'Good People Showing Them The Proper Way'

PALMERSTON YOUTH ACTIVITY GRANT FUNDING

EVALUATION REPORT

APRIL 2021

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Acknowledgement of Artwork
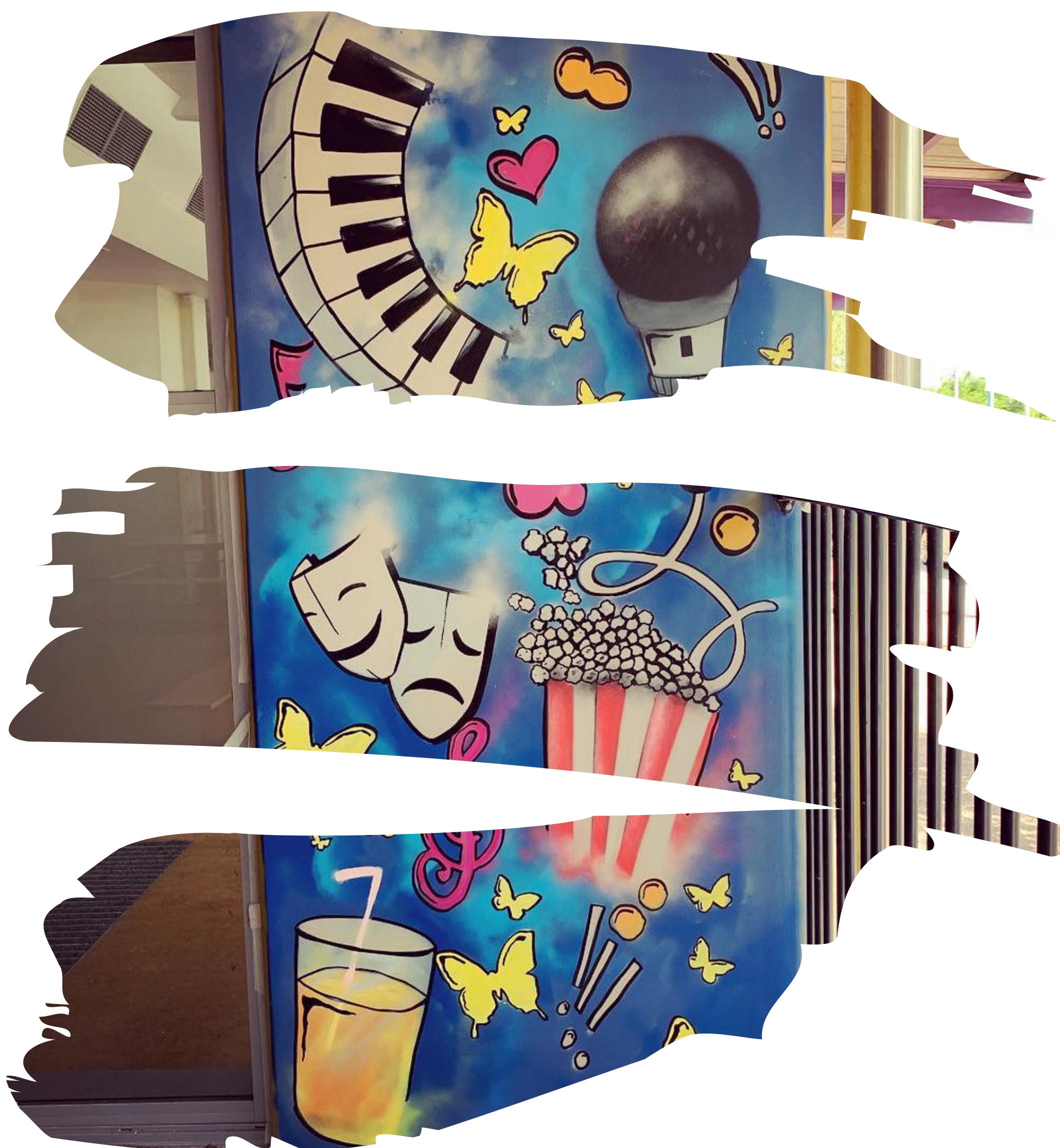
Artwork: Riece Ranson, Intrepid Designers NT

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Artwork: Miss Polly and Palmerston College Students

1.   Introduction

This report documents the evaluation of the Palmerston Youth Activity (PYA) Grant Funding. Since early 2018 this funding has successfully provided support to community organisations and partners to coordinate and deliver school holiday and after-hours activities in the Palmerston area. These activities are aimed at young people aged 10 to 17, particularly those considered 'at-risk'.

This funding is part of Northern Territory Government's Regional Youth Grants Program, developed in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory (Aust. Gov., 2017). The Regional Youth Grants Program is delivered through a partnership approach with Territory Families, Housing and Communities (Community Engagement) and Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet (Regional Programs). It aims to address the needs of at-risk and vulnerable young people in the Northern Territory (NTG, 2018).

The PYA Grant Funding Guidelines (Appendix A) overview the objective and rationale for this funding.

> *The objective of the Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding is to support and encourage school holiday and after-hours activities throughout Palmerston. Such activities and programs aim to ensure young people in Palmerston and those visiting from surrounding communities have several options for things to do after school and during school holidays. After-hours and school holidays are important times for young people to expand their skill set, to network and make new friends, and to develop pride in their community and self.*
>
> *The youth services sector has expressed interest in developing strong, collaborative working relationships, including improved coordination across the range of services and resources available. The Palmerston Youth Activities funding provides greater support for collaborative partnerships and can also offer improved access to funding for community groups who work directly with young people.*

This evaluation has sought to understand the extent to which the PYA Grant Funding objectives and aims are being met from the perspectives of young people, grant recipients, other service providers, community members, and community leaders in Palmerston. A mixed methods approach using interviews, surveys, observation and analysis of program documentation was used to achieve this from August 2020 to February 2021.

The evaluation results are positive and demonstrate the great potential of well-coordinated, collaborative, local community-based responses to supporting young people with engaging activities, supportive relationships and safe spaces.

The report begins with an executive summary and overview of recommendations. Background information about young people in Palmerston is presented, along with a review of related literature.   The evaluation results include a description of the core activities and an examination of the importance of the PYA Grant Funding before considering each aim in detail. The report concludes with a set of recommendations.

Artwork: Young Mulligas and Cudjeries

LOOK AROUND, THERE'S SO MUCH HAPPENING HERE. THIS IS THE BEST PLACE TO BE IN PALMERSTON AT THE MOMENT. I CAN'T THINK OF WHAT OTHER ACTIVITIES WOULD BE NEEDED, JUST MORE OF THIS.

(YOUNG PERSON AT URBAN JAMS)

2. Executive summary

This summary provides an overview of the evaluation project and results. The PYA Grant Funding Program is part of the broader Northern Territory Regional Youth Grants Program and has been operating in the Palmerston area for almost three years, providing a wide range of activities for 10-17 year old's after school and in the school holidays.

This report explores the extent to which program aims have been met and presents stakeholder views of grant administration, the strengths and challenges of activities and of service collaboration and coordination. Stakeholders include young people attending activities, activity providers, community leaders, government and non-government organisations who have expertise and experience in working with young people in Palmerston, and community members.

The results demonstrate that the PYA Grant Funding is achieving its objectives and aims. What is required now is long-term funding stability for the grant program, in particular, its 'cornerstone' activities that are providing ongoing, year-round activities, support, food and transport for young people in Palmerston and are delivered by local organisations working in partnership with government and community. These activities are creating the supportive, youth-friendly community environment that is required to make the long-term generational changes demanded by the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory (Aust. Gov., 2017).

2.1 Background

Gretchen Ennis from Useful Projects was commissioned by Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association (PaRBA), a long-term youth activity provider, to undertake the evaluation. The project was supported by PYA Grant Funding. Useful Projects, a Darwin-based research and evaluation consultancy, undertook the planning, data collection and analysis from August 2020 to February 2021.

The evaluation was generously supported by an evaluation reference group, which included the following representatives:

- Amanda Stevenson (City of Palmerston)
- Sally Weir (Department of Chief Minister & Cabinet)
- Lance Godwin (PaRBA)
- Serena Dalton (Grassroots Action Palmerston)

**Riece and Shannon
Outreach Program PaRBA**

- Kay Villafer (Larrakia Nation)
- Joey McGee (YORET - Department of Territory Families, Housing & Communities)
- Judy Brown and Leah Sanderson (YMCA)
- Jemma Wood (Anglicare NT)
- Esther Chapman & Bola Adeite (Charles Darwin University Students on Field Placement with Depart of Territory Families, Housing & Communities)

Members of the reference group supported the co-design of the evaluation and assisted with promoting evaluation activities, connecting with potential participants, providing activity information and engaging in data analysis feedback workshops.   This evaluation would not have been possible without their commitment to the project. The Terms of Reference for this group are located at Appendix F.

Rachel Fosdick (PaRBA and City of Palmerston), also provided much appreciated support, facilitating access to activities and participants, organising meeting space and assisting with the community survey market stall.   Amanda Stevenson kindly provided graphic design support for this report.

The evaluation methods and protocol were approved by the Menzies School of Health Research Human Research Ethics Committee on 7.10.20. HREC Reference Number: 2020:3849 (Appendix G).

The Aims of the Palmerston Youth Activity Grant Funding
- To support the delivery of a range of after-hours and school holiday activities in the region.
- To ensure 10-17 year old's, particularly those at risk, have accessible, safe and fun activities.
- To ensure young people are consulted about the provision of the youth activities to provide feedback and direction as to the delivery of these activities.
- To link young people attending activities with support and complementary early intervention services as needed, and
- To develop stronger and more collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders and improve coordination across the youth and related sectors.

2.2   Evaluation aims

The evaluation project sought to understand the extent to which the aims of the PYA Grant Funding were being met.

An evaluation planning workshop was held at the outset to unpack the aims and determine other questions to be addressed. These included a deeper understanding the strengths and challenges of the collaboration, the activities and the grant administration, along with an exploration of Covid-19 impacts and learning. Ideas for improving the grant program into the future were also sought. It was clear that creating a platform for the voices of young people was paramount,

along with gaining insights from activity providers and community members to build a holistic view of the funding program. To this end, a mixed-method evaluation design was used, including surveys, interviews, observation and document analysis.

2.3 Who participated in the evaluation?

40 Young people who currently attend youth activities funded by the grant program (survey-based face to face interviews individually or in small groups)

13 Saff from activity providers who have received PYA funding. (face to face interviews individually or in small groups)

9 Community leaders and staff from community organisations -not funded by PYA grants (face to face interviews individually or in small groups)

118 Palmerston community members (community survey; web-based and delivered at local markets)

2.4 Major conclusions

2.4.1 Why the Palmerston Youth Activity Grant funding is important.

It is a strong sense of community....so you feel like to you belong. You have a connection.

(Young person attending Youth Drop In Sports)

All kids deserve a chance to take part in fun activities in the holidays regardless of who they are or where they live.

(Community member)

There are three major ways in which the PYA Grant Funding is important for young people and families in Palmerston:

1
It supports and enables the provision of quality youth activities;

2
It facilitates connection and collaboration between after-school and school holiday youth activity providers and young people; and

3
It provides a protective and preventative focus.

These three ideas are reflected throughout this report. The PYA Grant Funding meets its stated aims and goes further. It contributes to the important work of creating a community culture that embraces and values Palmerston's young people and provides a preventative safety net that supports them and their families.

Further evaluation results are organised around the five aims of the PYA Grant Funding, with additional sections on Covid-19 learnings.

2.4.2 Supporting the delivery of a range of after-hours and school holiday activities in the region.

The PYA funding has successfully supported the delivery of a wide range of after-school hours and school holiday activities in Palmerston. Data that supports this includes the following count of school holiday activity hours since December 2017.

Palmerton Youth Activity Grant funding has provided :

An average of 53 hours of youth activities during every week of every school holiday period since December 2017.

Over 2,100 hours of school holiday activities since December 2017.

Cooking Activity
The Y Uptop

The PYA Grant Funding has supported the delivery of a wide range of youth activities during each school holiday period since December 2017. A list of all activities which have been funded over this timeframe can be found at Appendix B.

Activities have been provided by a variety of organisations, including local government, non-government organisations and private providers. This has ensured variety in activity type to include options as diverse as music creation, sports, exercise, dance, circus workshops and performances, horse riding, excursions, visual arts and crafts, drone workshops, first aid training, family dinners and streetball events.

Food was provided at 565 school holiday activities over three years.

"I just like to have somewhere to come, and to play basketball, and chill."

(Young person attending PaRBA Youth Drop In Sports)

The following graph is an overview of activity types provided in the school holidays since December 2017, by frequency.

PYA funded activity types by frequency of events

On average, there are 697 attendances each week at school holiday events and activities funded by the Palmerston Youth Activity Grants.
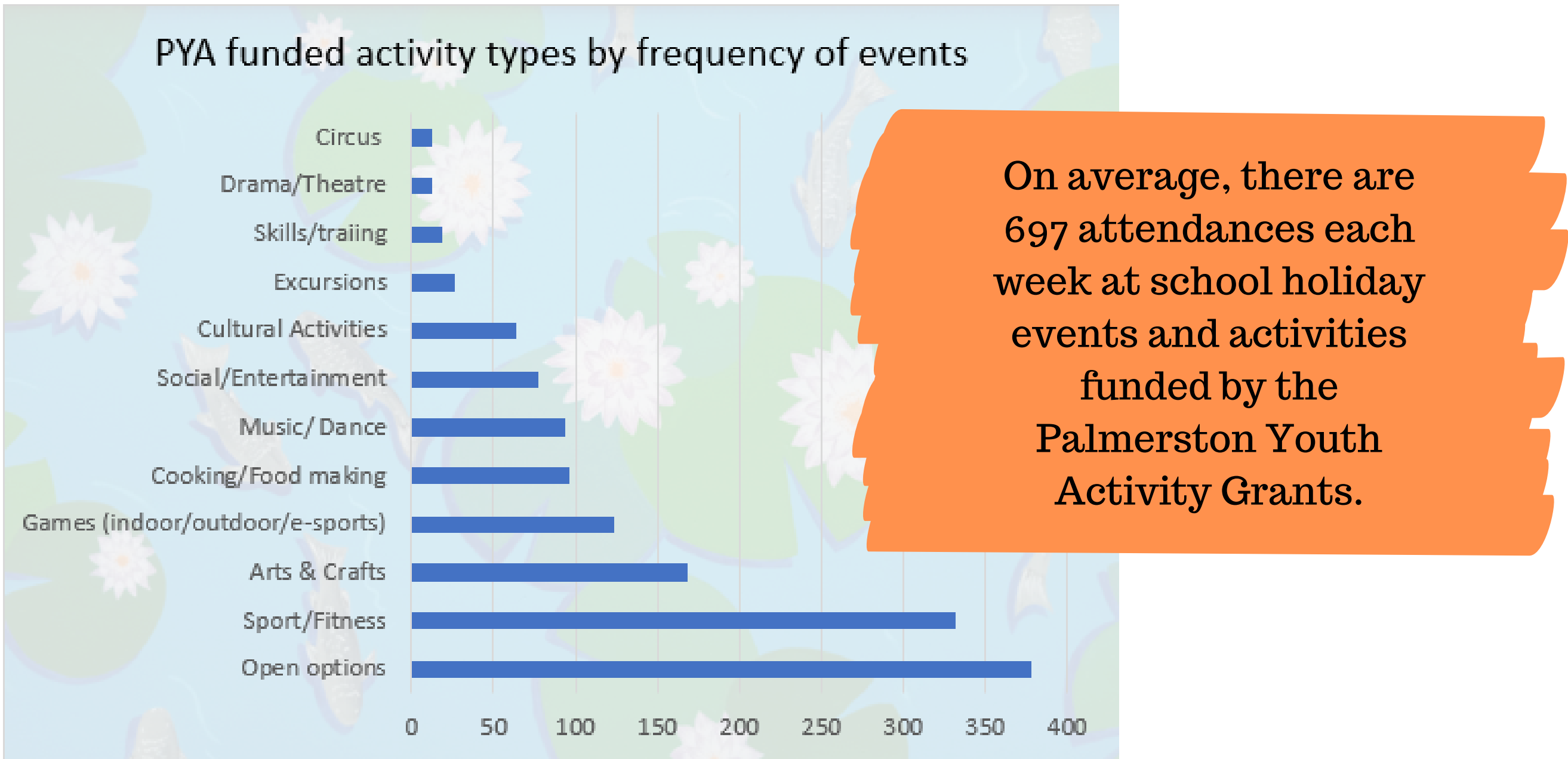
The graph demonstrates there are more 'open option' events than other types. These involve activity providers offering a range of choices for young people who can select activities on the day. This usually includes art and craft-making options, table-based and board games, active games such as handball, cooking, or just 'chilling' with friends and a movie, video game or music.

Consistency and reliability of supportive activity options are enhanced by ensuring there are youth activities available all year around. There has been a range of after-school activities funded by the PYA grants, with PaRBA's Youth Drop-In Sports and YMCA's Girls and Boys Nights becoming the most regular part of the after-school options for young people in Palmerston.

Artwork: Shaun Lee

The PYA grant funding has ensured there are activities for young people every day after school during term time. Food, adult mentors and comfortable facilities are provided at all of these activities.

2.4.3 Ensuring 10–17-year old's, particularly those at risk, have accessible, safe and fun activities.

As long-term PYA providers, the activities offered by City of Palmerston, YMCA, PaRBA and Larrakia Nation were the focus of this aspect of the evaluation. The following table summarises the data around access, safety and fun. We see that the aims of providing fun and safe activities are being met, and while accessibility is good, there could be broader public awareness of the activities.

Accessibility, safety and fun.

Summary of all participants' views

	Young People's Voice (n=40)	Organisations Voice (n=22)	Palmerston Community Voice (n=118)
Accessible Activities	95% reported no accessibility issues. Transport and other young people's behaviour were the two issues impacting accessibility.	Barriers identified: Access to and from rural areas Lack of community awareness of activities Social issues between young people	46% did not know or were unsure about after school or school holiday activities. 52% thought transport would be an issue. 25% suggested more promotion of activities.
Safe Activities	55% - extremely safe 37.5% – very safe 7.5% - somewhat safe	PYA funding has enabled development of safe activities. Behavioural issues can arise, but these are well handled.	8.5% were concerned about safety of activities (bullying, gangs, or negative behaviours)
Fun Activities	75% s selected 'fun' as a reason they enjoyed the activities.	'fun' was identified as a key aspect of each activity.	90% thought youth activities were important for Palmerston, one of the main reason was 'fun' (25%).

When 40 young people were asked what they liked about the activities, 'fun' was the most frequent response (75% of participants selected this). Friends and staff were the next most common responses.

What young people like about the Palmerston Youth Activities they attend
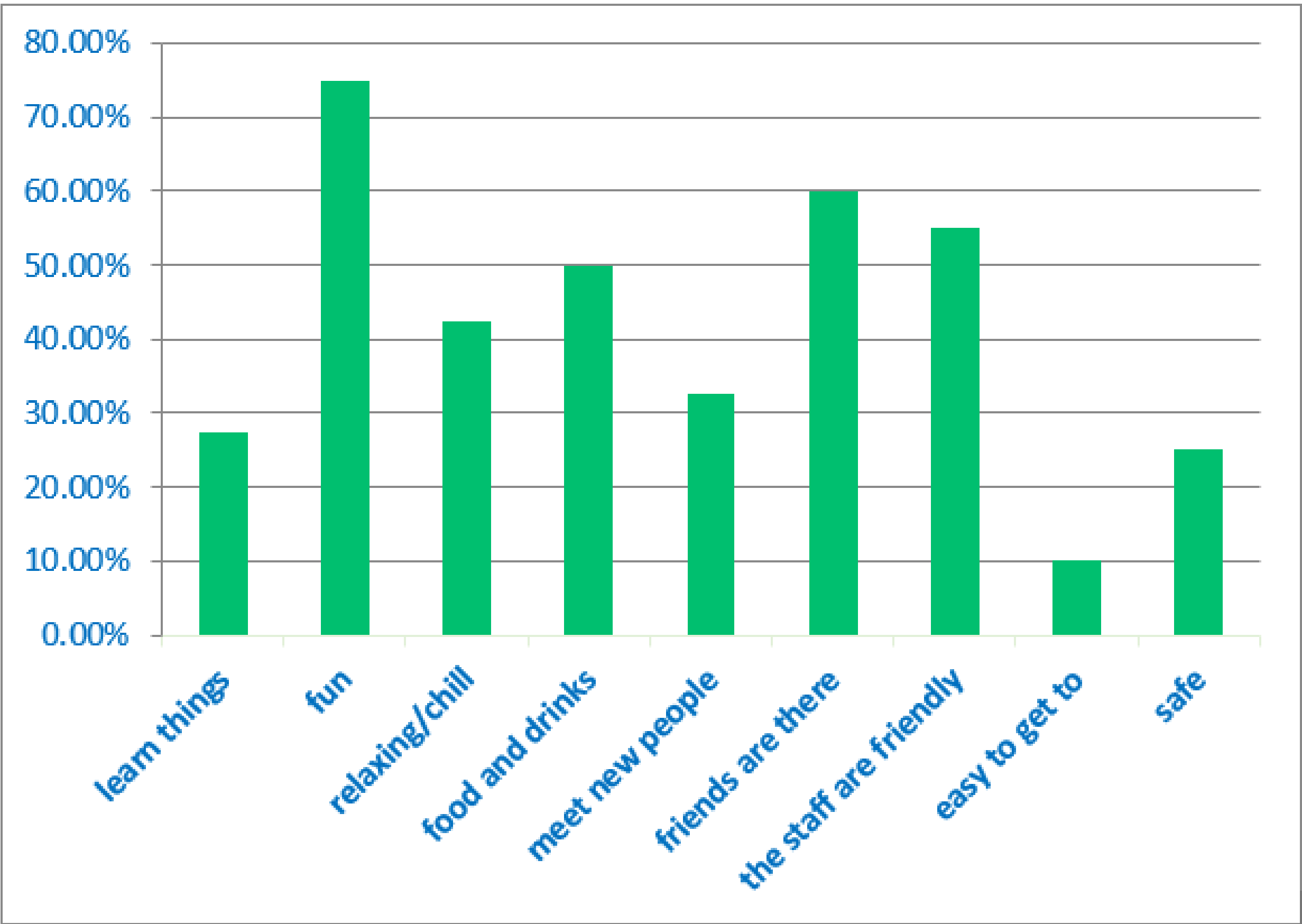
EVERY YOUNG PERSON INTERVIEWED ENJOYED THE ACTIVITIES THEY ATTENDED

82.5% RATED THE ACTIVITIES AS 'GREAT'

17.5% RATED THE ACTIVITIES AS ' GOOD'

(RATED ON A 5 POINT SCALE FROM 'NOT GOOD AT ALL ' THROUGH TO 'GREAT')

Accessibility is also generally good, with strong attendances at the majority of activities. However, the community survey identified that there was a lack of knowledge among the over 18's in the community concerning the activities. There was also a lack of clarity around who activities were for. Many community members did not know if activities were restricted to specific groups, or if they were open to all 10-17 year old's.

Activity providers and other community organisations believed the activities to be safe, however, some reported that behavioural issues could be challenging at times. The use of youth friendly, culturally safe security services (provided by Mulga Security) was considered to be a big advantage in ensuring safety, along with positive relationships between young people and staff, and staff ability to de-escalate any heated interactions.

92.5% of young people reported feeling extremely safe or very safe at the activities.

Community members had some concerns about safety issues, with 8.5% reporting that safety concerns such as bullying and violence may impact young people's desire to attend. The concerns were not always about the activities themselves but were focused on what might occur outside venues or in the streets after activities.

2.4.4 Ensuring young people are consulted about the provision of the youth activities to provide feedback and direction as to the delivery of these activities.
Interviews with activity providers demonstrated awareness and use of the Palmerston Youth Action Plan. This plan was informed by young people in Palmerston and use of this plan helps to keep the youth voice is at the forefront of activities. Many PYA providers were also members of youth and other service provider networks. Some had their own youth committee's and/or ensured the participation of young people in their decision processes making via a range of formal and informal mechanisms.

Youth participation in the PYA Grant Funding program could be enhanced through inclusion on the grant decision making panels and by inviting youth representation on the PYA coordination meetings.

Young people attending activities reported feeling listened to and respected by activity staff, as is clear in the following two graphs about respect.

