded in culture, and connected to community priorities.

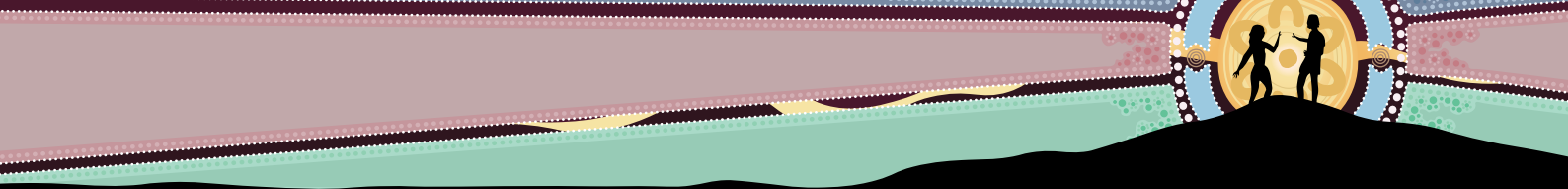
3.3 Endorsement by SNAICC governance bodies

The Board and Council recognised the need for the Youth Voice to:

- provide a structured and supportive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to meaningfully influence SNAICC's work
- be grounded in the shared understanding that young people must be empowered to participate in shaping the systems, decisions, and policies that affect their lives
- create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to lead, advise, and collaborate on issues that matter most to them, ensuring their perspectives are heard, respected, and embedded across SNAICC's governance and national advocacy.

Accordingly, both recommendations were endorsed, with SNAICC leadership committing to:

- Formally recognise the Youth Voice as a standing sub-committee of the SNAICC Council, with a clear mandate to provide strategic advice, contribute and have some independent decision-making, and elevate youth perspectives across all areas of SNAICC's work
- Explore sustainable resourcing of the Youth Voice, including through SNAICC core funding to cover operational costs, and support for targeted grant funding to underwrite youth-led projects
- Support the establishment of robust and culturally safe membership frameworks
- Maintain ongoing stakeholder engagement and community representation to ensure the Youth Voice remains responsive to community priorities.
- Continue monitoring and supporting the Youth Voice project, including for regular evaluation, reflection and feedback to ensure the Youth Voice is meeting its objectives and evolving in alignment with young peoples' aspirations.



3.4 Funding the Youth Voice initiative

To ensure sustainability, the Youth Voice initiative will be supported through a combination of funding streams. This includes integration within SNAICC's core governance and operational budgets, complemented by targeted grants and partnership funding to support youth-led projects and gatherings.

This approach strengthens the long-term viability of Youth Voice, ensuring it remains an enduring mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to influence national policy, service systems, and community outcomes.

Part 4: Conclusion

The SNAICC Youth Voice initiative marks a transformative step in embedding the perspectives, leadership and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at the heart of SNAICC's work and national advocacy. Informed by extensive consultations, submissions and community-led engagements, this proposal reflects a clear and consistent message that young people must be enabled to speak and provide input into shaping the systems and decisions that affect their lives.

The proposed structure is anchored by a Youth Voice Sub-Committee to the SNAICC Council which ensures that youth perspectives are integrated into governance, policy and advocacy at the highest level. Surrounding this central body is a dynamic ecosystem of participation providing flexible, inclusive, reciprocal, culturally considered and responsive opportunities. This approach recognises the diverse strengths, experiences, and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across Australia.

Responding to the highest priorities identified by stakeholders, the Youth Voice initiative is designed to build strong foundations that support meaningful youth participation and leadership. Through training, mentoring and community-based opportunities, this initiative will foster the growth of young leaders and strengthen their capacity to drive change within their Communities.

Importantly, the Youth Voice is a living and evolving platform, grounded in the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and committed to remaining responsive, culturally safe and community-led.



Appendix

Appendix 1. Engagement principles

The following principles formed a central part of SNAICC's engagement planning and guided our co-design work from end to end. They are closely aligned with SNAICC's organisational values and recognised ethical practice in research, reflecting our commitment to minimising consultation burden on participants, ensuring that engagement delivers tangible benefits to Communities, and upholding cultural safety and self-determination throughout the process.