Staff Respect Me

Sometimes
10%

No
3%

Yes
87%
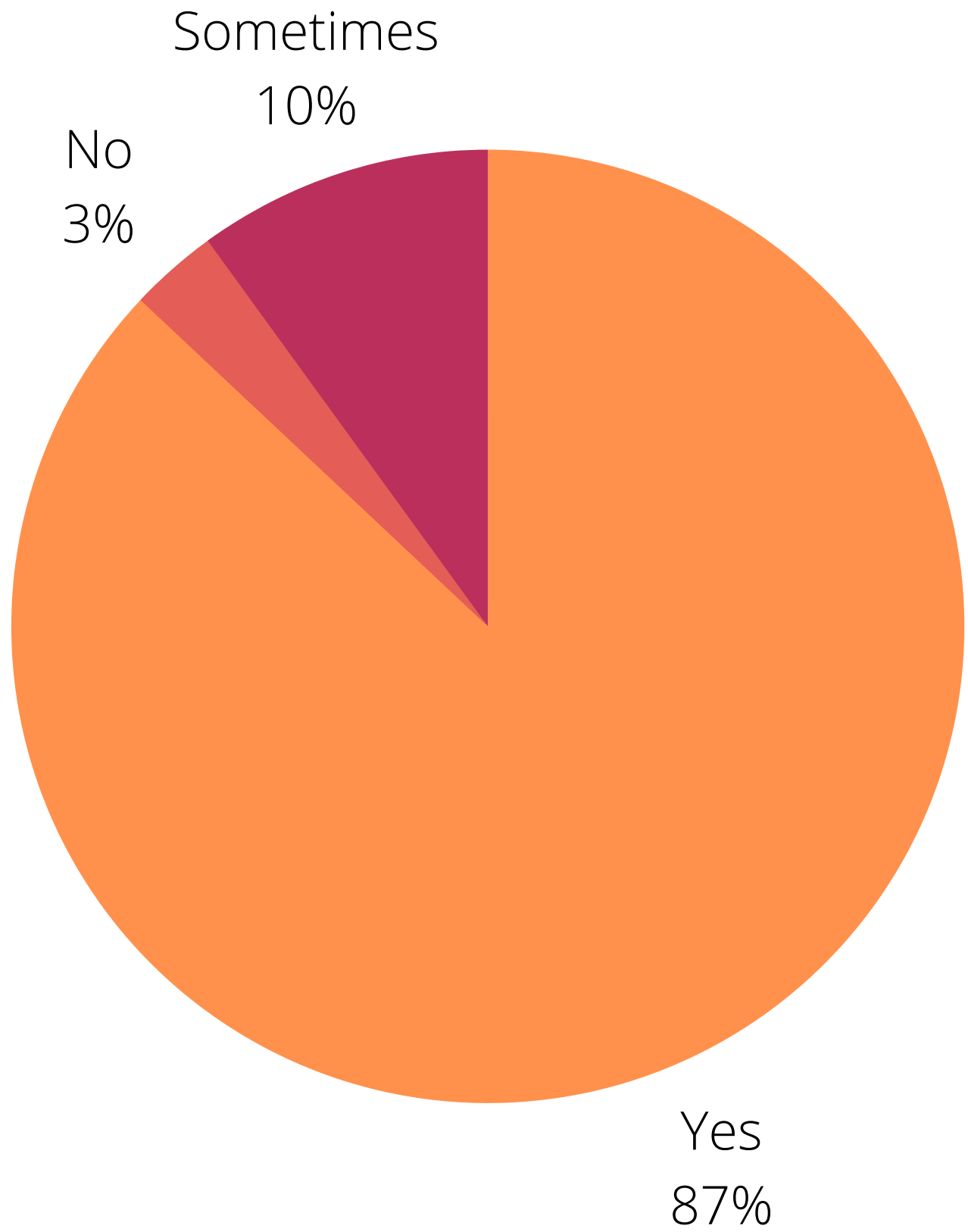
2.4.5 Linking young people attending activities with support and complementary early intervention services as needed.
Linking young people to support services they may need is an important outcome of the PYA Grant Funding. Young people benefited from long-term, trusting and supportive relationships with activity staff. When these relationships were in place, referrals were far easier to facilitate.

'We listen. We are hearing them, we action things. With the referrals, if they do need that expert help, we will have those conversations and support them in speaking with their own families.'

[PYA funded organisation]

Other outcomes observed by organisations and community leaders in Palmerston that are relevant to accessing support and linking to services are summarised below.

Summary of PYA outcomes from activity providers, community leaders and organisations viewpoint.

Connection
Positive behaviour changes
Safe spaces for young people
Enhancing Palmerston community
Opportunities for young people
Referrals and support
Crime reduction

There is room to build in the area of referrals, as changes to services and staff mean that this is a dynamic and evolving environment. Keeping on top of the supports available and the ways to access them can be a challenge for activity providers and an area that could be focused on in the future.

2.4.6   Developing stronger and more collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders and improving coordination across the youth and related sectors.
The PYA funding has made an important contribution to collaborative and coordinated working relationships in Palmerston.

The bringing together of government and non-government organisations, groups and community leaders to focus on providing young people with safe, fun and enjoyable activities during the holidays and after school is one of the most important aspects of the PYA Grant Funding. The following table provides a summary of the strengths and challenges of collaboration.

27 Youth Activity Co-ordination Meetings (2018-2020)

29 organisations represented

Overview of collaborations strengths and challenges from activity providers, community leaders and organisations viewpoints.

Collaboration and Coordination

Strengths
Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role
Working together/value adding
Creating a new culture
Local voices at the forefront

Challenges
Diverse organisations (size and resources)
Relationship tensions
Changing/evolving roles

The role of the Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator was widely acknowledged as the backbone of the success of the grant program. The set of skills and experience this role requires helps to facilitate positive relationships, work with tensions, and develop and maintain relationships with stakeholders across Palmerston and beyond.

The creation of a supportive culture around young people in Palmerston is another core aspect of the collaboration. Activity providers embraced a strengths focus in all their interactions with young people, including the language they use about and with young people. There is a focus on young people's resilience and capacity to address the issues they face.

> **It doesn't matter how hard a kid gets..... we are going to keep supporting them. It doesn't matter how much they act out, we are keeping our arms around them.**
>
> **PYA service provider**

The collaboration challenges were focused on different activity providers ability and/or commitment to participating in coordination group activities and meetings. This could create tensions around commitment to the collaboration, and issues with representation when not all providers are 'around the table'. The Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role has been important in terms of setting expectations, but perhaps revisiting, renewing and reaffirming expectations as activity providers, staff and networks continue to change and evolve, could be helpful.

The grant application processes and administration are also a critical aspect of the collaboration and both were generally considered fair, consistent and equitable. Room for improvement in terms of developing funding tiers for long-term services providers was frequently noted.

Melissa 17 - Postcard Project

Summary of grant application processes feedback from activity providers, community leaders and organisations viewpoints.

Grant application process and administration

What is working well?
- Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role is supportive
- Fair processes

What can be improved?
- Transparency
- Funding tiers/streams for proven activities to access longer term funding
- Further detail/criteria on the application

Suggestions for the future?
- Youth representatives on grant decision-making panels.
- Consider evaluation requirements and offer support for this.
- Ensure all potential applicants are aware of grants and are supported to apply
- Consider different tiers/streams of funding according to track record

While transparency in grant decision making panels was seen as working well, for the most part, it was also considered an area where improvement could be made. This was particularly around how decisions regarding targeted grants and funding for one-off events were made. Some participants felt these were not as beneficial to young people as the long-term engagement activities that are more closely aligned with trauma-informed approach.

Youth TRELLO Board - City of Palmerston

Every day they went out and they took food and treats like ice blocks - every day - and the kids just appreciated the human contact, that somebody was still keeping an eye on them. They took tennis balls, chalk, free wi-fi, sports equipment and played on footpaths and in the park.

(PYA grant-funded organisation)

Shack doing Outreach for PaRBA

2.4.7 Covid 19 responses and learning

The impacts of a global pandemic were felt across the Northern Territory and the PYA providers were required to quickly adapt to an uncertain and changing environment. The Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator and activity providers demonstrated excellent resilience and capacity to respond to community needs in a thoughtful and timely way. The major learnings from that time centred on the importance of outreach and included:

A deeper understanding of young people's home life

Going out into people's homes provides a deeper insight into the diverse lives of young people who engage with PYA. The provision of outreach activities, including food and wellbeing packs, to over 40 families each day, meant activity providers such as PaRBA, YMCA and Larrakia Nation and City of Palmerston had regular contact with families across Palmerston.

Meeting families and making stronger connections

The connections activity providers made with young people's family members were an unexpected benefit of the Covid outreach programs. Along with helping services better understand their participants, some long-lasting connections were made. Sharing stories, cooking and playing games with families in homes, yards, parks and streets meant that many families felt more comfortable to come into the activity locations themselves once Covid restrictions lifted. Activity providers noted that staff felt more connected to families as a result of the outreach activities.

Practical changes to practices

Other Covid-19 related changes were very practical ones.
This included the following.
· Gathering contact tracing information while ensuring young people's privacy was respected.
· Being flexible with planning and managing attendance fluctuations.
· Food packaging and serving changes were also required to minimize any virus transmission risks.

3.   Recommendations summary

The Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding has been successful in the major aspects of achieving its stated aims. In line with early intervention and prevention focused principles the grant funding is assisting in the creation of well-coordinated youth and community sector which not only provides engaging activities but acts as a support and safety net for young people in Palmerston.   As a result, the funding program is well placed to continue its's successes into the future.

The recommendations have been organised into the following five categories and are summarized below.
- Building on current grant funding & administration
- Enhancing collaboration and coordination
- Increasing capacity for community engagement and outreach activities
- Strengthening training and learning support for activity service providers
- Continue to enhance existing activities

Further detail about each of these recommendations is located in Section 12 of the report.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS
Building on grant funding and administration
- Develop a tier of funding that will facilitate the long-term provision (up to five years) of activities with proven track records of PYA service provision.
- Increase overall grant funding pool for PYA Grants to ensure ongoing high quality activities
- Grant applicants to address the ability to participate in coordination meetings and collaboration activities when they apply for funding.
- Grant applicants to articulate planned target group balance between at-risk and other young people.
- Develop mechanisms for further youth representation on decision making panels
- Enhance communication about grant panel decision making processes, including targeted funding.

Enhancing collaboration and co-ordination
- Develop an online space for information sharing, collaborative learning, and promotion of activities.
- Develop web-based data dashboard (as part of the online space) to share relevant data with real time analysis to keep track of important indicators
- Facilitate shared learning and development forums on important topics with activity providers.
- Continue using and enhancing quick communication systems such as What's App
- Attendance at the majority of activity co-ordination meetings should be a requirement of acceptance of a grant offer.
- Strengthen each activity providers knowledge and understanding about when and how to refer young people to other services and supports.
- Allocate time for a forum or workshop to consider the implications of activities being open to all, or to a specific target group, and to seek more clarity on the definition of 'at-risk'– so that members of the coordination group are working from the same base.
- Consider the idea of the coordination group working to further reflect on and develop a theory of change and associated model of practice, (or integrate the elements into a Collective Impact framework or similar).

Increasing community engagement through outreach activities
- Develop a PYA 'hands on' presentation which can be used to engage hard-to-reach young people in the locations they currently engage with.
- Assess the feasibility of taking existing activities such as Youth Drop In Sports Nights and Urban Jams, into the suburbs, streets and parks to engage with people with whom they live on a regular basis.
- Continue to build on existing relationships with NT Police to strengthen their relationships with young people in Palmerston.

Strengthening training and learning support for all activity providers
- Explore activity providers training and learning needs and consider how this training could be delivered across all providers to build skills, learning and networks.
- Consider the development of an informal training framework for activity providers to build the work force capacity in Palmerston.
- Facilitate access for all activity provider staff to an online or phone-based 24/7 professional practice support service.

Continue building on existing activities
- Build on the success of the Larrakia Nation bus by considering further transport options such as supplementing with mini-vans or cars during busy periods to allow more flexibility.
- Develop leadership pathways within each activity, for older young people.
- Investigate the idea of starting a community action/social change activity for over 15's.
- Ensure continued access to quality excursions to adventure and action-based activities.
- Investigate options for overnight holiday camping trips.
- Consider more outdoor-education type activities for older young people (15 to 17) during term time.
- Continue to keep the youth voice at the forefront of activity selection and investigate further ways to do this
- Investigate options for late-night activities that are specifically for 15-17 years old young people only.

4.   Definitions

4.1   'At-risk'

The term 'at-risk' in relation to young people means different things depending on the context. For example, in the following areas 'at risk' includes:
- Education – at risk of leaving school or training
- Police – at risk of entering the juvenile justice system
- Juvenile Justice – at risk of re-offending
- Mental health – at risk of self-harm or suicide
- Child protection – at risk of harm or neglect within a family.
- Housing – at risk of becoming homeless or at risk because of the impacts of homelessness.

While the focus of the PYA Grant Funding is 'at-risk' young people aged 10-17,a specific definition has not been clarified. As such a broad definition involving all of the above risks has been used in this report.

4.2   Strengths-based practice

Strengths-based practice is a way of working with people: individuals, groups, families and communities, to explore and understand their strengths. Once defined, these strengths are used to find solutions to challenges and difficulties and bring about a sense of hope about the future.   Strengths-based practice is based on respect, inclusion and empowerment.There is an assumption that people are the experts in their own lives, and they have the skills and knowledge to make positive change.

Strengths-based practice emerged in the 1980's, mainly in the practice areas of child and family welfare, youth work, mental health and disability. In the USA, authors such as Dennis Saleeby defined 'the strengths perspective', with Australian writers such as Di O'Neal and Wayne McCashen following suit here. Their work, along with other related practices such as solution-focused practice and narrative therapy, have had a strong influence on social work, community work, youth work and education in Australia.

4.3   Trauma and trauma-informed practice

Trauma is a term used to explain many of the issues young people 'at risk' face. It is therefore important to spend some time exploring what 'trauma' is and what it's impacts are. Kezelman (2016, p. 3-4) defines trauma in the following way.

> *Trauma stems from the overwhelming of coping mechanisms in response to perception or experience of extreme threat.*

> *Unlike `normal life stress' (which is constant and experienced by everybody) the perception of extreme threat activates innate `fight', `flight' and/or `freeze' responses which are protective at the time of the precipitating event/s, but which corrode health over time if the underlying trauma is not resolved.*

> *For those who live with the effects of unresolved trauma, `normal life stress' can be profoundly destabilising, trapping them in a cycle of physical and psychological reactivity which is devastating to well- being and to a wide spectrum of functioning.*

> *It is important to distinguish between `single incident' trauma (PTSD) and what is increasingly called `complex' trauma (i.e., cumulative, underlying, and often interpersonally generated). In fact, `complex' interpersonally generated trauma is not only more extensive in its impacts across a range of functioning but is also more common.*

Impacts of trauma

Trauma-informed approaches do not focus on differentiating between 'symptoms' of trauma and the 'impacts' of trauma. Rather, there is an understanding that 'symptoms' are often responses to trauma. However, it is important to acknowledge that 'unresolved early life trauma is correlated unequivocally not only with a raft of adverse physical and psychological health problems in adulthood, but with a range of psychosocial issues as well' (Kezelman 2016, p.4).

Trauma informed practice

Briefly, trauma informed practice has a focus on doing no harm. There is no blame or re-traumatization of people experiencing trauma. A sense of hope and optimism that recovery is possible is required. Trauma survivors are seen as unique people who have experienced extreme situations and have managed to the best of their ability. Stability and consistency of safe and supportive relationships are critical aspects of trauma informed practice. Kezleman (2016) outlines the principles of this approach, with questions to consider for service provision.

Safety – emotional as well as physical e.g., is the environment welcoming?

Trust – is the service sensitive to people's needs?

Choice – is there opportunity for choice?

Collaboration –communicate a sense of 'doing with' rather than 'doing to'

Empowerment – is empowering people a key focus?

Respect for Diversity – is there respect diversity in all its forms?

Local Youth Action Group Consultation - Palmerston Shopping Centre

5. Literature Review: Place-based prevention and early intervention programs with 'at-risk' young people

This literature review provides an overview of relevant research and evaluation reports from Australia and internationally. The aim is to provide some context about 'what works' in the prevention and early intervention space.

5.1 The importance of early intervention and prevention

The Report of the Royal Commission in the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory provides a strong argument for the value of early intervention and prevention approaches to both child protection and youth justice.

The primary goal for an effective child protection system is that it is pre-emptive rather than reactive, attempting to prevent harm and the risk of harm rather than reacting once risk factors present. It should be an evidence-based system that is tailored to local needs in the Northern Territory prevention efforts must be coordinated across government agencies, the Aboriginal controlled health sector, the non-government sector and local communities (Aust. Gov., 2017, p.168).

5.2 Place-based-initiatives

In this context, early support can be defined as 'strategies or programmes that avert or delay the onset or severity of health, mental health or social problems' (Aust. Gov., 2017, p.168). The concept of social capital can be useful here. Social capital involves the networks of trust and reciprocity between people, groups and organisations. It can be thought of as the 'glue' that holds communities together and is an important ingredient in the social, emotional, physical health and wellbeing of young people and their communities more broadly.

A systematic review of research from Australia, NZ, USA and Europe, concerning the impact of neighbourhood (place-based) social capital on the health and wellbeing of children and young people suggested that neighbourhood social capital might play a role in the health trajectories of children and young people (Vyncke, 2013). The Royal Commission Report (Aust. Gov., 2017) also stressed the importance of place-based early intervention and prevention work with young people.

> *The provision of place-based services is likely to be more effective because services can be provided by organisations who know the families and understand their problems, will be familiar with what supports are available and can ensure the accessibility and availability of those supports and services (Aust. Gov., 2017 p.175).*

5.3 The importance of community engagement

The evaluation of a community-driven preventive initiative aimed at young people across a range of communities in remote Arnhem land communities (Lee et al. 2008) provides a good example of the strengths and challenges of such work. The program used a community development approach, available to all young people, to focus on preventing substance abuse and increase respect for culture. The evaluation results showed 'increased youth training and recreational opportunities, increased communication between local agencies, overall satisfaction with programme delivery and optimism that it could achieve its goals.' (Lee et al. 2008, p.75). When examining ideas for improvement, participants stressed further training along with cultural programmes and other activities, and employment of more community-based Indigenous staff. Important elements of success included 'key staff, involvement of a respected Indigenous staff member and community engagement' (Lee et. al. 2008, p.75).

Other research on small-scale community-based development activities for marginalised young people highlights the benefits of increased access to positive and supportive relationships. Morgan et al. (2020, p. 237) conclude that

> *When marginalised young people are presented with the opportunity to generate positive interpersonal relationships built upon trust, recognition and acceptance, there is clear potential for community-based activity interventions to act as a form of education to enhance employability and incubate social mobility through the accrual of social capital.*

5.4   Service collaboration

The importance of community engagement and service collaboration is highlighted in a number of evaluations in similar contexts. Blignault et al.'s (2016) evaluation of a national program, using community development principles to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous youth in 14 remote and regional Australian communities points out that most progress was observed where there were strong local partnerships. Key learnings from the evaluation concerned program design, resourcing and ways of working. The authors point out that 'program staff at each site learned to be not too ambitious, but to work consistently with the community, establishing partnerships and engaging and training community members.' Ultimately, they find that

> Community and stakeholder capacity enhancement should be regarded as core, and evaluation built in.
> Activities directed at youth must be engaging and effective and integrated with other
> programs and service (Blignault, 2016, p. S53).

Collaboration also has its challenges, and these require consideration if services are to work together to create positive change over the long-term. Addressing power and equity issues, a lack of grassroots community engagement and pre-existing relationships have been shown as areas where tensions may arise in collaboration for social change (Ennis & Tofa, 2020). A good example of such challenges come from Demant (2018), who documents a Back on Track pilot program that aimed to improve health, education and justice outcomes for young people at risk in a metro Melbourne housing estate. A Collective Impact (CI) approach to collaboration was used, with diverse services attempting to work towards shared goals. The project was abandoned due to a lack of buy-in on the part of one stakeholder. The article provides insight into the challenges of collaboration across large government departments and smaller place-based, community and welfare spaces.It also highlights the critical importance of relationship-building for successful collaboration.

5.5   A positive approach

Positive youth development, a strengths-based approach to working with young people, has a preventative focus on issues such as substance abuse and violence. Dickson et al. (2018) systematically reviewed 12 such interventions, synthesizing process and outcomes evidence. Their analysis revealed how program implementation varied and was influenced by the local context. They found that -

> Community engagement enhanced program appeal. Collaboration with other agencies could broaden
> the activities offered. Calm but authoritative staff increased acceptability. Staff continuity
> underpinned diverse activities and durable relationships. Empowering participants was sometimes
> in tension with requiring them to engage in diverse activities. (Dickson et al. 2018, p.1110)

The value of strengths approaches for working with young people at risk of criminal activity is also highlighted in research into schooling responses to youth crime in south-western Sydney. This study found that ideas of safety, hope, engagement, justice and fairness in practice with young people were important foundations for practice (Reid, 2009). Other research on using 'strengths' or 'assets-based' approach to working with communities' points to positive impacts on young people's mental health (Boyd et al. 2008).

Wheelchair Basketball - Youth Drop in Sports

Sport based programs in the prevention and early intervention space are growing in number across Australia, with reports of over 110 such programs focused on Indigenous people alone (Macniven, Elwell et al. 2017). Along with this growth is an emerging body of evidence to support their use with young people in particular. Sport has been used as a mechanism to build relationships across cultures and to create positive interactions among young people. A study by Nathan et al. (2013) reporting on the evaluation of a sport-for-development program in Australia ('Football United'), provides evidence of building peer and prosocial relationships for boys involved in the football program. Similarly, an evaluation of a community-based, youth sport mentoring program in Melbourne (More than a Game) reported positive change in terms of cultural engagement of young Muslim men, and the development of social resilience, inclusion and belonging (Johns, Grossman et al. 2014).

Art-forms of all kinds (music, dance, writing, visual arts, drama, circus and multimedia) have been shown to have positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of young people in a variety of contexts in Australia (Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Houbolt et al 2003) and internationally (Daykin et al, 2008; Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013). Impacts have including gaining confidence and increased self-esteem through building supportive networks, acquiring skills and experience, physical benefits from movement-based art forms such as dance and circus, through increased understanding of difference and diversity, and career direction (Ennis & Tonkin, 2018). An example of one such program comes from Parker et. al. (2018) who 'explored the connections between music-making and mentoring with young people' in the South of England. An analysis of interviews with participants (school students) aged 11–17 years 'reveals various ways in which music-making facilitated positive change' and suggests that music-making activity, particularly when combined with mentoring support, may provide a wide range of benefits for young people.

Artwork: Young Person - Urban Jams

5.6   Challenges of youth engagement.

There has been much written on the challenges around engaging young people in youth activities, particularly those considered 'at-risk' of youth justice involvement, drug and alcohol abuse and disengaging with education. The Australian Government's, Interim Youth Taskforce report, (2019, p.14) states that youth engagement is 'vital to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of youth targeted programs, services and intervention'. Informed by research with young people, community, and service stakeholders, the report provides some useful ideas on improving engagement. The authors explain:

- Working with young people in defining the problems and issues that affect them can lead to new understandings about the source of such problems as well as potential responses.
- Young people's involvement also helps to build credibility and rapport for the project and ensure that their values and attitudes are accounted for … this approach helps develop interventions that are engaging to young people and therefore are more likely to be used, increasing the overall reach and impact of the intervention.
- Continuous engagement also helps keep pace with the fast-changing uses of technology, mitigating some of the impacts of the inherent time lag of translating research and evaluation findings into practice.

This same report highlights the importance of both place-based and collaborative approaches to working well with young people.   Consultations with communities demonstrated that a one-size-fits-all approach to programming and service delivery did not work (p. 41).

5.7   Learning what works in different contexts

In Solutions that Work, Dudgeon et al (2016, p. 3) identify factors that have provided good outcomes in Indigenous community-led suicide prevention programs. For young people, best practices include:
- Peer-to-peer mentoring, education and leadership
- Programs to engage/divert, including sport
- Connecting to culture/country/Elders
- Providing hope for the future, education and preparation for employment.

Dudgeon et. al (2016, p.3) also found that preventative programs with good outcomes generally shared a range of common elements that involved:
- Partnerships with community organisations and Aboriginal controlled health and community services
- Employment of community members/peer workforce
- Indicators for evaluation
- Cross-agency collaboration
- Data collections
- Dissemination of learning.

5.8   Similar Australian youth programs

There are government funded grant and targeted youth programs across Australia with some similarities to the PYA Grant Funding. For example, The Youth Crime Prevention Grants program (YCPG) is part of the Victorian Government's response to youth offending and provides $5.6 million funding to eight local government areas in Victoria. A further $2 million competitive grant scheme is available to another ten local government areas, and $1.5 million for the Koori Youth Crime Prevention grants. The YCPG aims to strengthen communities to intervene early and reduce the likelihood of young people engaging in criminal behaviour. Projects funded through the YCPG are expected to achieve a reduction in offending behaviour and recidivism among project participants by:
·Decreasing known crime-related risk factors and increasing protective factors.
·Achieving sustained improvement in engagement in school, training and/or employment.
·Increasing connectedness with the community.

The Victorian projects are also expected to develop or consolidate strong, effective partnerships among community organisations and across government initiatives. An interim evaluation of this initiative (Crime Statistics Agency, 2020) showed very different approaches in each location – with programs including a range of services and activities from case management and individual counselling to one-off events. A large number of participants were considered high-frequency offenders and/or had very complex needs. Issues with high levels of staff turnover and a lack of clarity around target-groups were seen in multiple locations.