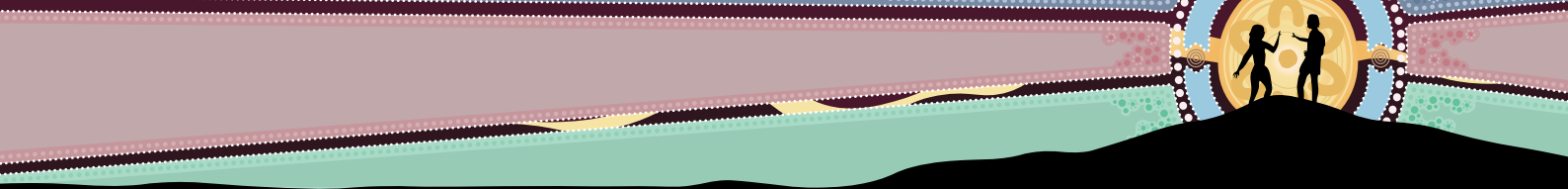
- **Capturing the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members:** SNAICC will promote opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples, Elders, Community leaders and Community members, including families and children, to have a direct voice in determining the most important features of a SNAICC Youth Voice mechanism. We will also support organisations who work with young peoples to fulfil their responsibility of engaging effectively with their constituents — including building sufficient time into the engagement process and providing stakeholders with suitable information.
- **Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination:** We will seek to ensure that the establishment of the SNAICC Youth Voice empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards self-determination in children's and young people's safety, development and wellbeing by ensuring that the design of this mechanism is driven by the perspectives, priorities and knowledges of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples, Communities and leadership.
- **Ensuring cultural safety:** We will invest in robust planning and preparation to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples and other Community members are engaged in a way that is trauma-aware, healing-informed and culturally responsive. We will utilise experienced and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators and will ensure that we have adequate supports in place to respond to the needs of vulnerable peoples.
- **Utilising existing networks:** SNAICC will utilise established networks to disseminate targeted information and to reach as many cohorts as possible. We will leverage existing strengths and communication pathways that ACCOs and Community governance structures have worked hard to develop (rather than seeking to duplicate these), maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of the process.
- **Adopting an inclusive and locally driven approach:** We will adopt an inclusive approach, with the aim of capturing a diverse range of voices and insights across Communities. Our engagement will be guided by and tailored to the needs of each Community and sector.
- **Gathering a strong evidence base:** SNAICC will collate robust, high-quality evidence on the operation of existing youth advisory bodies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative structures, nationally. This evidence base, in conjunction with the priorities and expertise of stakeholders, will inform recommendations around the roles, functions and structure of a SNAICC Youth Voice.
- **Reciprocity:** We commit to providing timely, accurate and transparent feedback to all stakeholders throughout the engagement and design process.
- **Transparency:** We will be open and transparent about the limitations and scope of our work, to avoid building unrealistic or competing expectations with Community and stakeholders.



Appendix 2. Research Themes and Questions

Table 1. Key Youth Voice Research Questions (adapted as needed)

Theme: Represent, and be responsive to, the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people	
1	What are the current opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to participate in developing laws, policies, and/or programs? Are there gaps? How could these opportunities be strengthened?
2	What should be the Youth Voice's role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families? How could it help strengthen relevant ACCO service sectors?
3	How should the Youth Voice drive SNAICC's work?
Theme: Clear, well-defined purpose and role	
4	What roles do other stakeholders in relevant ACCO service sectors currently play in amplifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's voices? How can the Youth Voice complement/enhance their work?
5	What roles and functions are likely to be most critical to prioritise for the Youth Voice?
6	How should the Youth Voice connect and interact with other youth voice mechanisms at local, regional, state, and national levels?
Theme: Strong, inclusive, and accountable governance	
7	What role should key organisations (such as SNAICC members) play in the governance, decision making, advising, and/or oversight of the Youth Voice, alongside SNAICC and the members of the Youth Voice body itself?
8	How should the Youth Voice provide accountability and transparency to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people broadly (i.e., young people who are not directly involved with the Youth Voice body on a regular basis)?
Theme: Relationships with governments	
9	What should be the relationship between Government agencies and the Youth Voice?
10	What should be the role of the Youth Voice in Closing the Gap?
Theme: The need for a long-term vision and sustainability	
11	What could a longer-term funding model look like for the Youth Voice?
12	What independent funding sources could be explored in the short/medium term?
13	What strategic relationships could support the Youth Voice during its establishment?
14	Based on the priorities identified, what other opportunities could be explored?



Appendix 3: What we learned about engaging effectively

This appendix captures key reflections and learnings from the Youth Voice engagement process, highlighting the importance of culturally grounded, respectful, and community-led approaches.