Artwork: Collaboration with Tony Lee, Trent Lee and Shaun Lee

Interestingly, the evaluation found that engaging young people and families went well when:
- Time was available to develop relationships with young people.
- There was continuity and consistency in project workers.
- Have flexible brokerage funding available to meet a young person's specific needs.
- Group activities were provided to create stronger peer networks.

Other state and territory governments offer a range of different approaches in the prevention and early intervention space in relation to youth justice. At times, these appear to be focused at the individual and close family level of intervention, for example, the NSW Government Youth on Track initiative (NSW Govt. 2020). In other locations, government appears to work with a range of non-government and community service providers to deliver a selection of individual, family and whole of community programs in the prevention and early intervention space (SA Govt, n.d.).

The PYA Grant Funding is in a unique position of being able to focus on prevention and early intervention at a community level, rather than an individual or family level.   The funding allows a sharper focus on community development principles such as deep local engagement, collaborative planning and decision-making, coordination across organisations, open access to the vast majority of activities for all young people, a non-labelling approach to engagement, provision of food, transport and mentors, and a focus on community-level change.

5.9   Summarising the literature

This brief review of preventative and early intervention, collaborative place-based youth activities highlights the principles that appear to increase program success, regardless of location or program focus.   The key learnings centre on:
- The critical importance of positive, supportive relationships for young people. This includes relationships with peers, workers, mentors, services, as well as with the wider community.
- The importance of consistency and continuity of programs and services because change takes time.
- The ability to provide truly engaging, youth informed activities and experiences that will attract and retain young people's interest over time.
- The benefits of service collaboration and coordination. Supportive linkages between organisations, community, families, groups, leaders, government and business are required to create the type of community that supports it's young people.

The PYA Grant Funding integrates these elements. It appears to be unique in its emphasis on provision of youth activities year-round, during school holidays and school term time. The literature review process did not locate any similar long-term, community based, prevention or early intervention programs that provide this type of collaborative, ongoing activity for young people. It is therefore important to explore the PYA Grant Funding program in more detail.

The following section provides an overview of the evaluation methods used to enable an exploration of how this approach is working in Palmerston, and the extent to which the objectives and aims of the program are being met.

6.   Evaluation aims in detail

Prior to commencing the evaluation, a stakeholder workshop was held in Palmerston (6 August 2020) to determine the evaluation aims and questions.   The workshop was attended by 12 representatives including local youth service providers, NT Government and Palmerston community leaders.

The Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding Guidelines (appendix A) provided an overview of the aims and objectives of the funding, and it was agreed that the primary aim of the evaluation was to explore the extent to which the Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding aims are being met.

Aims of the Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding:
- To support the delivery of a range of after-hours and school holiday activities in the region.
- To ensure 10-17 year old's, particularly those at risk, have accessible, safe and fun activities.
- To ensure young people are consulted about the provision of the youth activities to provide feedback and direction as to the delivery of these activities.
- To link young people attending activities with support and complementary early intervention services as needed, and
- To develop stronger and more collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders and improve coordination across the youth and related sectors.

In unpacking these aims, the stakeholder group also wanted to explore the following questions:

Young people's views
- Do young people feel listened to?
- What are their views about the activities?
- What are their ideas about future activities?
- What are the outcomes of participation?
- What are the standout stories?

Engagement
- Is the target group being engaged?
- What are the barriers and enablers to engagement?
- How can engagement be improved?

Collaboration & partnership
- What are the views on the grant application and administration processes?
- What are activity providers doing well?
- What has been challenging for activity providers?
- What can we learn from this?
- How can activity providers engage community more broadly?
- Has the community noticed the activities and/or their impacts?

The evaluation results have been organised around the five Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding aims, with responses to the stakeholder questions nested within them.

Before presenting the evaluation methods, some further context is provided. This includes background information on the Palmerston community and the story of Palmerston Youth Activities.

7. Palmerston Youth Activity Grants: Context

7.1 Young people in Palmerston

Palmerston is a young city, with the first family moving to the new town in 1982. The first shopping centre was developed in 1984, with schools and other infrastructure following quickly. Palmerston is a growing city with a range of businesses, industry, health and community services and public infrastructure. There are now 12 primary schools, two middle schools and three high schools within the City of Palmerston municipality. Palmerston is a diverse, vibrant and youthful city.

PALMERSTON IN NUMBERS

36,483 people

42% under the age of 25.

22% population growth over five years

90.2% school attendance

Families make up 79% of the population

11% of the population are Aboriginal
and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

30% of the population was born in a
country other than Australia.
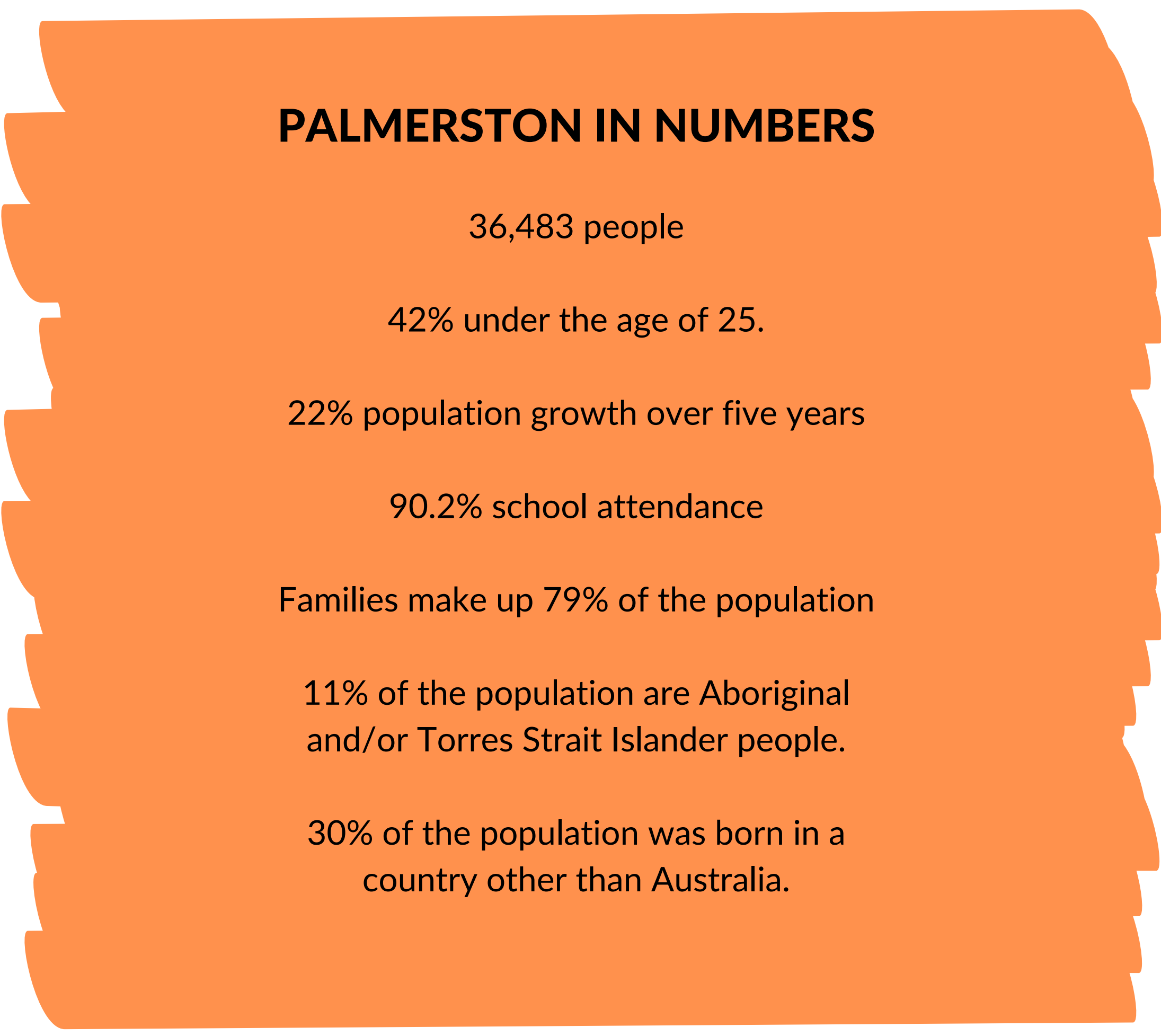
Table 1.Palmerston in numbers

Palmerston has a strong backbone of community engagement. Groups such as Grassroots Action Palmerston (GAP), Palmerston Indigenous Network (PIN) and Grow Well Live Well have worked to better understand the issues children, young people and families in Palmerston's face, and to create positive, collaborative change. Strong provider and stakeholder engagement in Palmerston contributes to the context of the PYA Grant Funding and to positive outcomes for young people. This includes PaRYS (Palmerston and Rural Youth Services) network, Palmerston Safer Communities Meeting, and Palmerston Kids Network. Each providing opportunities for services and stakeholders to engage with each other, identify the issues in the community and explore ways to work together to address these.

When youth crime was highlighted as a problematic issue in Palmerston during 2016, Grassroots Action Palmerston facilitated a range of community meetings and worked with government to create positive change with young people. Action sparked in this arena developed over the next five years to the point where there is now strong community leadership and collaboration in the youth sector in Palmerston.

In 2016, Grow Well Live Well released its first Palmerston State of Children report. This report used a popular framework called 'The Nest' (ARACY, 2009). This framework outlines five areas or 'domains' that are important for growing and thriving. Each domain is connected to the others, and they help us to understand how young people are going. A diagram that represents the approach is below.

Figure 1. ARACY Common Approach

The Grow Well Live Well research identified many things community members valued about Palmerston, including the range of services and programs, it's friendly and multicultural feel, the sports and recreation facilities, parks, education opportunities, entertainment options, and affordability. Palmerston was also considered a good place for young families, with a sense of community and pride.

The same report also highlighted people's concerns. This included crime, break-ins, drug and alcohol abuse, planning and city environment issues, domestic and other violence, antisocial behaviours, homelessness, poverty, and the cost of living. Concerns about unsupervised and neglected children and worries about the 'bad reputation' of Palmerston were also raised.

When thinking about what would make Palmerston better for young people, the following ideas were developed:
- Cultural, family, adult education supports and services
- Additional education/school supports
- Youth activities and facilities
- Sport and recreation facilities
- More up to date information and better communication
- More resources for specialised services
- Collaboration and coordination of services
- More entertainment, cafes
- Better public transport
- Peer mentors for young people

These ideas are aligned to the activities funded by the PYA grant program. It is in many of these areas that the PYA Grant Funding contributes to the community of Palmerston.

7.2   Northern Territory Regional Youth Grants Program: A prevention and early intervention approach

The challenges facing too many young people in the Northern Territory were brought into sharp focus through the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory Report (Aust. Gov., 2017).   A key message from this report was the need for a public health approach involving prevention, early intervention and diversion, to support young people at risk of entering the juvenile justice system.

The Northern Territory Government developed Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families 2018-2023.   This documented the Northern Territory Government's plan to implement wide ranging reforms to better support children, young people, and families experiencing vulnerability, and to deliver the recommendations of the Royal Commission (Aust. Gov., 2017)

Safe, Thriving and Connected supports prevention and early intervention strategies which include The Regional Youth Grants Program. The program aims to address the needs of at-risk and vulnerable young people in the Northern Territory (NTG, 2018). The PYA Grant Funding is part of Northern Territory Government's Regional Youth Grants Program. This grant funding began in 2018 and now has an annual allocation of $460,000 up until June 2022 for the Palmerston region.

The strong foundations created by Palmerston's active and engaged community groups and networks has meant that the PYA Grant Funding could build on committed local engagement and expertise to develop a collaborative, place-based approach to the grant program - working with young people, their families and community.

In 2019, the Palmerston Youth Local Action Group undertook a four-month community engagement process (Dysart, 2019) that identified young people's thoughts on living in and improving Palmerston. This exploration revealed the following important points.
- Young people in Palmerston have complex understandings of social issues, can identify areas for action, and lead positive change.
- Trusted adult mentors and small action groups create safe spaces for young people, from diverse backgrounds, to step into.
- By inviting young people to connect in diverse ways, we get to engage with young people with broad experiences and backgrounds.
- Action-making can be risky. It is important to have the right youth work skills within the community to mentor young people while they make their projects and ideas a reality (Dysart, 2019 p. 2).

Mulga Security with J-Milla at a YDIS Party

Following this, The Palmerston Youth Action Plan was developed with the Palmerston Youth Local Action Group in 2019. This plan provides insight into young people's views about Palmerston and developed seven goals.

1 Young people are supported to be leaders in the community and to have a voice in issues that affect them

2 Create a safe, inclusive space for young people in Palmerston and a range of opportunities for young people to participate in activities that are fun and engaging.

3 Develop a resource map for young people and service providers so young people can know where to get help and support

4 Improve community awareness of trauma and its impact on young people

5 Improve cultural connectedness through the community

6 Support young people to remain in school and stay engaged in education and training

7 Change the narrative about young people in Palmerston by promoting the positive contributions being made.

These goals have been important in informing the local decision-making panels which review, shortlist and selects programs, events and activities to be funded by the Palmerston Youth Activity Grants.

7.3 The Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding

The story of the PYA Grant Funding began in 2017 with the Youth Services Innovation Grants which provided afterhours and school holiday activities to young people in Palmerston with a targeted emphasis on 'vulnerable' and hard to engage young people. These grants had a focus on coordination and collaboration amongst service providers who worked together to promote and support activities.

The first activities were provided by the YMCA, Larrakia Nation and Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association (PaRBA) through the December 2017/January 2018 school holidays, with some additional programs also providing activities for an extended time to include further school holiday periods in April 2018. Youth sports drop-in sessions and sports-night activities, music, arts and crafts, social events, excursions, breakfast and lunch programs along with games and other activities in safe, youth friendly spaces were provided. Young people enthusiastically engaged with the activities, and over 2798 attendances over six weeks were recorded.

The April 2018 youth activities attracted strong numbers of young people, with 643 attendances recorded over the week. Activities included basketball drop-in sports sessions, drumming workshops and performances, hip-hop dance, music creation, wellbeing-focused activities, arts and crafts, exhibitions and a community dinner. Food was provided at almost all activities.

Transitioning between the Youth Services Innovation Grants and the new Regional Youth Grants Program in Palmerston was facilitated by the new Palmerston Youth Programs Coordinator role and assisted by a local decision-making group. The Palmerston Local Decision-Making Group was comprised of representatives from Department of the Chief Minister, City of Palmerston Council, Territory Families Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Team (YORET) Palmerston, and the Regional Youth Programs Coordinator - Palmerston, Department of the Chief Minister & Cabinet.

Momentum grew over 2018 as the transition between grants took place. The Local Decision-Making group met on May 10th 2018, to review programs and recommend nominated providers from the Youth Services Innovation Grants to extend service provision into the July 2018 school holiday period. Approval was granted for the Regional Youth Programs Coordinator to approach the nominated organisations and discuss capacity, activities to be provided and funding required to deliver them. The funding provided to those organisations for the June/July 2018 school holidays was obtained from the annual amount available through the upcoming Regional Youth Activities Program. In that three-week holiday period, 2,421 attendances were recorded at a similar range of activities to the previous holiday period. The two-week October 2018 holiday activities proceeded in a similar vein, with a wide range of activities and 1981 attendances recorded.

A one-year funding round began with grants available for 1 November 2018 to 31 October 2019. By this time, services were also being funded to provide youth activities during school term, so that young people had access to enriching, safe and engaging activities all year round. After school hours programs such as Youth Drop In Sports (PaRBA), Girls Night and Boys Night (YMCA) could consolidate and grow over the year. Service providers began meeting regularly (see Appendix C for further detail) to collaborate on school holiday programs, share learning and knowledge about issues impacting young people in Palmerston and generally work towards building a more integrated and holistic 'web' of activities and support. The PYA Coordination Group began meeting monthly, and more often during holiday periods as needed.

Targeted funding was organised by the Palmerston Youth Services Co-ordinator to respond to the specific needs of high-risk youth and to fill any gaps in programming activities. For example, this funding has ensured that transport could be provided by Larrakia Nation in the form of bus linkages between the activities and young people's homes. Targeted funding also allowed quick responses to issues as they were identified by local groups, such as wellbeing programs, a youth resources card and outreach programs. More information on activities funded can be found at Appendix B.

The third year of the PYA funding saw grants move to a longer timeframe (February 2020 to June 2022). This meant stability of service provision and consistency for young people. Service providers such as PaRBA, YMCA, Larrakia Nation and the City of Palmerston continued to provide cornerstone activities with safe spaces across school terms and holidays. Newer providers added to the mix, bringing fresh approaches to engaging young people, such as Yarraman Territory's horse-based activities, and SoundED's music, video and sound production.

The PYA have developed rapidly over the past three years. The consolidation of the coordination group, the length of grant funding, the number of service providers involved and the activities on offer, have all grown. Attendances are strong. This evaluation is based on PYA data from December 2017 through to December 2020. In the following sections, the evaluation methods and analysis are presented.

Artwork: Palmerston Postcard Project by Mikayla aged 17

8   Evaluation methods

As the Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding is in the implementation phase, process and outcome evaluation are considered suitable types of evaluation (Patton 2014).   A mixed methods design has been used, including interviews, surveys, observation, and analysis of existing records (such as school holiday activity programs). This aligns with the evaluation aims and provides a range of participation options for stakeholders (Mertens, 2005). A summary of the data collected and its purpose in this evaluation is presented below in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of evaluation methods and data collected

Evaluation Methods & Data		
Type	**Purpose**	**Number of Participants**
Community survey	To understand Palmerston community members views of the youth activities	118
Interviews with Palmerston Youth Activity participants	To understand young people's views about the activities they attend and explore ideas for the future.	40
Interviews with Parents/guardians of activity participants	To understand views about the activity impacts on young people and explore ideas for the future.	5
Interviews with service providers who have received a Palmerston Youth Activities Grant	To explore the grant application and administration processes, the strengths and challenges of the collaboration, the activities, and ideas for the future	13
Interviews with community leaders and other services in Palmerston	To understand views on the impacts, strengths, and challenges of the Palmerston Youth Activities	9
Observation: Attendance at Palmerston Youth Activities and collaboration meetings	To observe the collaboration processes, the youth activities, and see the various activity spaces.	5 PYA collaboration meeting's 6 youth activities
Document review	To summarize and describe materials generated by the program (meeting minutes, attendance sheets, school holiday program calendars, activity promotional materials etc).	

Participation in all aspects of the evaluation was voluntary. Gretchen Ennis from Useful Projects undertook all of the interviews and oversaw the survey distribution (both web based and at the Palmerston Market). Interviews took place in participants workplaces, youth activity spaces and the Useful Projects office.

Interview data, and the open responses (text based) in the surveys were thematically analysed using a general inductive qualitative approach (Thomas, 2006). Quantitative survey data was analysed using a simple descriptive analysis method. Observations notes and (non-identifying) photographs were taken at youth activities and these were used to contextualise the data analysis and inform the writing the report.

The document analysis involved the collection of all relevant PYA Grant Funding information, such as grant applications, attendance summaries, school holiday program calendars, meeting minutes and agendas. These were summarized into a data base and used to determine frequencies of meetings, activity types and hours. Summaries of this information are used throughout the report and can be found in full in the appendices.

Participants and the Evaluation Reference Group were provided with draft data analysis and also invited to analysis feedback sessions to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Informed consent was sought for in-depth interviews and all attempts have been made to de-identify the participants in the analysis provided. Surveys required verbal consent only as no identifying data was collected. For further detail on the evaluation methods, ethics approval, and analysis please see the appendices (D, E, G, H & I).

9.   Evaluation results

The evaluation results are organised around the five Palmerston Youth Activities Grant Funding aims:

· To support the delivery of a range of after-hours and school holiday activities in the region.
· To ensure 10–17-year old's, particularly those at risk, have accessible, safe and fun activities.
· To ensure young people are consulted about the provision of the youth activities to provide feedback and direction as to the delivery of these activities.
· To link young people attending activities with support and complementary early intervention services as needed, and
· To develop stronger and more collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders and improve coordination across the youth and related sectors.

Responses to the stakeholder questions are embedded within each of these sections. In the first instance, this includes an exploration of the importance of the PYA Grant Funding. The results conclude with learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic responses. The data used to assess each aim has is detailed in each of the five sections.

9.1   The Importance of the PYA Grant Funding

> Look around, there's so much happening here.
> This is the best place to be in Palmerston at the moment.
> I can't think of what other activities would be needed, just more of this.
>
> **(Young person at Urban Jams)**

This section brings all stakeholders views together to explore why the PYA Grant Funding is important. Three major reasons are presented and explained, using quotes from young people, organisations and community members. The PYA Grant Funding:

1. Supports and enables the provision of quality youth activities
2. Facilitates connection, collaboration and creativity between after-school and school holiday youth activity providers.
3. Provides a protective and preventative focus

9.1.1   Supporting and enabling quality youth activities

There are many organisations and groups providing great services to young people in Palmerston. Until the PYA Grant Funding, however, there was little in terms of consistent, free, safe activities for 10 to 17 year-olds after school or in the school holidays. The PYA Grant Funding has supported a range of organisations to provide activities to meet this need. These activities ensure young people have something fun and engaging to do all year round. The following quotes from Palmerston community members demonstrate this.

> "They provide safe and beneficial entertainment for Palmerston youth."
>
> "[They are] keeping kids safe, good engagement. Great people involved."
>
> "Because it makes us more productive, active and fit."
>
> "It gives my teenage son something good to do"
>
> **(Community member survey responses)**

The PYA providers pointed out that the funding allowed them to provide activities in the afternoons, evenings, and during holiday times that they were not previously able to do due to the financial costs. The value-adding to existing services is an important element of the funding, as we see in the following comment.

It is an enabler - it makes things possible - it can get things over the line.!

(PYA Grant Funded Org)

Discussions with the 40 young people who attend PYA Grant funded activities showed an overwhelming appreciation of what was on offer to them. The comments below are indicative of the young people's views and are explored further in section 9.3.

I love volleyball and basketball. I like playing and improving my skills. I like the people here.

(Young person attending PaRBA Youth Drop in Sports)

I like the art, the wellbeing art and Indigenous art, I like talking to the staff. They listen and they do the activities we ask for.

(Young person attending YMCA activities)

The PYA Grant Funding also provides access to critically important practical aspects of activities such as transport, youth-friendly security, and mechanisms for quick communication between providers and community. These elements value add to all activity providers, ensuring activities are linked to each other and the community.
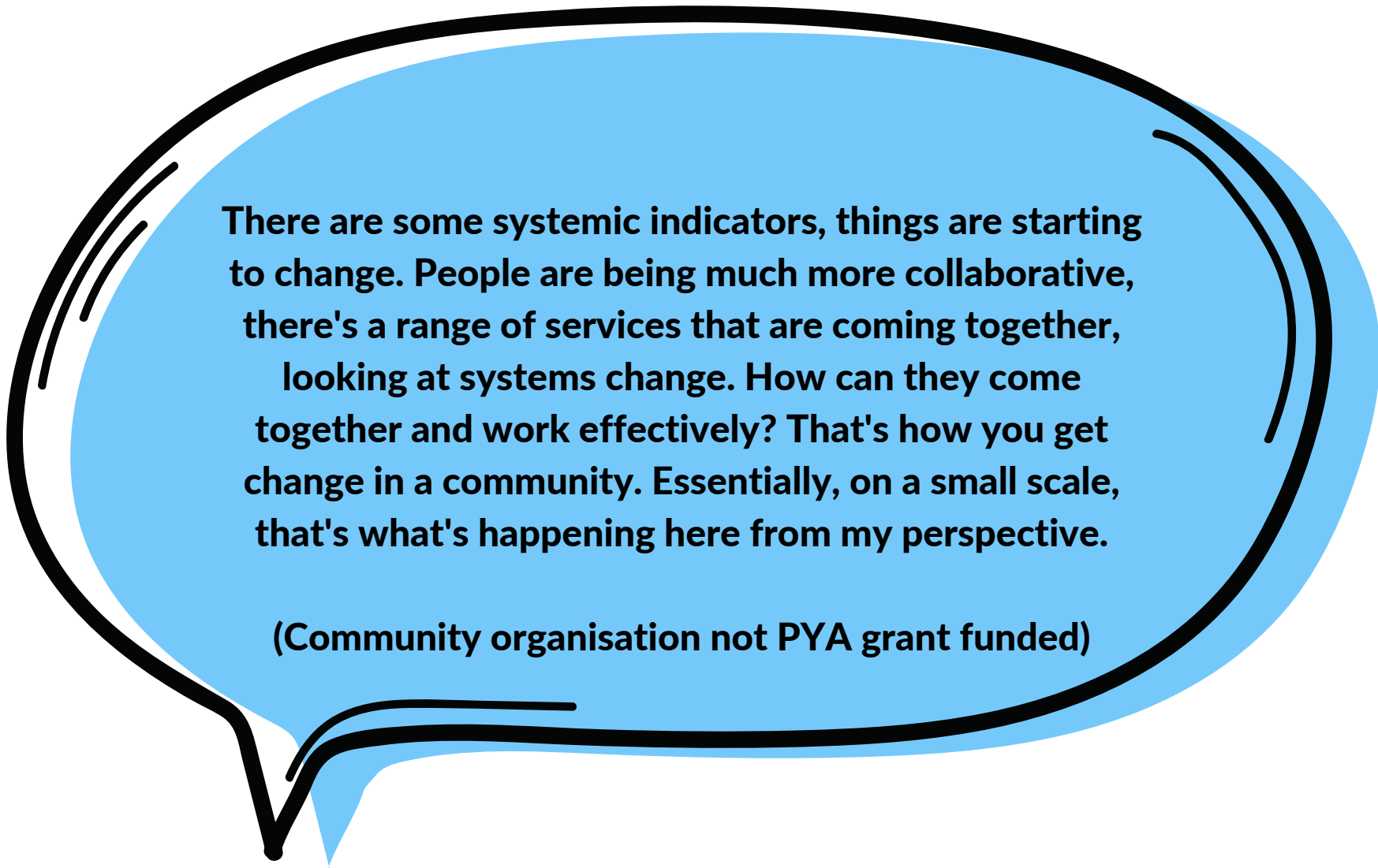
9.1.2   Facilitating connection, collaboration and creativity between youth activity providers.

The importance of having a full-time youth activities co-ordinator was clearly expressed by all activity providers and community leaders. The Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role was widely acknowledged as a critical resource which helped bring diverse stakeholders together to ensure the development and implementation of activities after school and in the holidays.

The coordinator's expertise is so important.....bringing people together..... Having those good strong relationships and knowing what is safe and appropriate. [The coordinator] supports the community to create. It's good. It's long term practice that will create real sustainable change in the community.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

This role is also important for assisting with trouble-shooting across all providers, sharing important knowledge, information and resources, and regularly bring the funded organisations and others together in a coordination group. The PYA Grant Funding has enabled this collaboration and coordination and its importance is expressed in the following comment.

> There are some systemic indicators, things are starting to change. People are being much more collaborative, there's a range of services that are coming together, looking at systems change. How can they come together and work effectively? That's how you get change in a community. Essentially, on a small scale, that's what's happening here from my perspective.
>
> (Community organisation not PYA grant funded)

The PYA funding has also facilitated creativity among the providers through the provision of activities by organisations that may not traditionally have been engaged in the prevention and early intervention youth workspace.Organisations focused on areas such as music production, the arts, sports and recreation have demonstrated a collaborative focus by moving into the space of young people 'at risk'. This collaboration and creativity has resulted in some great options for young people. The following quote demonstrates this well.

> It's been really collaborative, what I've observed is some providers that wouldn't traditionally have been in the space have stepped into the space. They may be sports or recreation based, but they've looked at how that can connect and make links with young people and strengthen their community participation and involvement. That's good because when young people can be connected to groups and sports activities it strengthens their connection to community as well.
>
> (Community organisation not PYA grant funded)

9.1.3 Providing a protective and preventative focus

The funding for the PYA is part of the Territory-wide Regional Youth Grants funding initiative by Northern Territory Government and is focused on prevention and early intervention. It is delivered through The Regional Youth Grants Program via a partnership approach with Territory Families, Housing and Communities (Community Engagement) and Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet (Regional Programs).

As can be seen throughout this report, young people in Palmerston now have consistent access to safe, engaging activities after school and in the school holidays. These activities are staffed by workers and volunteers who participants see as trustworthy mentors. Young people have access to nutritious food, safe spaces, caring adults and transport home. Each of these factors come together to provide a protective and preventative layer of support for young people in Palmerston.

The ways in which the PYA Grant Funding contributes to this supportive environment is detailed here, using the words of young people, organisations and community leaders, and community members.

Supporting organisations to provide a range of places for young people to be.
The PYA funding helps services to provide activities that assist in keeping young people occupied in meaningful ways. This in turn helps to lessen the amount of time young people might be spending in other locations where they may not be as welcomed or more likely to make negative choices. Quite simply, there was a strong view among community members that free, consistent youth activities keep young people out of trouble by providing good places to go and quality things to do.

> If they are in the Rec Centre they aren't on the street.
>
> Good kids turn into good adults (usually!), and some kids need help to find ways to be "good". Holiday programs can be an opportunity.
>
> **(Community member's comments)**

The interviews with organisations and community leaders also confirm that this funding is essential for improving many young people's lives in Palmerston. The following quotes demonstrate this.

> Having been on this journey for a few years, it is essential. We know when there are diversional activities it's a protective factor for young people - preventing escalating in youth justice or homelessness…. I think the way the youth activities grants have reinvented youth activities in Palmerston, I think there's some real ingredients to take from it
>
> **(Community organisation – not PYA funded)**

> The activities are something that's needed…….It gives us the chance to mentor young people. It's almost a preventative to anti-social behaviour. It's important for young people's growth, that socialising. But the safety, the food - that underlies everything.
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

Supporting activities that help families

The availability of free activities can help families by providing food, transport and safe holiday and after-school options. Excursions to the cinema, national parks, bowling, swimming, horse riding and many other activities may not be within the budget of many families. PYA Grant Funding has helped to support these activities so that families know there are always free and fun things for their young people to participate in 52 weeks a year.

The interviews revealed many stories of families who had relied on after school activities during difficult times, to provide food and safety when they were not able to. The three quotes below clearly show the importance of the activities for families and children and highlight their protective and preventative nature.

It gives people choices of things to do where there might be financial or access issues otherwise.Guides them appropriately in the right direction.

(Community Member survey response)

To me this grant is a really important thing..........The saying is 'It takes a community to raise a child' and if families aren't in a position to do that, or they drop the ball for a while - then we now have places in the community where young people can go that are safe and welcoming.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

I can get away from my parents when they are drunk.

(Young Person who responded to community survey)

Valuing young people, no matter what.

The idea of creating a 'new culture' that places a high value on young people in Palmerston was raised in interviews with service providers. This idea is extremely important. The value placed on young people was noted in terms of more 'intangible' things. This included the strengths-focused language activity providers used, the belief in young people's abilities, the dedication to generational change, the sense of hope and the creativity and focus brought to the work.

The value placed on young people was also in the practical things that the PYA funding contributes to – quality materials, good food, culturally safe security, and transport: These are all things that create a sense of being valued and cared for. Quotes from young people who attend the activities provide more insight into this idea.

They are kind and give you good food and snacks.

(Young person attending YDIS activities)

If you're hungry the staff will make you something or there's fruit. You can help with cooking the dinner. I like the food and the snacks. We made toffee apples today for Christmas, that was really good. And we did tie-dye t-shirts.

(Young person attending YMCA activities)

Almost half the young people interviewed mentioned the Larrakia Youth Bus and how they relied on it to get home from activities in the evening. Simple comments such as the one below shows that young people feel they can rely on this.

I live close so I can walk here - and I always get dropped off by the Larrakia bus.

(Young person attending YMCA activities)

Facilitating positive relationships

The power of positive, consistent and supportive relationships between young people and activity providers was noted time and time again by organisations, community leaders, community members and young people, and is backed up by research literature.   The activities the PYA Grant Funding helps to provide give young people access to positive relationships with other young people, supportive adults and mentors.   As discussed in the comment below by one service provider, relationships are the foundation of everything. They are also a cornerstone of trauma-informed practice.

I can talk to them; they help me out. I can tell them things and they can relate. They are good people

(Young person attending YDIS activities)

The staff are so kind and friendly and help you when you have a problem.

(Young person attending YDIS)

Relationships that exist for young people as a result of this funding are the key. Relationships between young people and their mentors. Mentors at YMCA, the mentors at PaRBA. Young people have access to these relationships that are very considered and careful. The work they do in thinking about this and supporting each other to maintain that posture, which is positive, welcoming and has consistent boundaries - It's such a challenge but they are always consistently welcoming and showing kindness and understanding. It's incredible, and that's the transformation.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

Community members also saw the value in young people being able to spend time with their friends in welcoming places.

> **Hanging out with friends can boost their happiness**
>
> **(Community Member survey response)**

The importance of having access to relationships with adults who are consistently being "chill" (calm, flexible and relaxed) was really important to young people and was recognised by community members as something beneficial.

> **I can sit back and relax, or I can volunteer to help out with packing things up. You can do whatever you want. It depends on how you feel that day and staff are chill with that.**
>
> **(Young person attending YMCA activities)**

> **The guys that run it are pretty chill. Kids like them, they are good activities to keep kids busy. The kids come home talking about what they did, who they hung out with..**
>
> **(Community Member survey response)**

Linking young people to services, communities and future options

One of the aims of the PYA funding is to facilitate links and referrals to services young people might need. In addition to these types of links, other important links are also being created. These include links to the community more broadly, by feeling valued and having a sense of place as well as through connections to other groups, services, businesses and the public via guest presenters, public performances and community-based activities. A connection to future options for volunteer work, links to training and to employment was also found in many of the interviews, as seen in the following comments.

> **It connects kids to their community**
>
> **(Community Member survey response)**

I would like to get a job here. There are kids who come here and volunteer and get jobs here - so you have opportunities like that.

(Young person attending YDIS)

[The activities are] Something to do for youth that helps make a community

(Community Member survey response)

9.2   Supporting the delivery of a range of after-hours and school holiday activities.

"I like making jewellery, doing tie-die, painting, socializing, games, it's just really good.'
"I liked the snakes at the Urban Jams."
"I love volleyball and basketball."
"I like talking to the staff."
"I just like to have somewhere to come."

(young people attending various PYA grant funded activities)

9.2.1   School holiday activities (December 2017 to January 2021)
The PYA Grant Funding has supported the delivery of a wide range of youth activities during each school holiday period since December 2017. This involves a average of 53 hours of activities in every week of every school holiday period. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of hours per week of PYA Grant Funded activities.

Table 3. Hours of youth activities funded by PYA - December 2017 to January 2021

School holiday Hours of Activities Funded by PYA Grant				
Holiday Period		total hours PYA funded	Weeks	av hours per week
14 December 2017	2 February 2018	222	6	37
13 April 2018	21 April 2018	66	1	66
2nd July 2018	21 July 2018	190.5	3	64
1 October 2018	13 October 2018	118	2	59
15 December 2018	26 January 2019	273	6	46
15 April 2019	20 April 2019	58.5	1	59
29 June 2019	20 July 2019	190	3	63
30 September 2019	12 October 2019	125	2	63
15 December 2019	26 January 2020	265	6	44
March/April	COVID	0		
27 June 2020	18 July 2020	243.5	3	81
26 September 2020	10 October 2020	133	2	67
18 December 2020	30 January 2021	280.5	6	47
Total PYA funded holiday hours		2,165	41	53

Activities have been provided by a wide range of organisations, including local government, non-government organisations and private service providers. This has ensured variety in activity type to include activities as diverse as music creation, dance and circus workshops and performances, horse riding, basketball, volleyball, excursions, visual arts and crafts, drone workshops, first aid training, family dinners and streetball events.

There have been some 'cornerstone' activity providers involved from the outset. The activities they provide have become part of the social fabric for young people during school holidays in Palmerston. These include:

YMCA - 'chill out breakfast' and daily activities program.
Every Monday to Friday of the school holidays, the YMCA 'up top' in the Palmerston City Centre, provides a free breakfast. From 9.30am to 11.00am young people can come along to enjoy food and a comfortable space to just chill out. YMCA youth workers are available to talk and assist as needed.

Each weekday from 11am to 3pm, a further range of activities are provided. This includes options for arts and crafts, cooking, indoor and outdoor games, visits from community mentors, and other activities that are suggested by the young people that come along. Lunch is provided, and lots of space to play, relax and watch movies or listen to music.

An excursion is organised every week, and young people get free transport, food and entry to activities such as ten-pin bowling, trampolining, ice skating, swimming and other outdoor recreational activities.

Kids v Cops Youth Week Event - The Y Uptop

THE Y UPTOP PRESENTS:

KIDZ VS COPZ

BASKETBALL GAME

THURSDAY - 15th APRIL 2021

11.30am - 2.30pm

Youth Drop In Sports (YDIS) - Palmerston Recreation Centre

Roxie and Quinton - Good Dog Therapy Dogs at YDIS

Palmerston Youth Centre

PaRBA – Youth Drop In Sports

Youth Drop-in Sports (YDIS) runs each Monday to Thursday of the school holidays from 3pm to 5pm, with special events on Friday evenings to 9pm, and some Saturday activities. Despite the name, it's about much more than sport. YDIS provides many different activities as well as snacks, drinks and meals for young people. Staff are on hand at all times. Craft-making, tabletop games, tik-tok dance-offs, pizza-making, and bubble soccer are an example of just some of the activities that have been provided.

Artwork: Miss Polly - Palmerston Senior College

Youth Drop in Sports - PaRBA

Friday night activities often involve an invitation to families with 'Family Feed Fridays' where burgers and pizza are on offer. YDIS also supports Urban Jams nights (see next page)

City of Palmerston – Urban Jams

Urban Jams happens six times a year at the Palmerston Recreation Centre and is a celebration of all things street culture. Hip hop music, breakdance, street art, sports, food and more are provided to 150 to 200 young people at each event. Events have a different 'hot topic', where young people can informally connect with local support services or resources. Urban Jams is delivered on a monthly basis during the wet season from October to April.

Events provide opportunities for young people to create, socialise, perform, learn and just chill. There are opportunities for young people to volunteer with event organising and promotions, which provides supportive opportunities for skill development and work experience. Urban Jams provides young people with a great evening of engaging activities, along with linkages to mentors and connections to community.

Urban Jams - City of Palmerston

Urban Jams - City of Palmerston

Larrakia Nation – Young Mulliga's & Cudgeries

Since December 2017 Larrakia Nation has worked in consultation with young people and in collaboration with other services to deliver activities including Young Mulliga's and Cudgeries and other culturally rich and engaging activities to young people and their families in Palmerston. Young Mulliga's and Cudgeries engage 10–17-year-olds in school holiday activities that embed culture through arts, crafts, music, dance, cooking, stories and games.


Larrakia Nation – Youth Bus

Ensuring young people have safe transport to and from activities has been a key component of the PYA Program.   This has been provided by Larrakia Nation through their 10-seater youth bus service. When PYA providers saw an increase in attendance, transport for young people also had to increase. A Coaster bus with more capacity and additional staff have been required over busy holiday periods. Larrakia Nation Youth Bus staff have developed good relationships with the young people they transport and have strong knowledge of family and community networks and issues and resources. All this comes together to create a safe transport service for Palmerston youth.

A wide range of diverse activities

The activities detailed above are some examples some of those on offer during school holidays. While they have been the cornerstone activities, many others have been offered over the past few years. The mix of school holiday activities funded by PYA grants can be seen in the following graph (further detail at Appendix D). Food was provided at 565 school holiday activities over the three years.

Figure 2: PYA funded activity types by their frequency
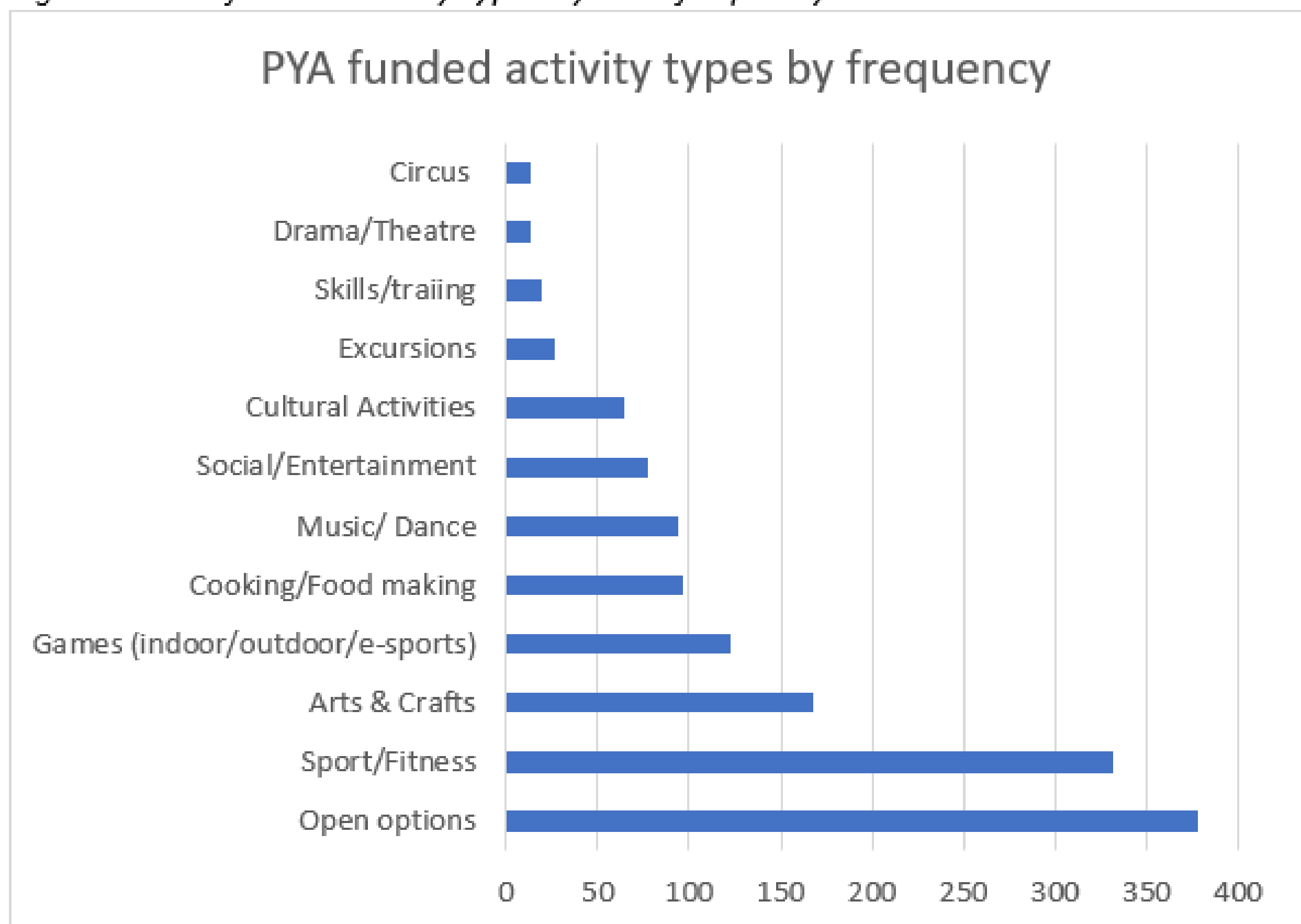
Larrakia Bus Services

9.2.2 After-school activities

There have been a range of different after-school activities funded by the PYA grants, however Youth Drop-In Sports (YDIS) and YMCA's Girls and Boys Nights have become the most long-term. The PYA grant funding has ensured there are activities for young people every day after school during term time. These include the following core activities:

Youth Drop in Sports

PaRBA have been funded by the PYA grants to run YDIS programs since the transition grants in December 2017. PaRBA started out as a community sports association that supports young people to engage in basketball, but has grown along with Palmerston's youth activities, to become a cornerstone of youth engagement in Palmerston. PaRBA's YDIS program offers a Monday to Thursday 'drop-in' at the Palmerston Recreation Centre, from 3pm to 5pm, along with Friday and Saturday night activities from 5pm to 9pm.

As with the School Holiday YDIS, young people can engage in a variety of activities in this space, include arts and crafts, games, dance and places to relax and talk. Staff mentors are always available for conversations or simply to listen or play.

> **Youth Drop-In Sports is a really safe inclusive youth driven space where young people from 8 to 18 can participate in sport, all sorts of activities, have a feed, and access mentors or referrals if needed. It has changed a lot since the start. It's really moved from a basketball focus to a youth-driven wellbeing space.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

PaRBA have based their work with young people on evidence, embedding practice models with a strong theory of change. They have developed pathways from participant to volunteer to employee. PaRBA have supported young people on community orders with positive change as they transition from court mandated work through to employment with PaRBA . Aiming for positive generational change, PaRBA have built in ongoing evaluative and reflective practices which have assisted in smoothing their transition from a sports focus to a holistic youth development one.

Youth Drop in Sports - PaRBA

YMCA Girls Night/Boys Night

YMCA's Palmerston Youth Space, located 'up top' in Palmerston City Centre, is home to a range of drop-in and programmed activities year around. The PYA Grant Funding has facilitated YMCA to run a 'Girls Night' every Tuesday from 3pm to 7pm and a 'Boys Night' every Wednesday from 3pm to 7pm.   Girls and Boys Nights are supervised events, which involve cooking dinner, games such as handball, pool and table-soccer, music and dancing, art and craft-making.

> We get the kids in, supply dinner and activities. Sometimes we get facilitators in that could be anything from Headspace, Legal aid, people that make things like natural body lotions or fashion and beauty stuff. We do outdoor sports, indoor games and whatever the kids choose that day.
>
> (PYA grant funded organisation)

There are often special guests, such as local community leaders and past participants who bring their skills and experience back into the Youth Space to share with young people. This type of interaction can inspire young people and connect them more strongly to their community. YMCA Palmerston have a high number of local staff and strong Indigenous employment. This has been important in creating supportive links to the local community which come with the networks and knowledge that is beneficial to young people and their families.

The Y Uptop - Youth Space

Girls and Boys Nights are specifically for the same sex to spend time with their peers. It's also being culturally aware and sensitive to some of the issues within the community which the kids verbalise. We may need to get facilitators in, if' it's AOD or if its sexual health, mental health, anything to do with wellbeing. We have access to professionals to discuss and talk, again in a culturally sensitive way. They are run throughout the school term.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

9.2.3 Targeted Funding

A portion of the PYA funding is separate from the competitive grant application process. This is known as 'targeted funding' and allows the Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator to respond to the local issues and needs as they are identified. The decisions about the targeted grants are made by the Palmerston Local Action Group, which is one of the key stakeholders in the development of the Palmerston Youth Action Plan.

This funding has been used in a variety of ways including the provision of additional transport (Larrakia Nation Bus) during busy periods, youth events and special projects. Targeted funding has also been used to meet the goals in the Palmerston Youth Action Plan. City of Palmerston were funded to create a Youth Resource Card, to provide information to young people and their families about services, activities and resources in the local Palmerston community. This card was co designed by young people and distributed through schools and at places where young people meet.

The Postcards for Palmerston Project also provides an example of how target funds were used to facilitated creativity, interaction and community connection with young people during the early days of Covid 19 restrictions. Below is a postcard by Wilson aged 11.

9.3 Ensuring 10-17-year old's, particularly those at risk, have accessible, safe and fun activities.

> The staff are good, friendly. You can talk to them if you get into any trouble, you get close to them when you come here every day.
>
> **(Young person attending YMCA Girls Night)**

As long-term activity providers, the PYA grant funded activities offered by City of Palmerston, YMCA, PaRBA and Larrakia Nation were the focus of this section of the evaluation. Here we draw upon interviews with young people, activity providers and other organisations, as well as the community survey. To begin, Table 4 provides a summary of the various stakeholder's views. A deeper exploration of each of these aspects is then presented.

Table 4 – Overview of accessibility, safety and fun elements of PYA

Accessibility, safety, and fun aspects of activities Summary of all participant views			
	Young People's Voice (n=40)	**Organisations Voice (n=22)**	**Palmerston Community Voice (n=118)**
Accessible Activities	95% reported no accessibility issues. Transport and other young people's behaviour were the two issues impacting accessibility.	Barriers identified: Access to and from rural areas Lack of community awareness of activities Social issues between young people	46% did not know or were unsure about after school or school holiday activities. 52% thought transport would be an issue. 25% suggested more promotion of activities.
Safe Activities	55% - extremely safe 37.5% – very safe 7.5% - somewhat safe	PYA funding has enabled development of safe activities. Behavioural issues can arise, but these are well handled.	8.5% were concerned about safety of activities (bullying, gangs, or negative behaviours)
Fun Activities	75% s selected 'fun' as a reason they enjoyed the activities.	'fun' was identified as a key aspect of each activity.	90% thought youth activities were important for Palmerston, one of the main reason was 'fun' (25%).

9.3.1 What young people like about the activities

To explore young people's views, data from the 40 interviews with them were used. The first diagram (Figure 3) sets the scene by demonstrating 100% of participants thought the activities were 'good' or 'great'.