Valuing Local Knowledge and Relationships

Youth Voice would not have achieved nationwide reach without recognising our existing sectors and the relationships SNAICC has with place-based ACCOs, who are deeply embedded in and accountable to their Communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who contributed to this proposal guided our work with their deep cultural knowledge, underlying trust, and commitment to their Communities. ACCOs, big and small, understand local needs and priorities, with some smaller ACCOs sharing that they can often be overlooked and undervalued despite their critical role and deep understanding of community contexts.

Youth Consultation Partnership and Co-Design with DIYDG

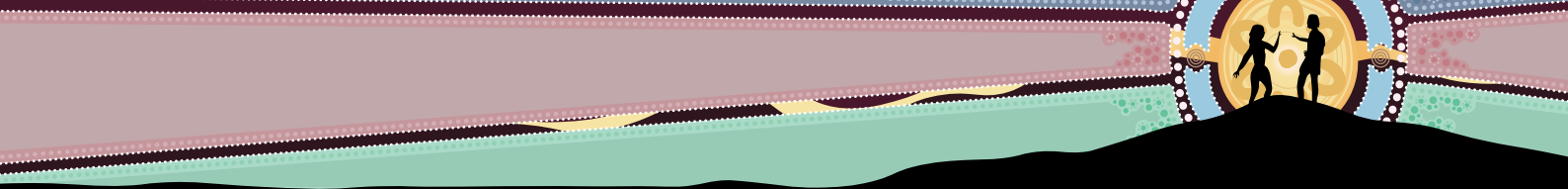
The Cairns Youth Consultation was co-designed in partnership with local ACCO, Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good (DIYDG). The partnership with DIYDG underscored the value of their pre-existing relationships with young people and the importance of embedding culturally safe and youth-friendly consultation practices. From the outset, it was clear that the interests of young participants were central to every decision made by DIYDG workers, including their initial willingness to engage.

The partnership played a pivotal role in shaping the consultation to ensure it was meaningful and accessible. Key elements included:

- Providing food and fair remuneration to acknowledge young people's time and contributions
- Designing interactive, activity-based sessions that fostered creativity and engagement
- Co-facilitating the consultation to ensure relatability and cultural safety
- Hosting the session in a space familiar and comfortable to the young participants

Planning with Flexibility and Awareness of External Factors

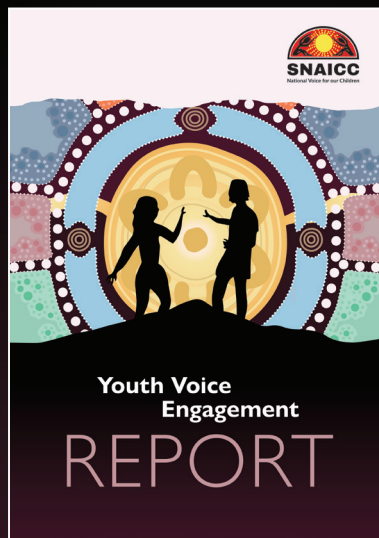
Given the project's short timeframes and tight deadlines, it was essential to acknowledge the potential burden this could place on communities. The importance of allowing adequate lead time and adopting flexible planning approaches quickly became evident. External factors such as political elections, overlapping commitments like policy partnership meetings and cultural obligations (from the project team and Communities being visited) often impacted the feasibility of travel and engagement. Building flexibility and remaining responsive to changing circumstances was crucial to ensure that engagement efforts were respectful, timely and not imposed on Communities during periods that were inappropriate or unsuitable.



Avoiding Tokenistic or Forced Engagements

Attempts to conduct consultations in locations such as Shepparton, Ceduna, and Roebourne highlighted the importance of Community capacity and readiness. Measures for community capacity and readiness included whether the community reports they were undergoing a recent death in the Community, short-staffing, current non-existent programs and confusion in other organisations had attended their Community to a similar consult. Appreciating this initial stage of the SNAICC Youth Voice project was fast moving to assess the child and family sectors needs to achieve amplifying young voices to the national level, these community report and SNAICC not working to force engagements (in this initial stage) still provided us with key information that went into the approved design of the SNAICC Youth Voice project. Youth Voice regularly revisited the engagement schedule by adjusting timelines to align with community needs or choosing not to proceed when engagements risked feeling forced or rushed. Our approach prioritised mutual trust and respect by aiming to ensure that consultations occurred only when Communities were ready and willing. In instances where in-person visits were not feasible, online meetings proved equally valuable and offered a flexible and respectful alternative that maintained connection and continuity to the project.





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