Figure 3:Young people's enjoyment of the youth activities they attend (n = 40)
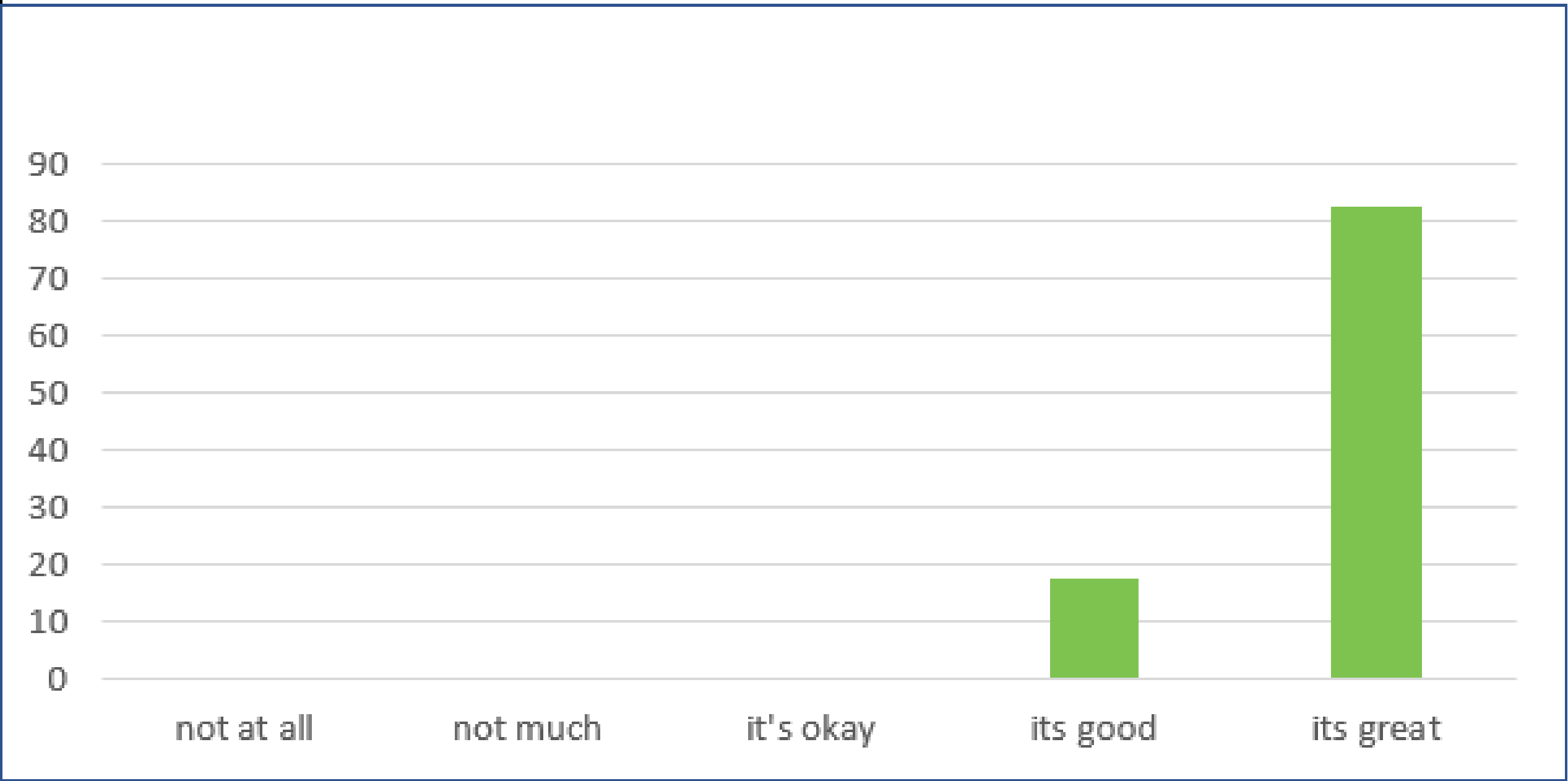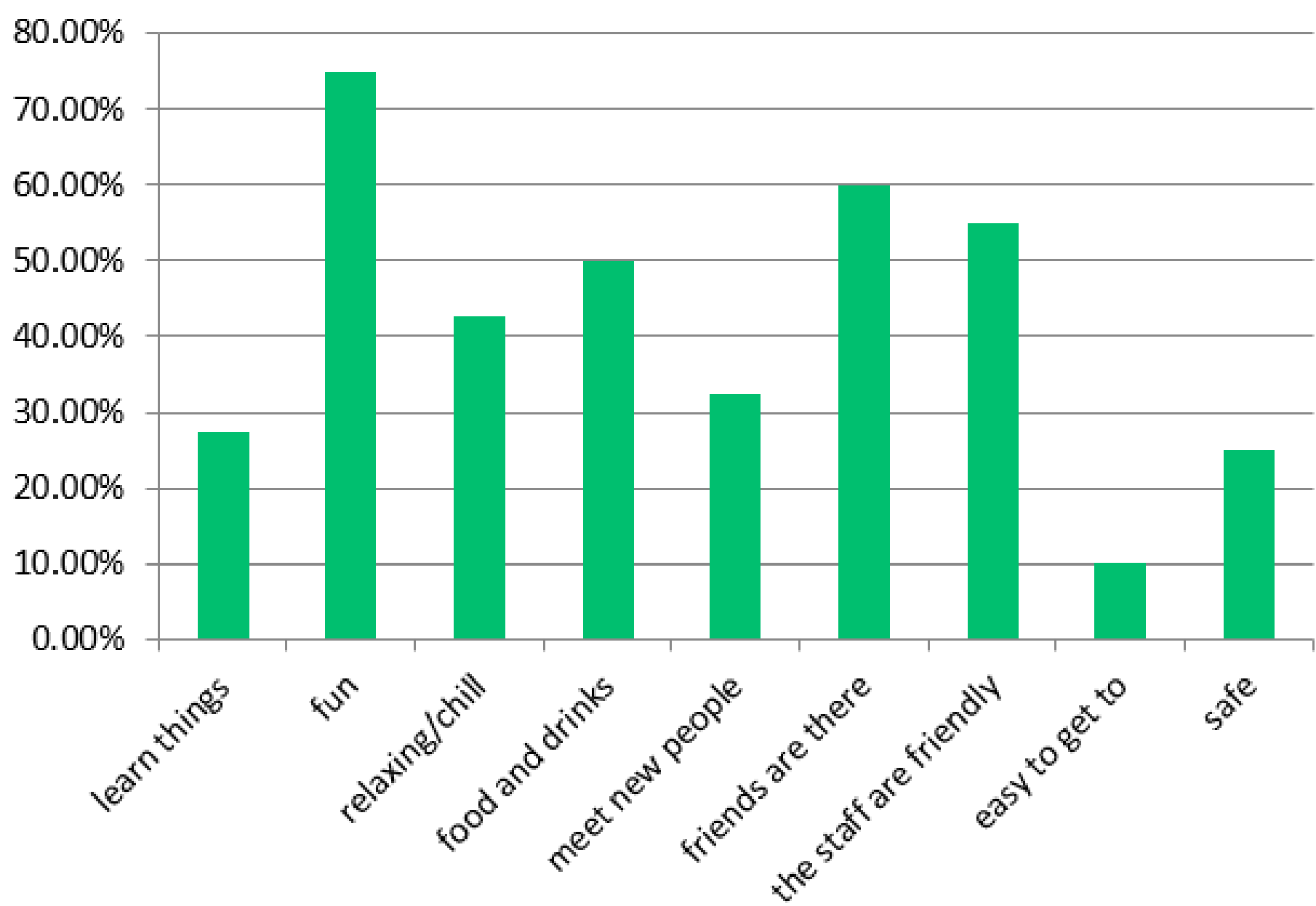
Figure 4 provides more information about what elements are enjoyable to the youth participants. Participants could select as many answers as they wanted. The most popular response was 'fun', followed by relationship-focused responses ('friends are there' and 'staff are friendly').

Figure 4: What young people like about the activities (n = 40)

Further detail about what young people like about specific activities is detailed in the boxes below. Participant quotes are in italics.

What Young People Like About Youth Drop In Sports

A great place to play basketball and volleyball, and to just chill.
- *I just like to have somewhere to come, and to play basketball, and chill.*
- *You can just chill, there are not many grown-ups. It's cool because it's airconditioned, there's food, it's a good place to be. Better than outside.*

Supportive, friendly staff
- *The staff are friendly, and you can talk to them about anything you need.*
- *The staff will always talk and play sport with you if there is no one else to play with.*
- *[Five comments about liking specific staff members]*

Links to future opportunities
- *There are volunteer opportunities. If you want to take them there is the opportunity to get skills for working here. It gets kids into doing something after school.*

Building friendship networks
- *It's good having people to talk to. I didn't know anyone when I started and now I know nearly everyone in my school and other people in the 10-12 campus. It's reassuring for me for when I go into year 10, I will know people at that campus.*

What Young People Like About YMCA Activities

Supportive, friendly staff
- *There are lots of people here who are nice to me.*
- *There are adults you can trust.*
- *[Five comments about specific staff members]*

The Activities
- *I like making jewellery, doing tie-die, painting, socializing, games, it's just really good.*
- *Doing tie-dye and painting and playing tag inside*

Playing and having fun
- *I like to play and have fun with my friends.*

Making Friends
- *I moved to Palmerston at the start of the year and I have met my friends here.*

Somewhere safe to be
- *I don't like being at my home because of family arguments so it's good I can come here and have friends and talk and have dinner.*
- *I like to get out of the house*

Food
- *The food is good, I always eat here.*
- *I like eating dinner here, especially sausage stew.*

What Young People Like About Urban Jams

Networking & Skills
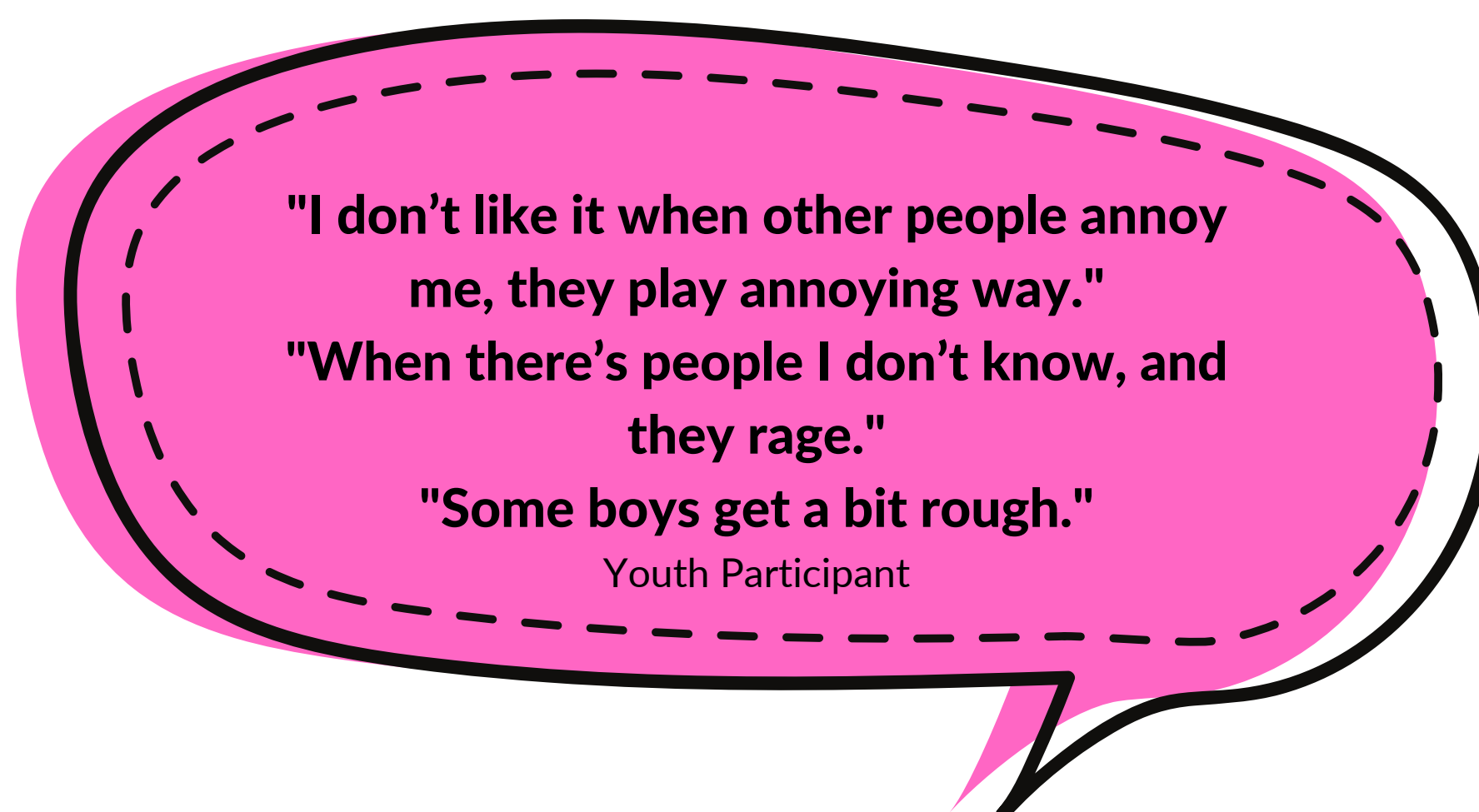- *I like to meet other people in the youth media team and I have gained work experience and skills from being involved.*
- *I really want a job in government, and this helps me build up my skills and meet people.*

Great range of activities
- *Look around, there's so much happening here. This is the best place to be in Palmerston at the moment. I can't think of what other activities would be needed, just more of this.*

9.3.2 What young people find challenging about the activities

There were very few criticisms of the activities by the young people. Only seven reported issues that were problematic for them, and these were all about the behaviour of other young people. The following quotes provide more detail:

> **"I don't like it when other people annoy me, they play annoying way."**
> **"When there's people I don't know, and they rage."**
> **"Some boys get a bit rough."**
> Youth Participant

Even though some of the participants discussed the behaviour of others, the general sense of feeling safe at the activities was strong, as we see in the following section.

Safety

The following bar graph (Figure 5) demonstrates a high level of feelings of safety while at the activities among the 40 youth participants. Over half reported feeling extremely safe. The reasons for feeling less than 'extremely safe' were linked to the comments above, where participants did not feel comfortable with other young people's behaviours.

Figure 5: How safe do young people feel at the activities (n-40)
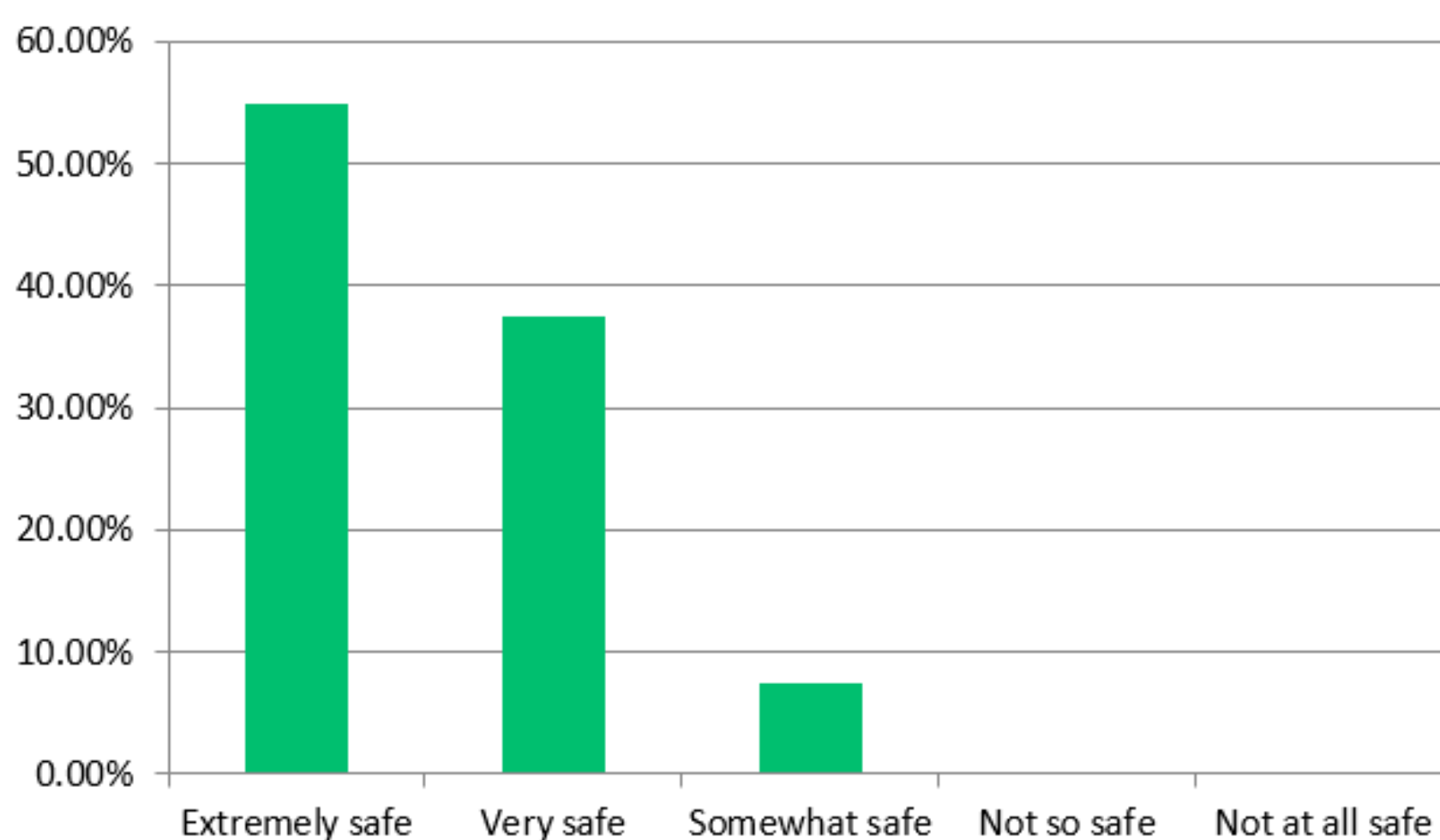
Getting to and from activities

When asked about getting to and from the activities, the following points were raised:

- Two young people said that transport was difficult for them.
- One noted safety in Palmerston was an issue for them on the street.
- Getting there: Most participants used public transport (bus) or chose to, walk, or had their parents drop them to the activity.
- Getting home: 15 young people said they always get the Larrakia bus home. Other young people said they got the Larrakia bus sometimes, with others having parents, guardians, or other family, pick them up.

9.3.3 Organisations views on activity strengths

Participants from a variety of organisations were asked about the strengths of the activities that have been funded by the PYA grant over the past three years. A summary of their views can be found below in Table 5. The following section provides some further detail on these strengths. There is resonance between the young people's views about activity strengths and those of the organisations, particularly in terms of the fun nature of activities and the importance of the staff.

Table 5: Summary of organisations views on activity strengths

Organisations views of the strengths of the activities	The staff (caring, supportive, empowering, skilled, and knowledgeable)
	The activities are fun
	Flexible and responsive activity delivery
	Supportive and empowering in working with young people
	Prevention focused & holistic
	The provision of food
	The activities help families through providing safe spaces, food, and things to do.
	Great resources for young people (airconditioned, comfortable, access to food, mentors, internet)

The staff.

All interview participants discussed the importance of activity staff and acknowledged the work being done in all of the youth spaces in Palmerston.   This resonates with young people's views, which also highlighted that the staff were a key aspect of what they liked about the activities. The following themes were raised about the staff by organisations and community leaders

- **Staff really care about young people.**
- **They know the community.**
- **They have skills and experience**

You've got to have the right people running those programs, and they have that. Young people at that age, they have to connect. It's all about relationships. It's everything. Relationships are everything. Hello! It's the key to everything.

(Non PYA funded organisation)

The mentors and leaders express the value of each and every young person in everything they do, even the smallest of things.

(PYA funded organisation)

Fun Activities

Just as the young people highlighted, the importance of the 'fun' aspect of youth activities was recognised by organisations and community leaders too. This was considered to be particularly important when young people may not have other spaces where they can 'just be kids' as the following quote points out

Our young people, because of their responsibilities, there's lots of expectations, even the stereotypes that are put on them and they need to live up to that - but they are losing their childhood. If they want to play with dolls or cars, here they can do it!

(PYA grant funded organisation)

Flexible

Being able to respond quickly to the needs of young people was considered to be really important in engaging them meaningfully.   Being flexible in your thinking, and willing to check your own assumptions about young people was also noted. The following quotes demonstrate the importance of flexibility in practice.
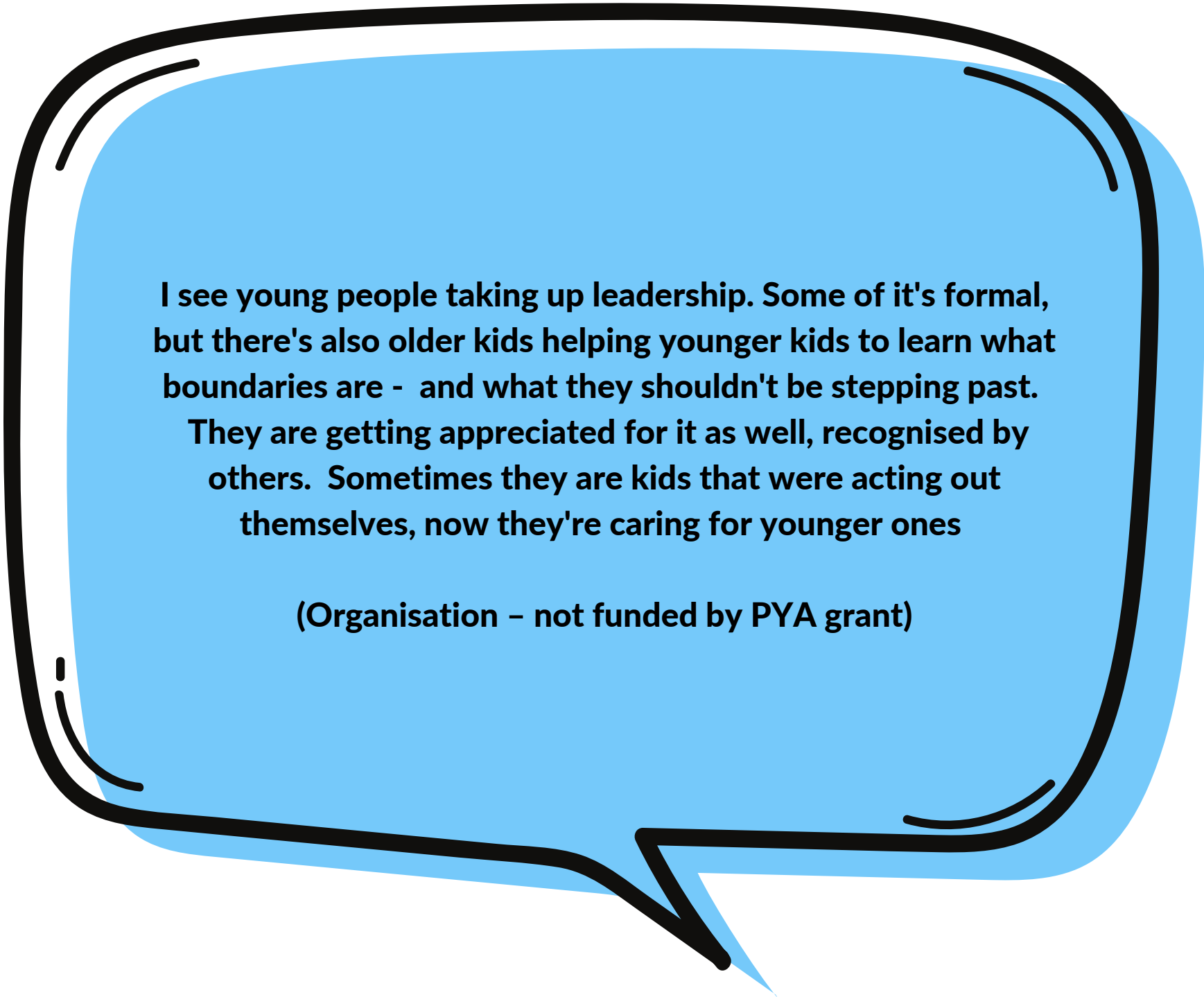
You need to be very flexible. Very flexible! You can have a whole activity planned, but some days they just want to sit in the air-con and eat some food.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

Supportive and empowering

Each participant discussed the way activities are supportive of young people's knowledge, ideas and input. They strive to work in ways that empower young people.

I see young people taking up leadership. Some of it's formal, but there's also older kids helping younger kids to learn what boundaries are - and what they shouldn't be stepping past. They are getting appreciated for it as well, recognised by others. Sometimes they are kids that were acting out themselves, now they're caring for younger ones
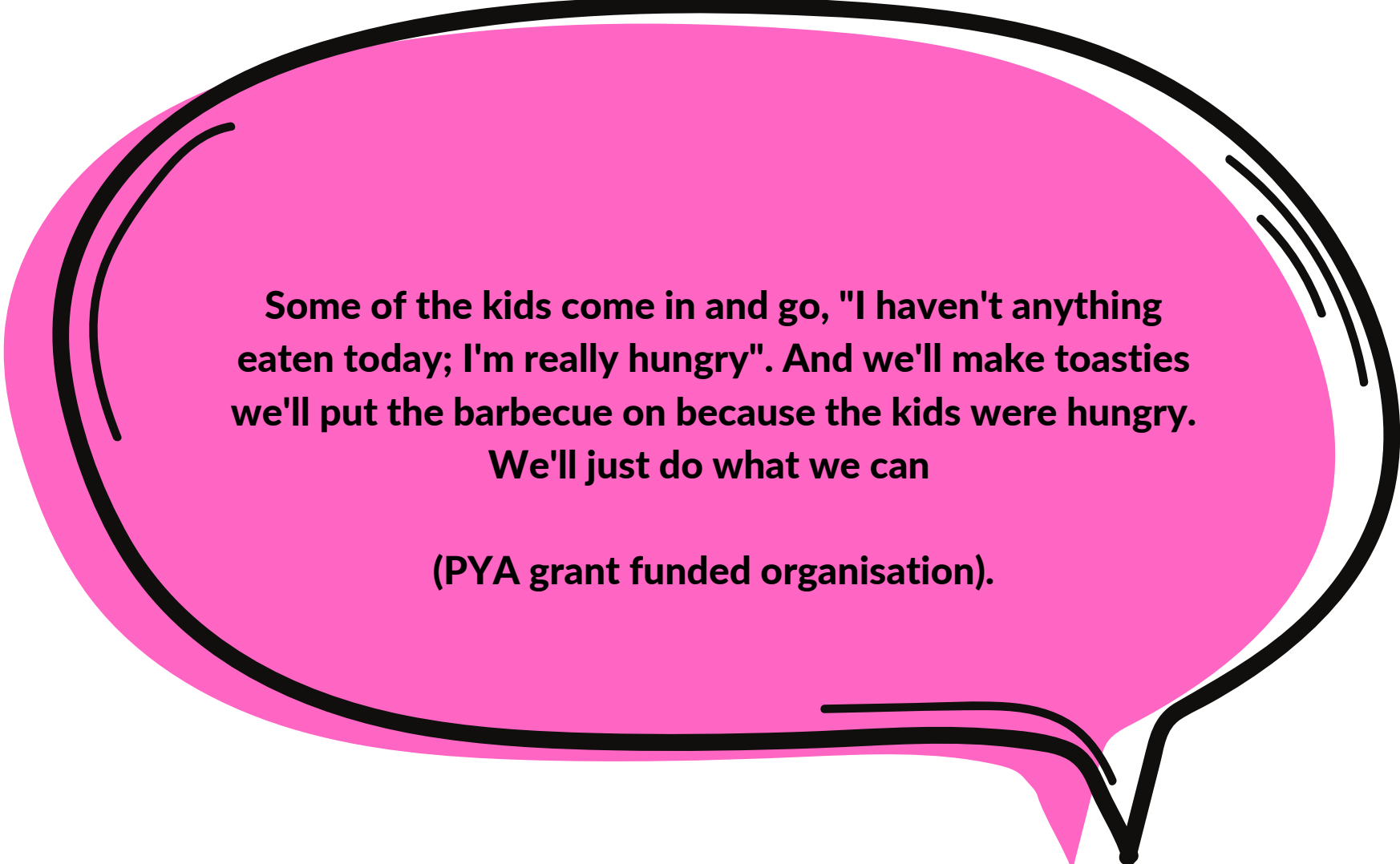
(Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)

Prevention Focused and Holistic

There was a clear focus on holistic and preventative approaches at the collaboration level and the individual activity level.   This was expressed in terms of creating safety, consistency and connection, all important elements of trauma-informed practice.

Provision of food

Food was considered to be vitally important to the activities. Many participants felt the food provided during activities was a key part of some young people's daily food intake. Being able to provide a basic necessity such as food in a non-labelling way is important in reducing stigma and helps connect young people and staff. The following quote provides an indication of how important this is.

> Some of the kids come in and go, "I haven't anything eaten today; I'm really hungry". And we'll make toasties we'll put the barbecue on because the kids were hungry. We'll just do what we can
>
> (PYA grant funded organisation).

Good for Families

Participants talked about the way in which the activities have been good for many families in Palmerton. At times when things are not going well for a family, or when adults are required to work long hours, the activities can be relied upon to provide a safe space, food and caring adults.

> Some kids get dropped off early in the morning and don't go home until the last program finishes at night. But if those carers or parents needed respite, then what a good thing that we've given them that. ...... [H]ow amazing is it that there is somewhere for them to be, that we can do that? There is food, adults that care, safety, activities. Those kids get supported through that.
>
> (PYA grant funded organisation)

Access to wi-fi and other resources

Ensuring young people have access to a comfortable lounge, air-conditioning, TV, wi-fi and other resources was considered a benefit of the PYA activities. These provisions help young people to feel valued and welcomed as community members. They also help create space for quiet time when young people need some time out.
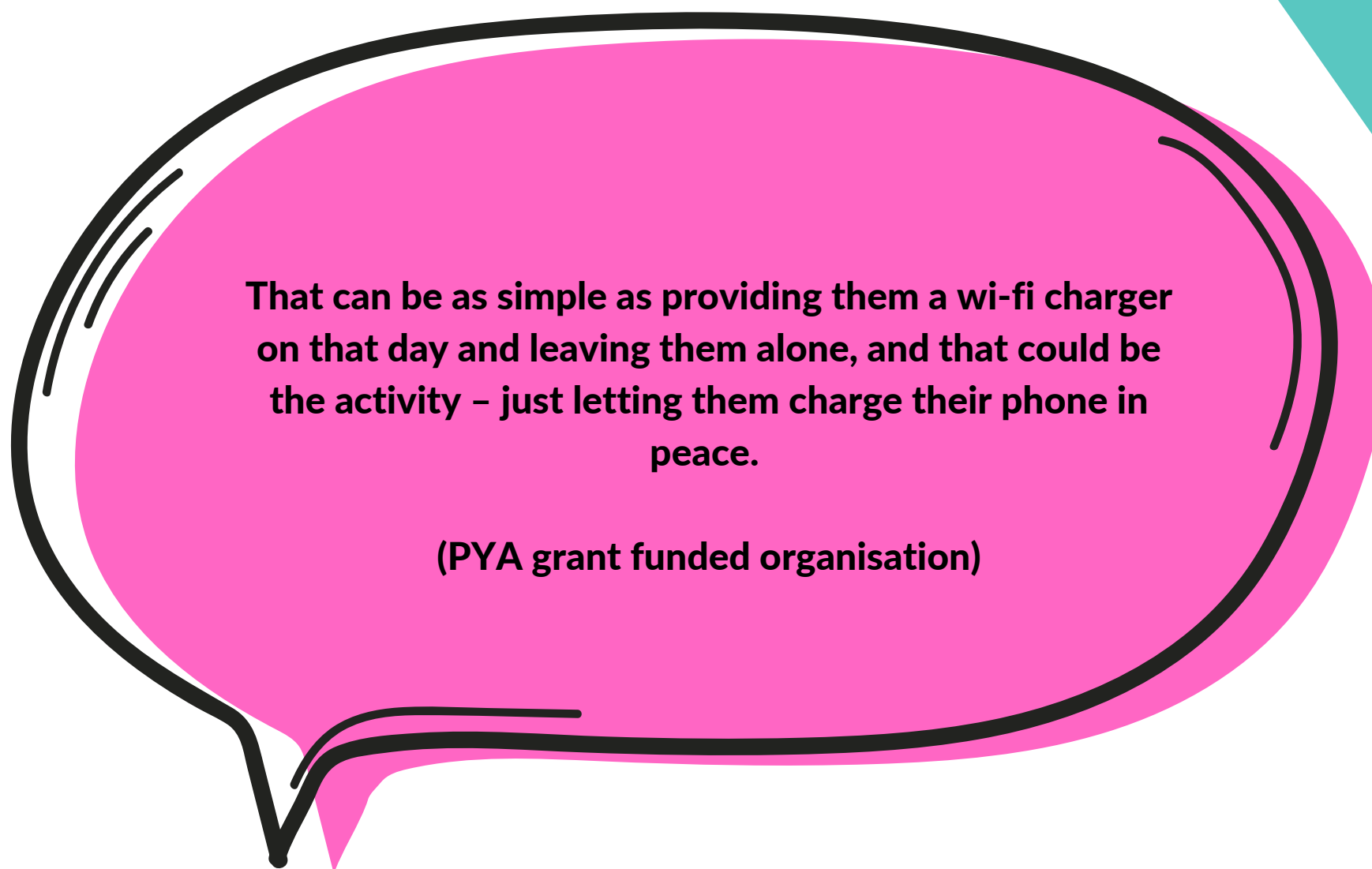
That can be as simple as providing them a wi-fi charger on that day and leaving them alone, and that could be the activity – just letting them charge their phone in peace.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

9.3.4   Organisations views on activity challenges

When asked about the challenges or difficulties associated with the activities, organisations and community leaders identified three issues. These are summarised in Table 6, and explained in further detail below.

Table 6: Summary of organisations views of activity challenges

| Challenges in the provision of Activities (Organisations View)	Access and engagement issues
	Behavioural issues
	Type, timing and location of activities

Access & Engagement Issues

A range of issues in the area of access and engagement issues were raised. These were:

- Age range: people who are younger and older than 10-17 target age wanting to access activities.
- Difficulty engaging 15 – 17 years old's.
- Transport issues for rural young people
- Ensuring equal access for young people with a disability
- At-risk and general population - Where should the focus be?

Participants raised the question of where to focus attention in terms of promotion of activities.   This was often linked to the meaning of 'at-risk', who decides that, and what the implications are for delivery of activities. The tensions that can arise in working out the balance of participants is articulated well an activity provider in the following quote.
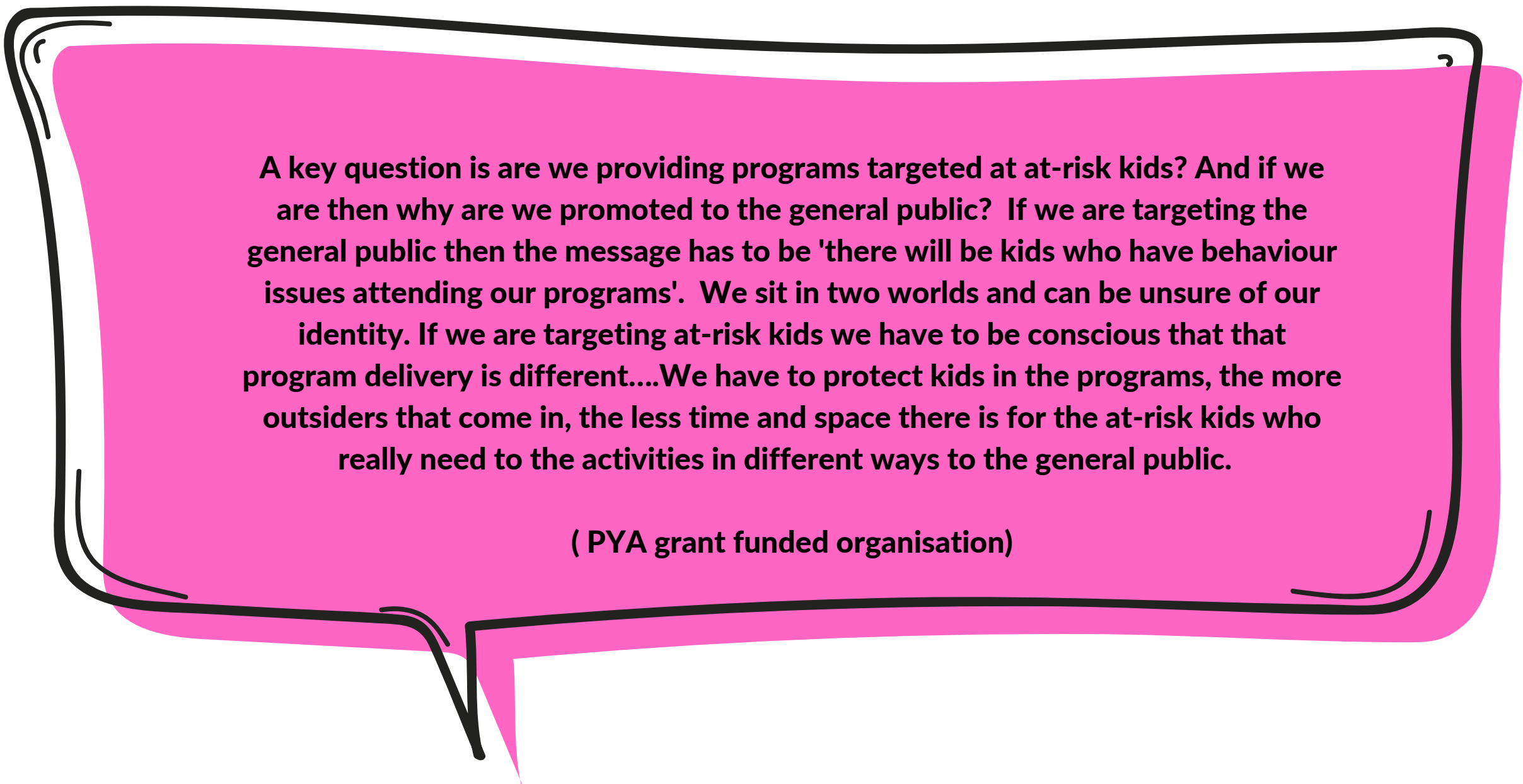
A key question is are we providing programs targeted at at-risk kids? And if we are then why are we promoted to the general public? If we are targeting the general public then the message has to be 'there will be kids who have behaviour issues attending our programs'. We sit in two worlds and can be unsure of our identity. If we are targeting at-risk kids we have to be conscious that that program delivery is different....We have to protect kids in the programs, the more outsiders that come in, the less time and space there is for the at-risk kids who really need to the activities in different ways to the general public.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

Challenging behaviours

While young people's behaviour was generally manageable at the activities, there are times when incidents of aggressive, bullying or otherwise concerning behaviour can occur. The issue of violent or 'anti-social' behaviour was raised by some participants as a challenge for the activities. This was not only a challenge in regard to dealing with young people engaging in the behaviour, but in ensuring those around them were okay, as well as grappling with community perceptions. This was discussed in terms of three main areas:

- Risk of violence – Managing young people who may be acting out, upset and violent in the activity spaces
- Sense of safety – Ensuring all participants, families and community feel safe in the activity spaces
- Negative media/community commentary about young people, youth spaces and behaviour.
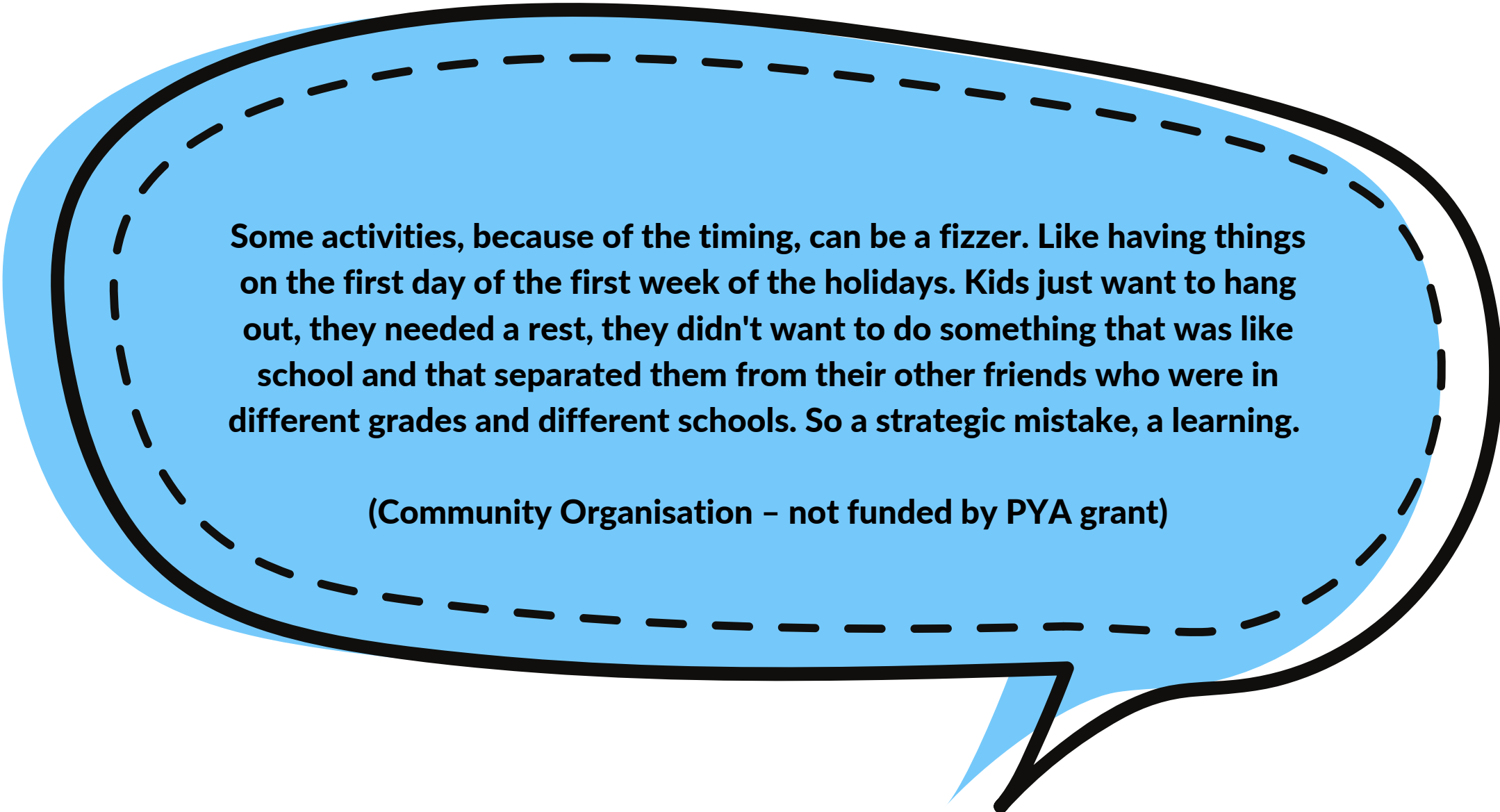
> **With the Friday family feeds we are very open about it - we say you are welcome to come in and be with the kids but you are not allowed to make judgements on behaviour. Children have the right to misbehave in this space, they have the right to act-out, but let us deal with it. It is why we exist.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

Type, timing and locations of activities

At times, activities may not 'hit the mark' for young people. This could happen when the facilitators' delivery style or the activity content was not the right fit for the 10-17 year old target group. Issues around the activity location, and the timing or scheduling of events could also impact attendances. The following comment elaborates.

> **Some activities, because of the timing, can be a fizzer. Like having things on the first day of the first week of the holidays. Kids just want to hang out, they needed a rest, they didn't want to do something that was like school and that separated them from their other friends who were in different grades and different schools. So a strategic mistake, a learning.**
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

9.3.5 Organisations views on participation barriers and enablers

Organisations and community leaders recognised a number of barriers to participation. Importantly, they also identified that relationships between young people, with service providers and the community more broadly were an important

enabler for participation. Ensuring young people's voices were at the forefront of activity planning and delivery was also seen to be important for engagement. Utilizing the existing networks of young people and services was also considered a good way to access potential participants.   Table 7 provides an overview of the barriers, enablers and ideas that organisations identified in relation to young people's engagement in Palmerston Youth Activities.

Table 7: Engagement barriers, enablers and ideas from Organisations

Organisations/Community Leaders Views on PYA Engagement of Target Group	Barriers	Location (hard to access from rural areas)
		Awareness/understanding of activities (What is on and who is it for?)
		Social Issues/disagreements between young people
		Disability access
		Age range issues (feeling too old or young to attend some activities or events)
		Mismatches (events, activities, venues, or facilitators not well matched to particular groups of young people.
	Enablers	Relationships (between young people, organisations, and community)
		Encourage youth voice/leadership in activities
		Increase connections through existing networks
	Ideas	Splitting activities by age group
		Outreach into places where young people already are
		Young people leading activities

I think some parents may be a little afraid. The expectation is that we work with young people that have extreme behaviours, and they do show it out in the wider community, and I think some parents are not allowing their children to access our space. Without having a meaningful understanding of what we actually do in this space - what we tolerate and what we don't tolerate.

(PYA funded organisation)

Artwork: Miss Polly - Palmerston Senior College
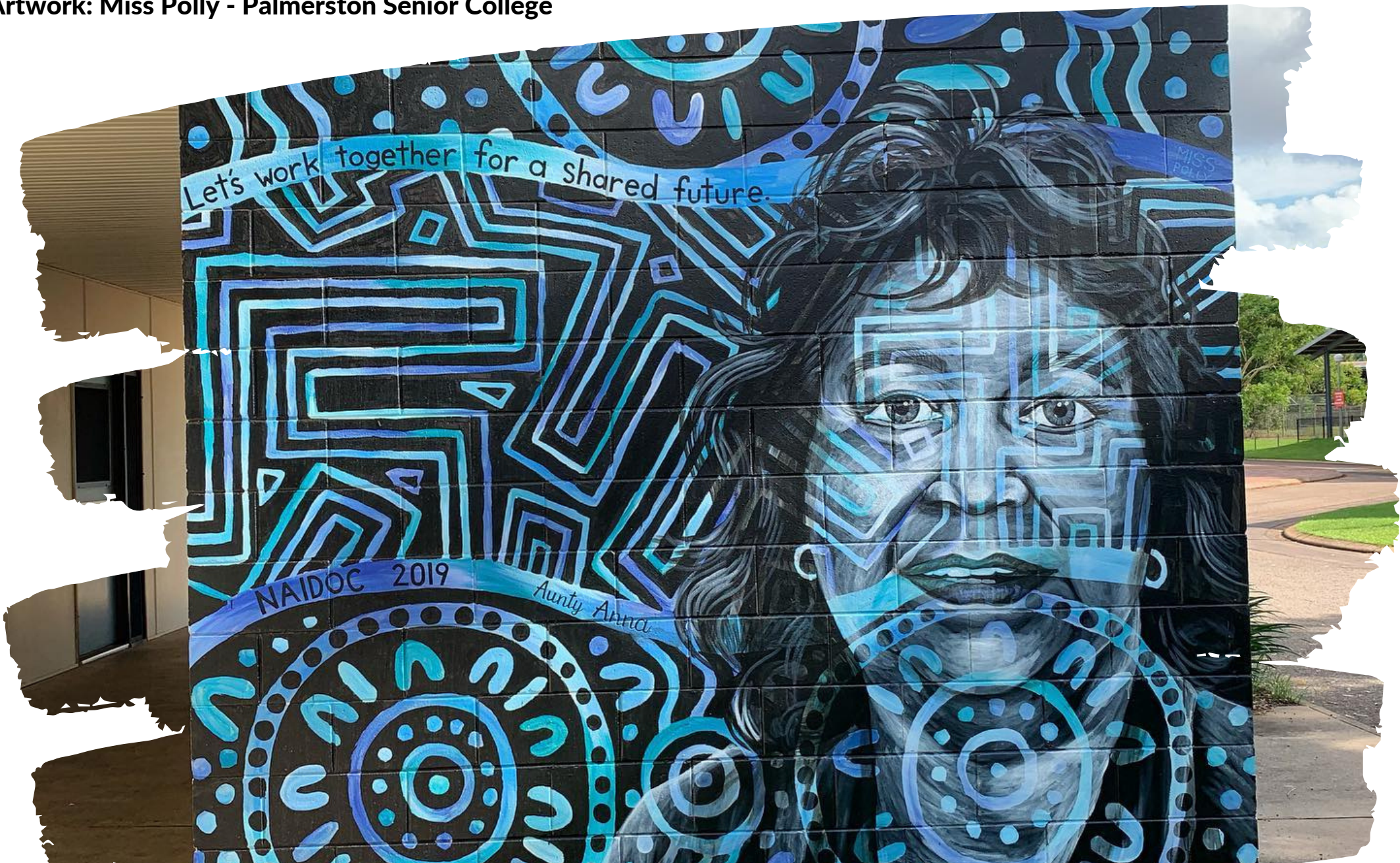
9.3.6 Community Views about Palmerston Youth Activities

The following analysis was drawn from the Community Survey. 118 Palmerston residents responded to the survey, however not everyone answered all questions. The number of people that answered each question is noted as the '(n =)'.

Community Awareness of PYA Activities

The following graph (Figure 6) provides an overview of the after-school activities that people in Palmerston are aware of. Participants could select as many as they knew about. The graph demonstrates that 35% of those who answered this question didn't know about, or were unsure about, the activities.

Figure 6: Community awareness of after-school activities in Palmerston for 10-17 year old's. (n = 118)
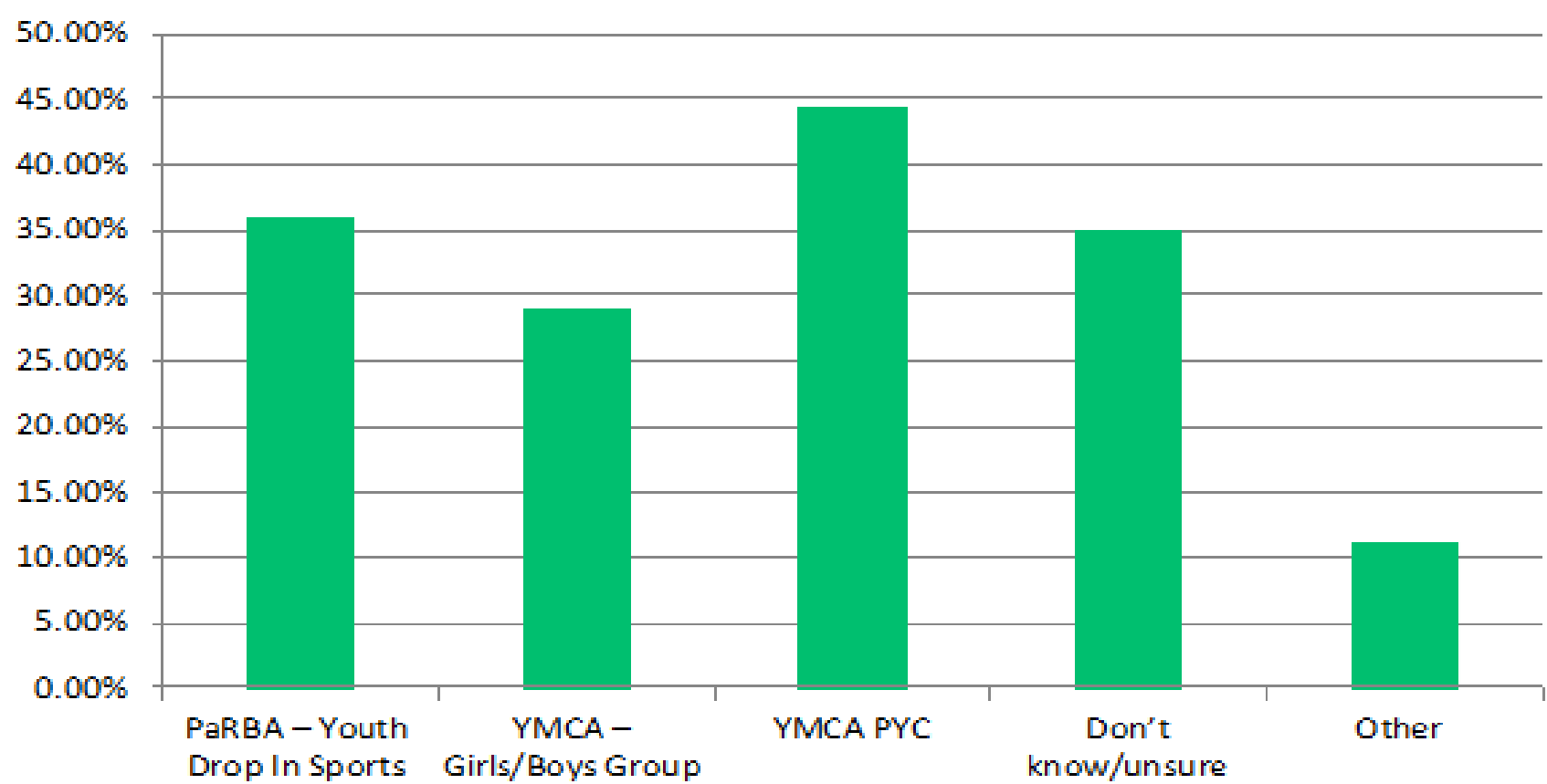
Participants were also asked how they had heard about the after-school activities. Figure 7 shows that for more than half of those who answered, it was via 'word of mouth'.

Figure 7: How people heard about after-school activities (n=72)
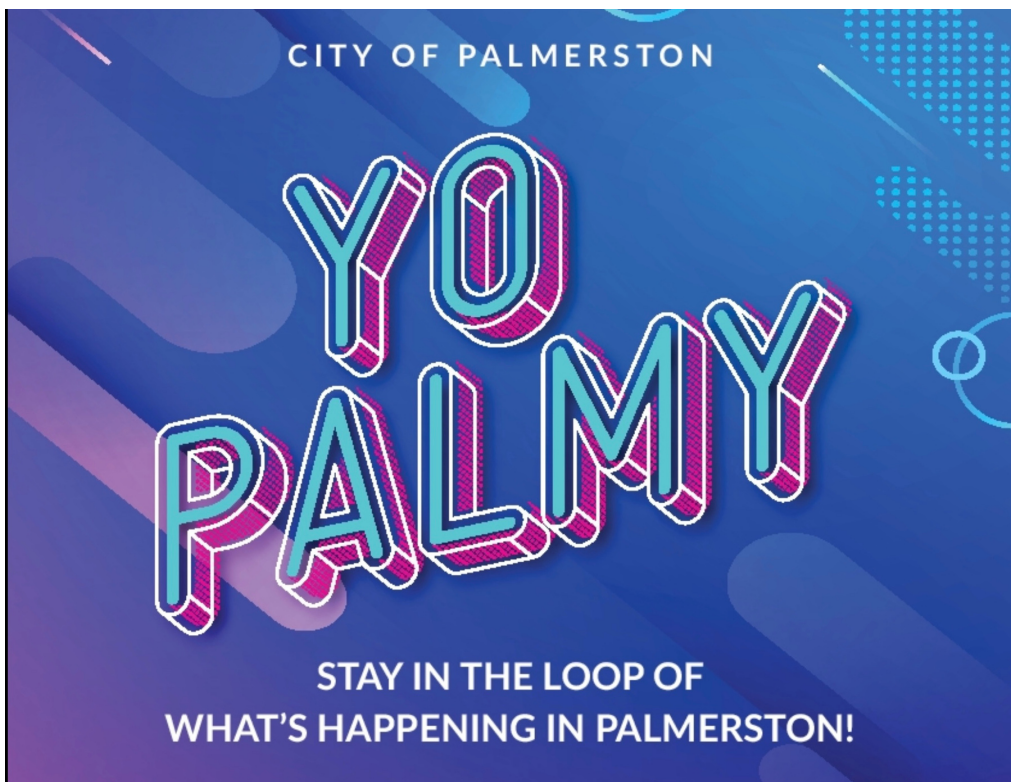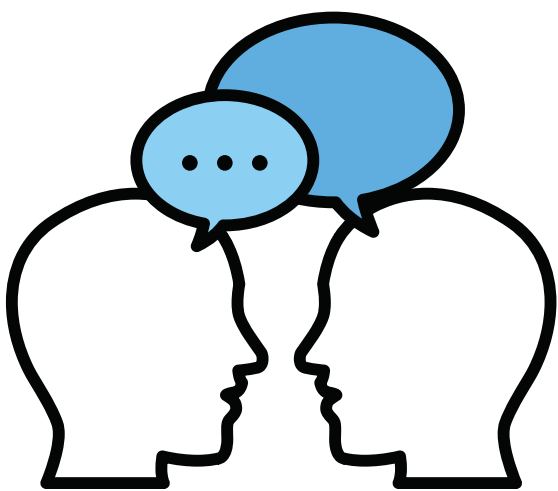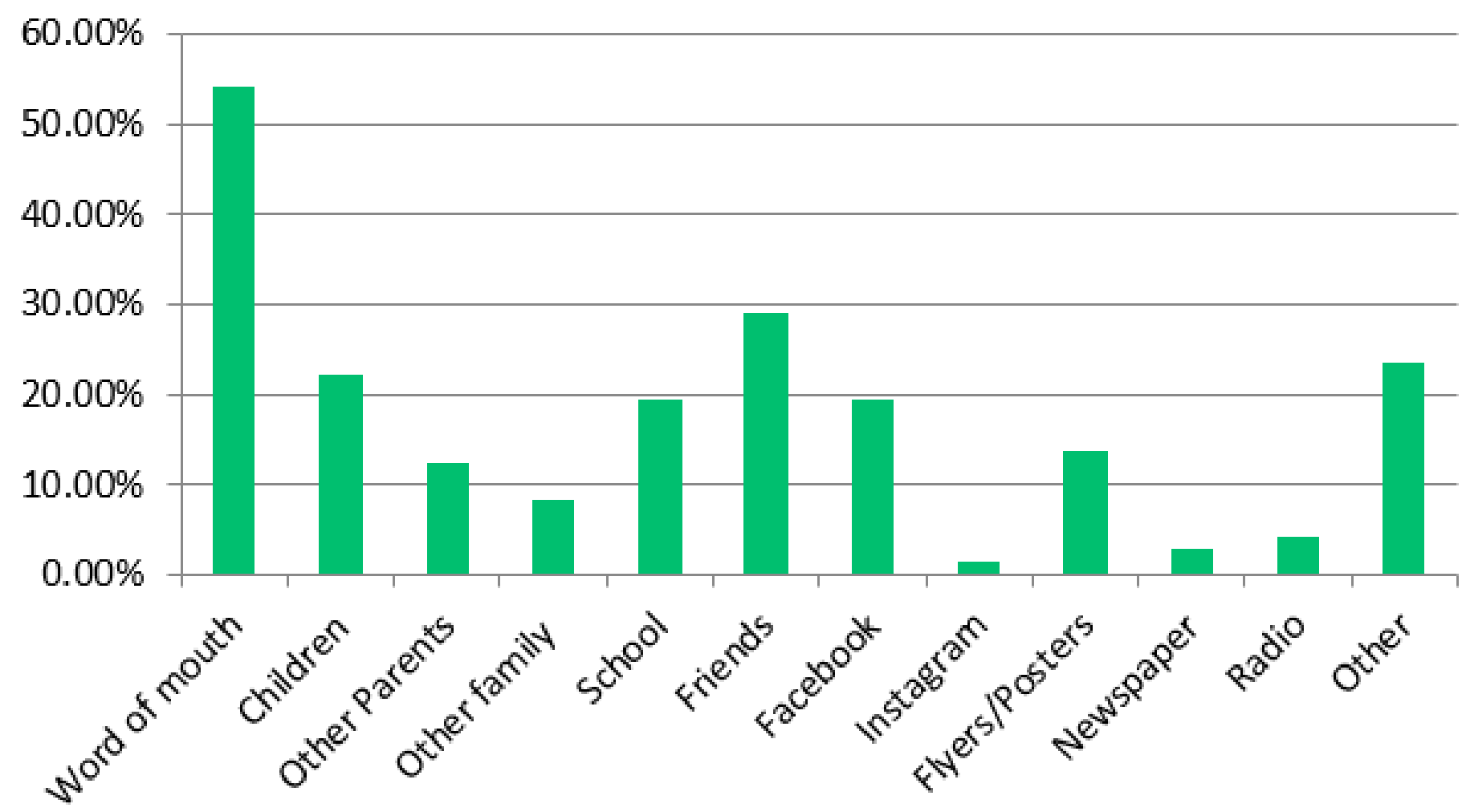
Awareness of PYA Grant Funded school holiday activities had a similar amount of community awareness, with 37% of community survey participants reporting no awareness. Figure 8 shows the awareness levels of each the activities.

Figure 8: Community awareness of school holiday activities in Palmerston for 10 to 17 year old's. (n=112)
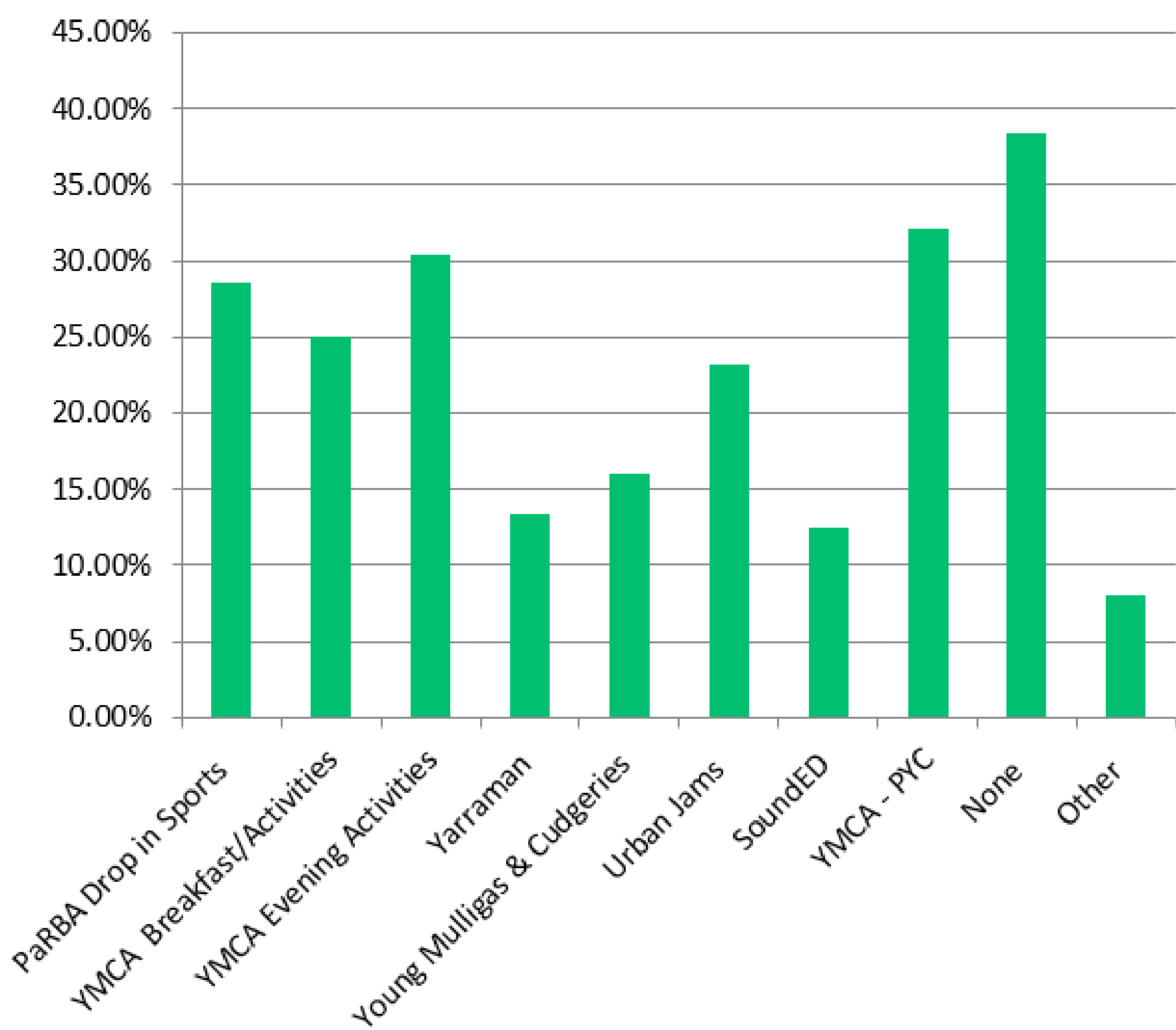
What makes it hard for young people to attend activities? (n=90)

Community survey participants were asked about any barriers to engaging in Palmerston Youth Activities they were aware of. They reported the following issues (with the number of people who made this comment is included in brackets):

- L ack of transport/no one to take them (47)
- Lack of family or social support/encouragement (16)
- Peer pressure/stigma about activities (9)
- Scared/anxious/shy/fear (10)
- Bullying/gangs/Behaviour concerns (8)
- Lack of knowledge about activities (9)
- Money (6)
- Parents work/other parent commitments (5)
- Weather – too hot (2)
- Lack of time/other things on (3)
- Location/distance (2)
- Laziness (1)
- Boring activities (2)
- Not speaking English (1)

When asked to consider what would help young people attend a school holiday or after school activity, 94 community members raised the following ideas.

More advertising/promotion of events and activities (n =24).

Ideas include: School information sessions/notes home, shopping centre notice boards/posters, letter box drops, television and radio commercials, public bulletin boards, Instagram, facilitating school excursions to try activities. As the following quote demonstrates, more detail about specific events would also be helpful in deciding whether to attend or not.

> **More information. Hard to know whether to go to something if you don't know a lot about it especially if you're an anxious person. The more you know what it's about, you can decide if you want to try.**
>
> **(Community survey participant)**
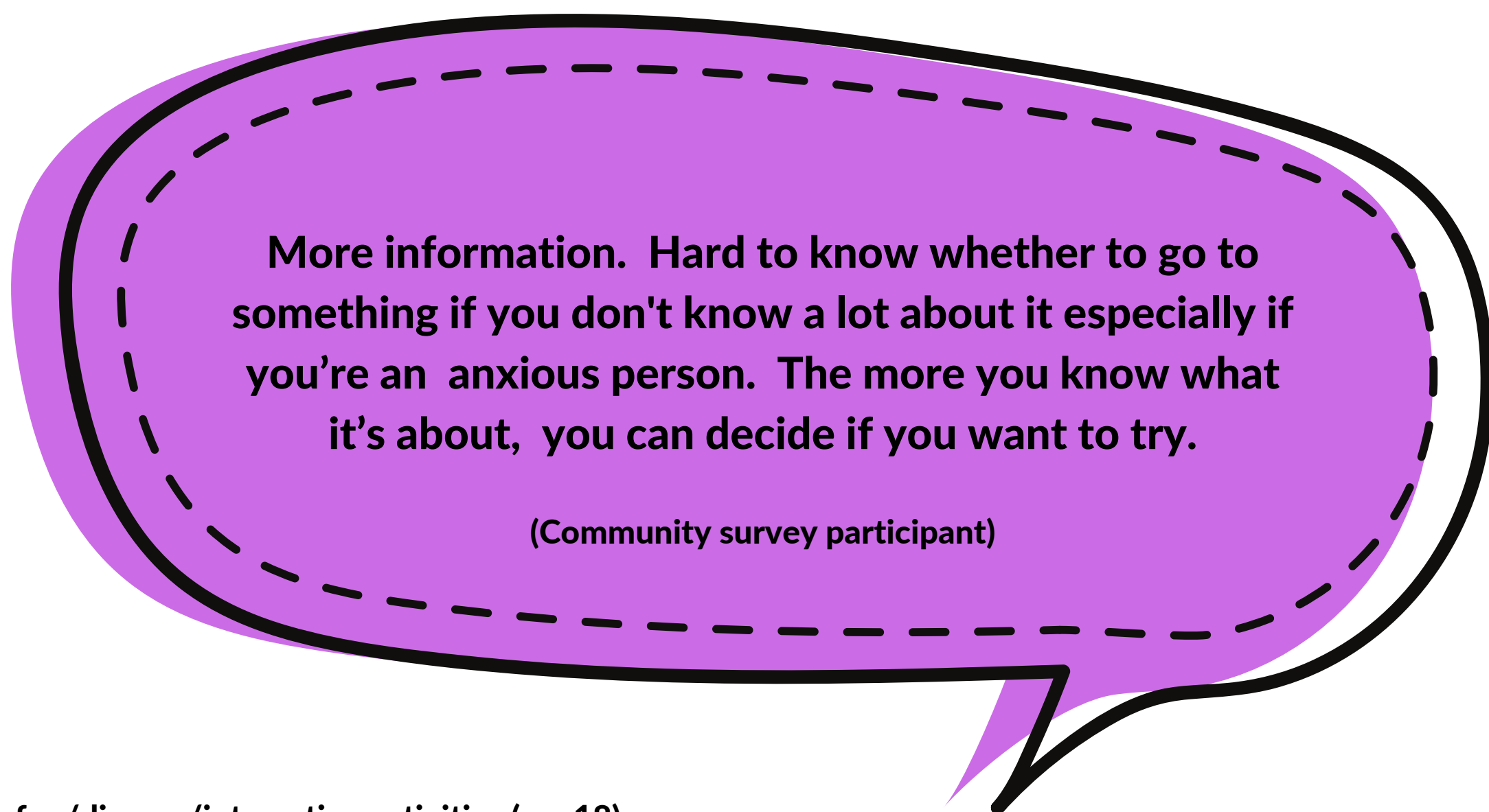
Ensuring fun/diverse/interesting activities (n = 18).
Some community members highlighted the importance of providing a range of activities for young people. Suggestions included: an indoor skatepark, more outdoor activities, social media activities, high adrenaline/action activities for older young people, and ensuring the activities are not too structured.

> **Relevance and variety…. Kids and especially teens like options. whether it's a come and play basketball in your one time or actually having teams set up or some kind of training session. different people like different things - not that this isn't already happening** ⬚
>
> **(Community survey participant)**
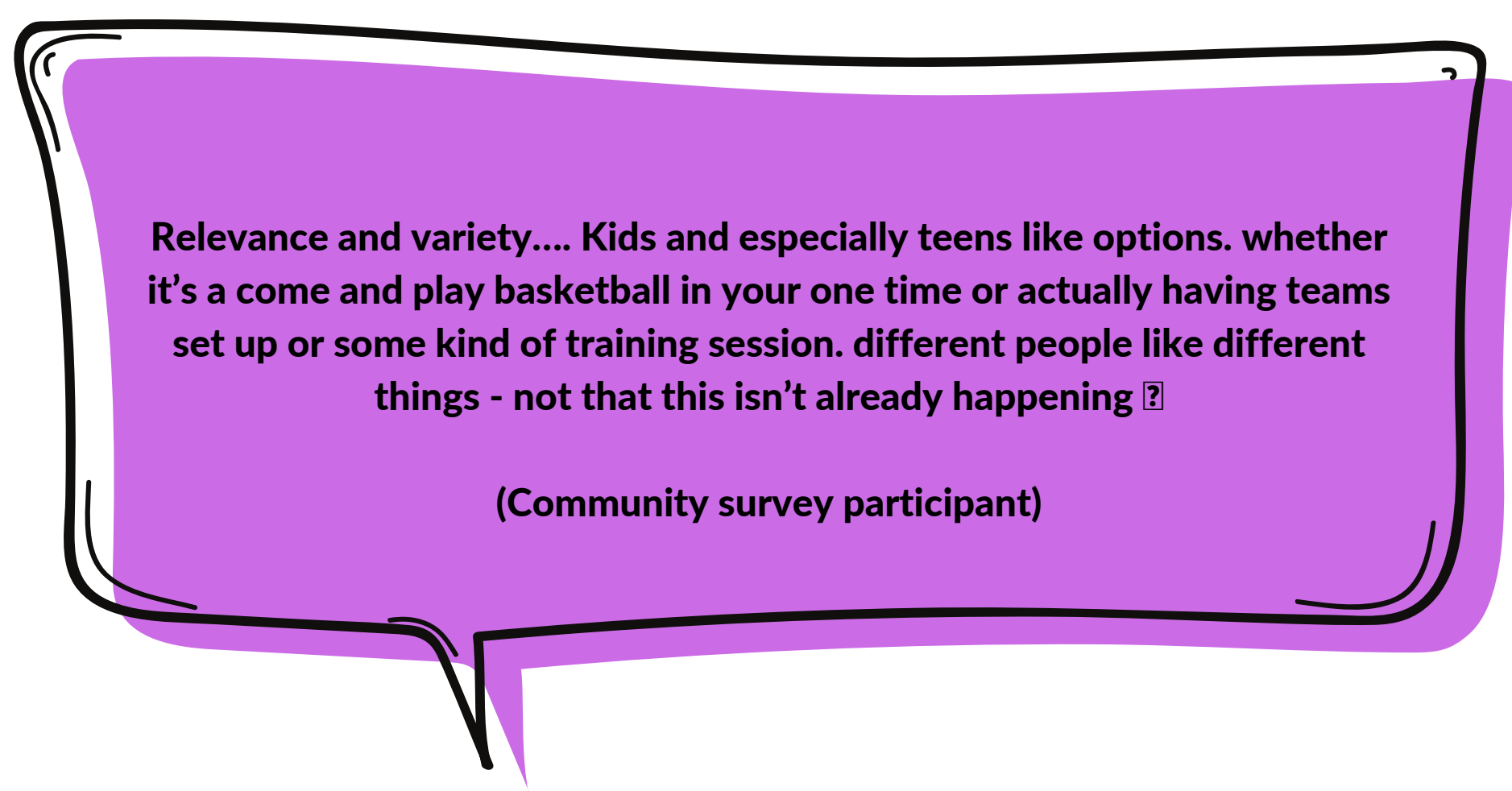
More free transport (n =11)
While the Larrakia Bus provides young people with transport home at the end of the evening, some community members thought there needed to be more frequent buses.   Ensuring that transport is free was also noted by a few survey participants.

> **More rides home [are needed]. The buses are too full and too long to wait.**
>
> **(Community survey participant)**

Knowing activities are safe (n =7)

Seven community members had concerns about the safety of the activities. They felt that if parents and guardians could be reassured their young people would be safe, then more young people would attend.

[Having a] security and police presence. It's also parents that don't feel the kids are safe attending them - as the same groups are at shops causing trouble.

(Community survey participant)

Other ideas for encouraging engagement (with number of people who had that idea included in brackets) were:
- Family support/parent input to encourage attendance(3)
- Familiarity with places/people/activities would help some young people attend (3)
- Ensuring there are places for kids to rest (2)
- Support for young people when English is not their first language (1)
- Having more things at the YMCA (1)
- More Basketball (1)
- Including educational programs (1)

Community Views on the Benefits of PYA.

The following two charts (Figures 9 and 10) demonstrate that Palmerston community members think the youth activities are a good idea, and why this is so.

Figure 9:Community views on whether PYA are a good idea (n=107)

Are school holiday & after school youth activites in Palmerston a good idea? (n=107)

Unsure 3%

No 0%

Yes 97%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure
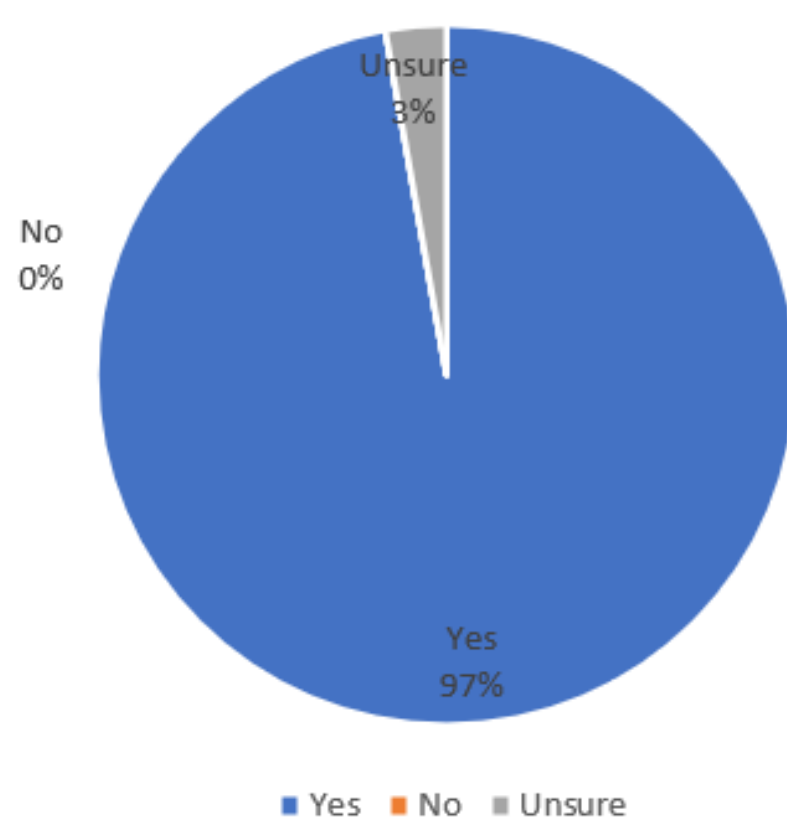
Community members provided comments on why they thought youth activities were are a good idea. These comments are summarized in the following chart.

Figure 10: Community views on why PYA is important for Palmerston
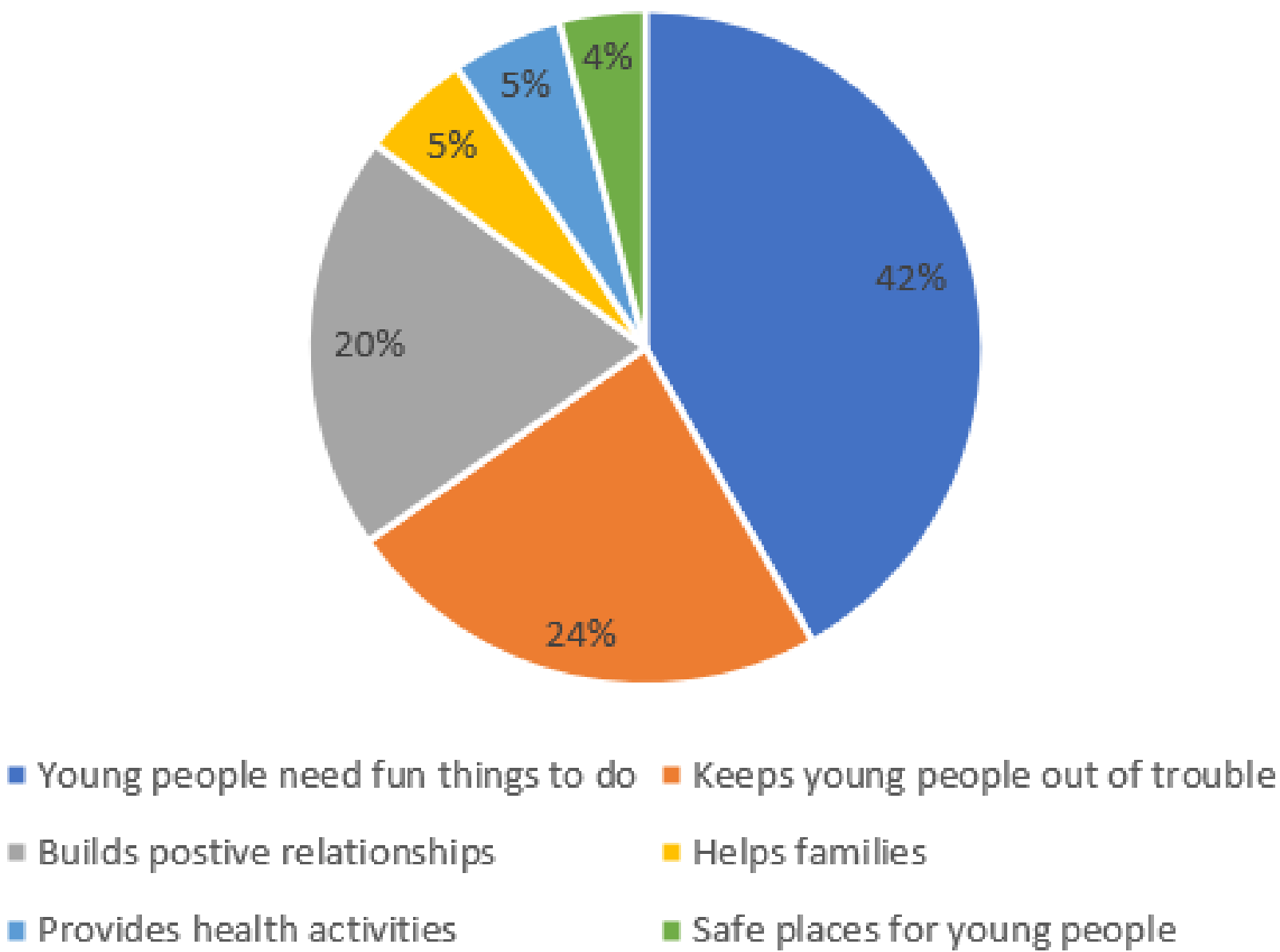
Community voices on the importance of school holiday and after school activities

Forty community survey participants elaborated on the reasons why PYA Grant Funded activities are important for Palmerston.   While the major themes are presented in Figure 10, participants comments provide further richness to our understanding of the reasons why Palmerston youth activities are valued.

"[The activities] keeps young fellas out of trouble. Good people showing them the proper way."

"All kids deserve a chance to take part in fun activities in the holidays regardless of who they are or where they live."

"Boredom can be a big factor in harming mental health. Making positive connections is very beneficial."

"Essential supports for families. Activities for families cost a lot and it's important for you people to have things to do."

"Kids need safe places to go."

(Palmerston Community Members Survey Reponses)

9. 4   Ensuring young people are consulted about the provision of the youth activities to provide feedback and direction as to the delivery of these activities

> **I can talk to them; they help me out. I can tell them things and they can relate. They are good people**
>
> **(Young person attending Youth Drop in Sports)**

This section includes an analysis of interviews with young people and organisations to explore youth input into the activities. Young people's ideas for future activities are also included here.

9.4.1   Young people feel listened to

Interviews with young people included a question about feeling listened to. Participants were asked to mark how often they felt listed too by staff at the activities on a sliding scale from 0 ('Never') to 100 ('Always'). Figure 11 below highlights an average response of 85.

Figure 11: 'Staff Listen to Me' – Young people's responses

Staff Listen to Me

Always = 100

85 was the average response.

This indicates a very high rate of feeling listened to.

Never = 0
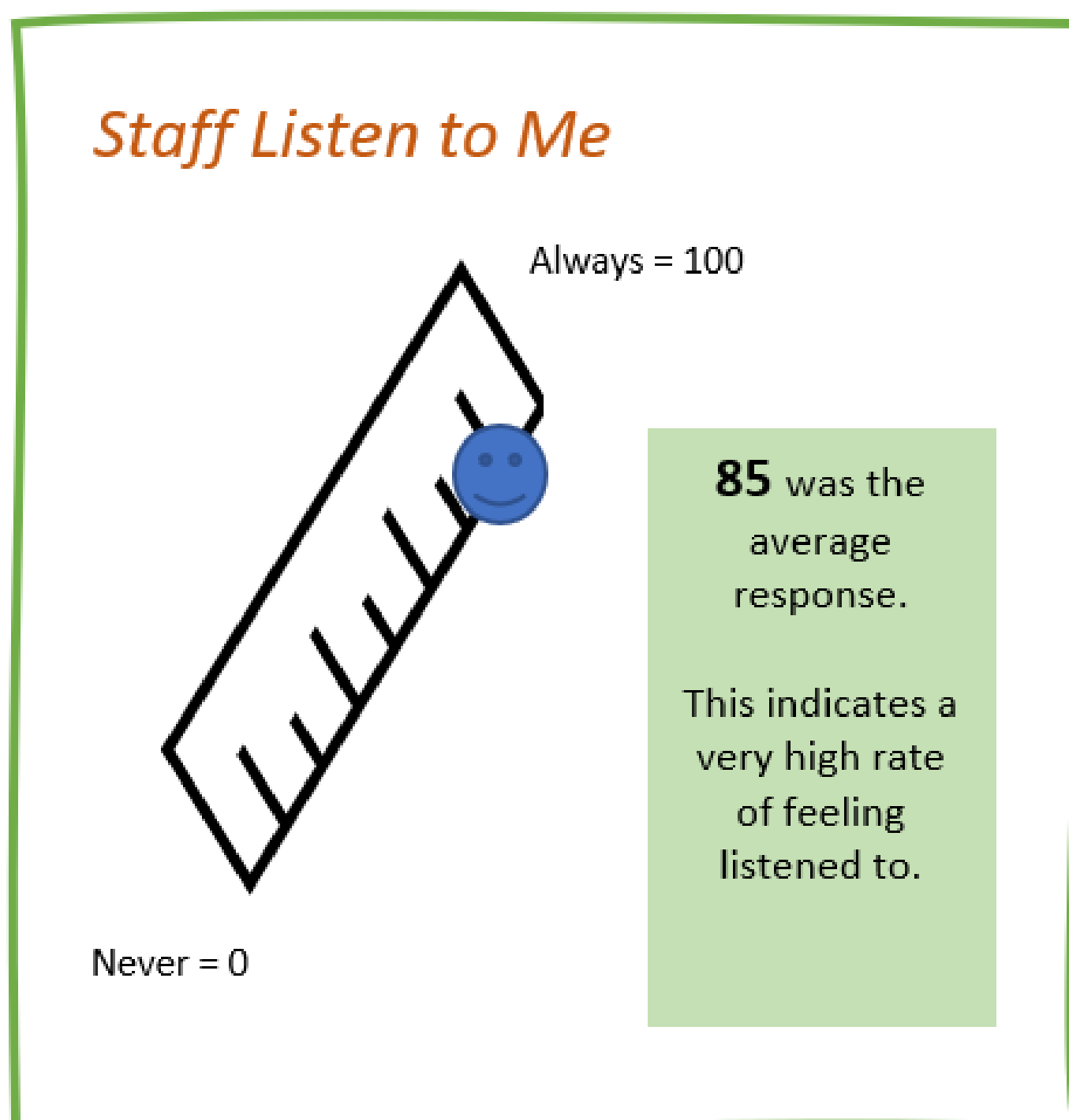
Youth X Forum 2021

A range of ways youth input occurs

Interviews demonstrated that most organisations were aware of, and used, the Palmerston Youth Action Plan. As discussed earlier this plan was informed by young people in Palmerston and its use helps to ensure the youth voice is at the forefront of activities.

To embed an ongoing youth voice in their activity planning, many funded organisations had their own youth committees and/or ensured the participation of young people in their decision making via a range of mechanisms. For example, PaRBA include young people in their service planning and delivery and regularly survey participants to ensure ongoing feedback about the activities they provide. City of Palmerston engages young people in all aspects of the Urban Jams events from planning through to media and evaluation. YMCA staff ensure continuous conversations are had with young people at each of their activities, to seek more informal and ongoing input into program planning.

Each of the organisation engage young people as staff, mentors and volunteers. This provides young participants with a wide range of 'relatable' workers who have their finger on the pulse of youth culture, trends and movements. This too assists in placing young people's voices at the forefront of activity planning and delivery.

9.4.2 Young people feel respected

87% of young people interviewed felt that staff respected them, with only one young person answering 'no'. When asked why they felt staff didn't' respect them, this was because of a disagreement with a staff member that day.

Figure 12: Young People's Views of Staff Respect

Staff Respect Me (n = 39)

10%
3%
87%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Sometimes
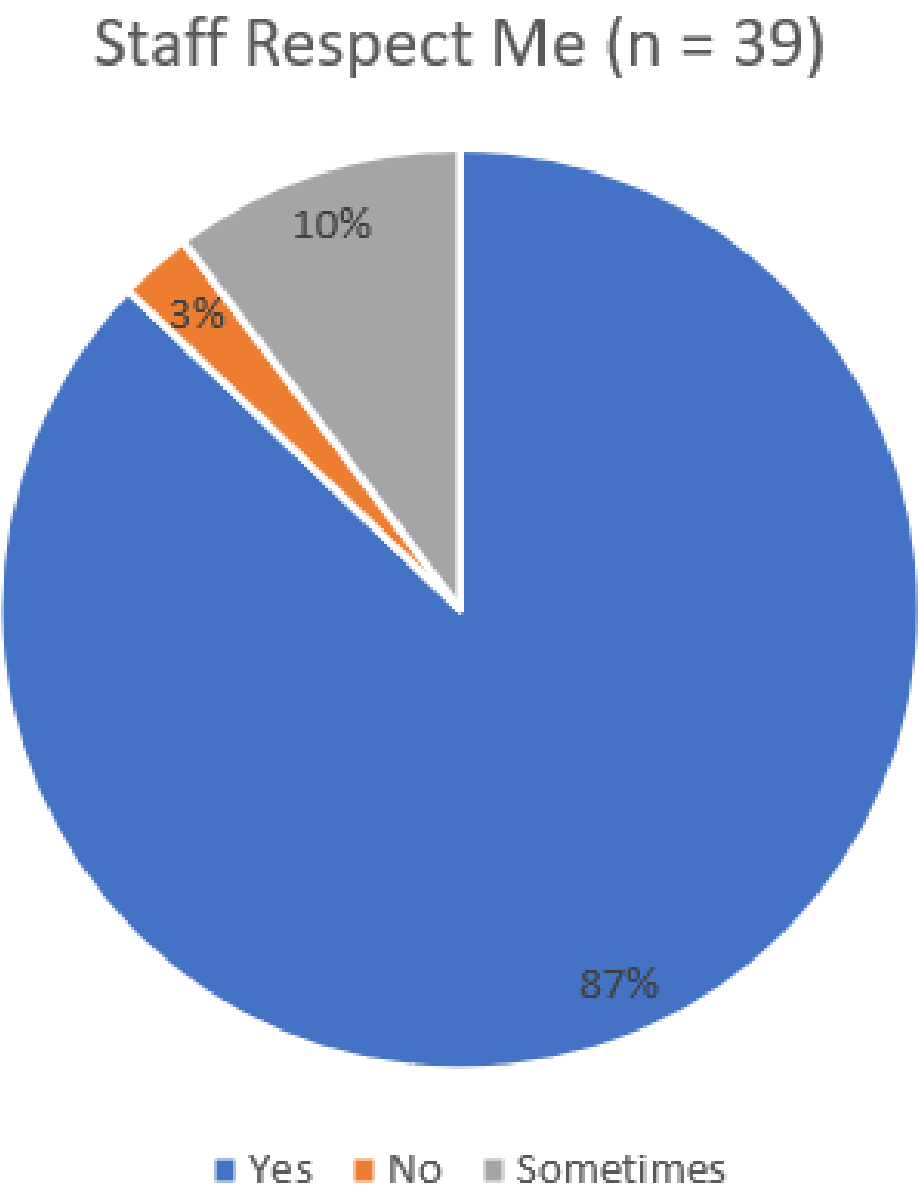
Elders teaching at The Y Uptop

Artwork: Collaboration with Tony Lee, Trent Lee and Shaun Lee

9.4.3 What young people say about PYA staff

Young people were generally very enthusiastic in their praise for staff, and many had 'favourite' staff members who they particularly liked and trusted. The following section brings together themes which highlight what young people like about the staff at three regular activities. Participant quotes are in italics.

YMCA Activities

They listen
- *The staff listen about what food you like and what to have for dinner.*
- *They listen and they help you. Sometimes they are busy, but they always try to listen.*

Kindness, trust, support
- *They are kind and give you good food and snacks.*
- *The staff are good, friendly. You can talk to them if you get into any trouble, you get close to them when you come here every day.*
- *The staff are always there for you. They are kind and caring. They are funny too.*
- *The staff are great. They give us snacks and dinner and are very welcoming.*
- *I love the staff, they listen.*
- *You can trust them; they listen if you are upset*

Youth Drop-In Sports

Kind, respectful, fun.
- *I can talk to them; they help me out. I can tell them things and they can relate.They are good people*
- *Staff are kind and funny and respectful*
- *They are friendly and fun to hang out with.*

Supportive mentors
- *The staff are great mentors. They support you and encourage you.*
- *The staff listen to what you want to do.There are rules, but they are on point so it's fair. You follow them. They cook food for us. They bring us inside if there is trouble outside.*

Connection and belonging
- *I feel very safe at the Rec Centre. It is a strong sense of community, everyone knows everyone around the Rec Centre, so you feel like to you belong. You have a connection.*

Urban Jams

Mentoring
- *We have good mentors; they encourage you to learn things and gain experience and skills you can use to get jobs. Things like organisational skills and going to meetings, promotion, strategy, writing, all kinds of things.*

Respectful & friendly
- *They make you feel very comfortable.*
- *Staff are great, friendly, especially the security guard here.*

Street Art Program for Youth Week
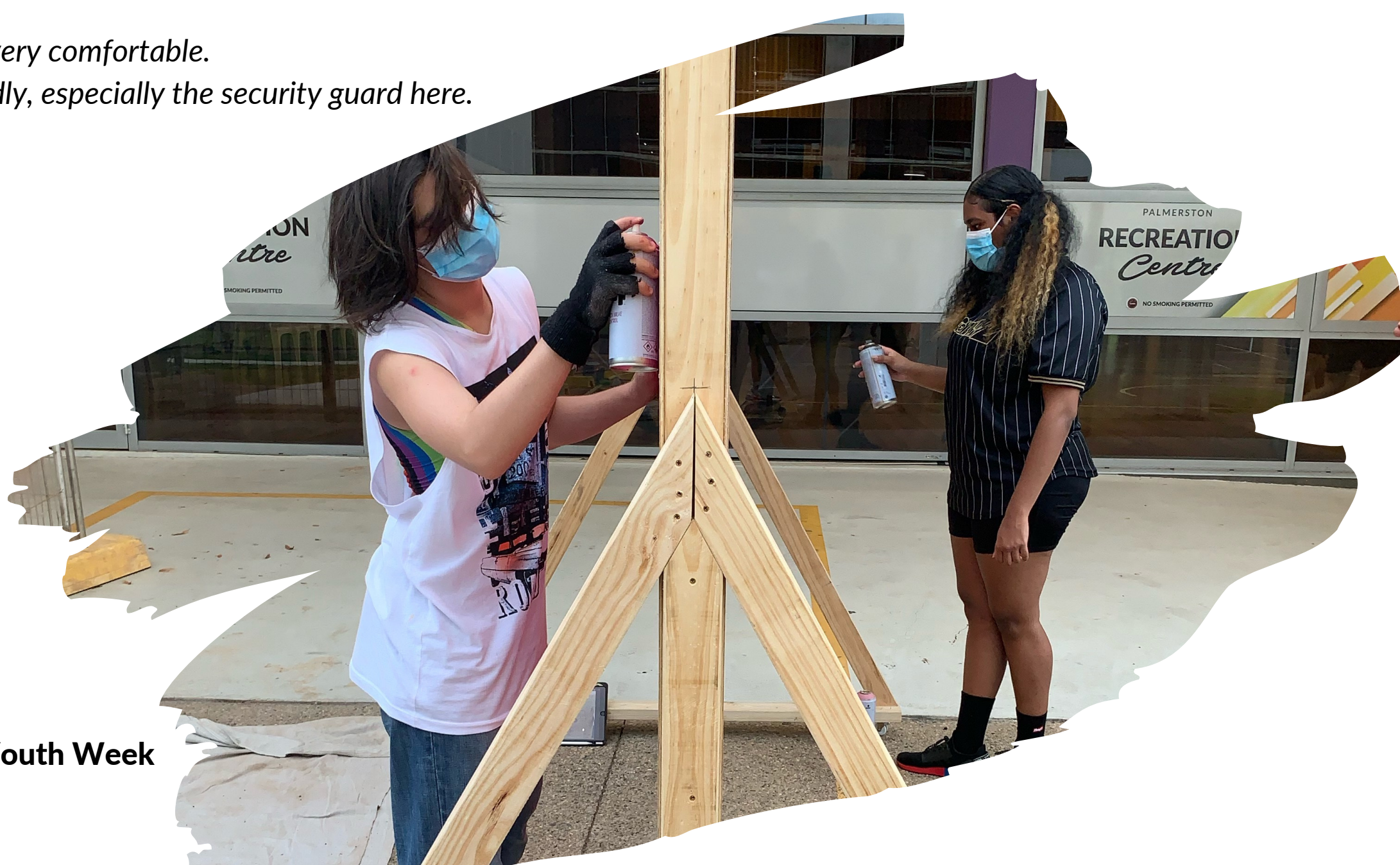
9.4.4 Young People's Ideas about future activities

When asked about what future activities they would like to see for young people in Palmerston, young people provided the following responses. It is important to point out that many of the ideas listed are already included in the school holiday calendars, indicating a good fit between what young people would like, and what is being delivered.   If more than one person made the suggestion, the number in brackets indicates this.

Facilities
- *Indoor skatepark*
- *An arts and drama centre*
- *Indoor soccer*

Events
- *More concerts & festivals*
- *More concerts for under 18's (6)*
- *Street Art*
- *A street art festival for young people (2) – more street art in general*

Other Events
- *More Kids vs Cops basketball or volleyball contests – I loved that!*
- *More Urban Jams, I love that. Love the music and the volleyball.*
- *more colour runs, more pool parties, they are the best*

Activities
Sport related
- *Rugby and AFL*
- *Other sports like bike riding and jogging.*
- *Some skills practice sessions and volleyball/basketball competitions.*
- *Volleyball and basketball comps and training for the comps*

Physical Fun & Games
- *I wish there was trampolines here - in the floor like at Flip Out.*
- *A big jumping castle for just girls with slip and slides*
- *Tree climbing, tight rope walking.*

Arts related
- *More visual arts things, there could always be more arts related things. Painting, wood burning, pottery. (2)*

Other
- *I liked the snakes at the Urban Jams, more of that would be good.*
- *Making Tik Tok videos (2)*
- *Science experiments with Mentos and other experiments.*

Excursion Ideas.
- *King Pin Excursion (11)*
- *Ice Skating (7)*
- *Flip Out (5)*
- *Laser tag (3)*
- *Camping trips (3)*
- *Sleepovers at the PYC (3)*
- *Wave pool (2)*
- *Cinema (2)*

Improving Youth Input

The interviews with organisations demonstrated that they saw ongoing, meaningful youth input as critically important. Interviews only revealed one further way in which the input of young people might be enhanced. This was to invite youth representatives onto the grant decision-making panel.

9.5   Linking young people attending activities with support and complementary early intervention services as needed

This section draws upon interviews with organisations and community leaders to consider the extent to which the fourth aim of the PYA has been met. As we will see, linkages and support for young people are an important outcome of the activities. These and other related outcomes such as connection and opportunities are explored.

> **We listen. We are hearing them. We action things.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

Table 8: Summary of organisations views about outcomes of PYA

Outcomes linked to activities.	Connection
	Positive behaviour changes
	Safe spaces for young people
	Enhancing Palmerston community
	Opportunities for young people
	Referrals and support
	Crime reduction

9.5.1 Connection (to other young people, to mentors, to families, to services, to community

The formation of supportive and empowering relationships between young people, youth workers, organisations and the broader community were discussed as an important outcome of the PYA Grant Funding.

> **Young people want to be connected to their community.**
> **It is building a greater sense of self and of success.**
>
> **(Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**
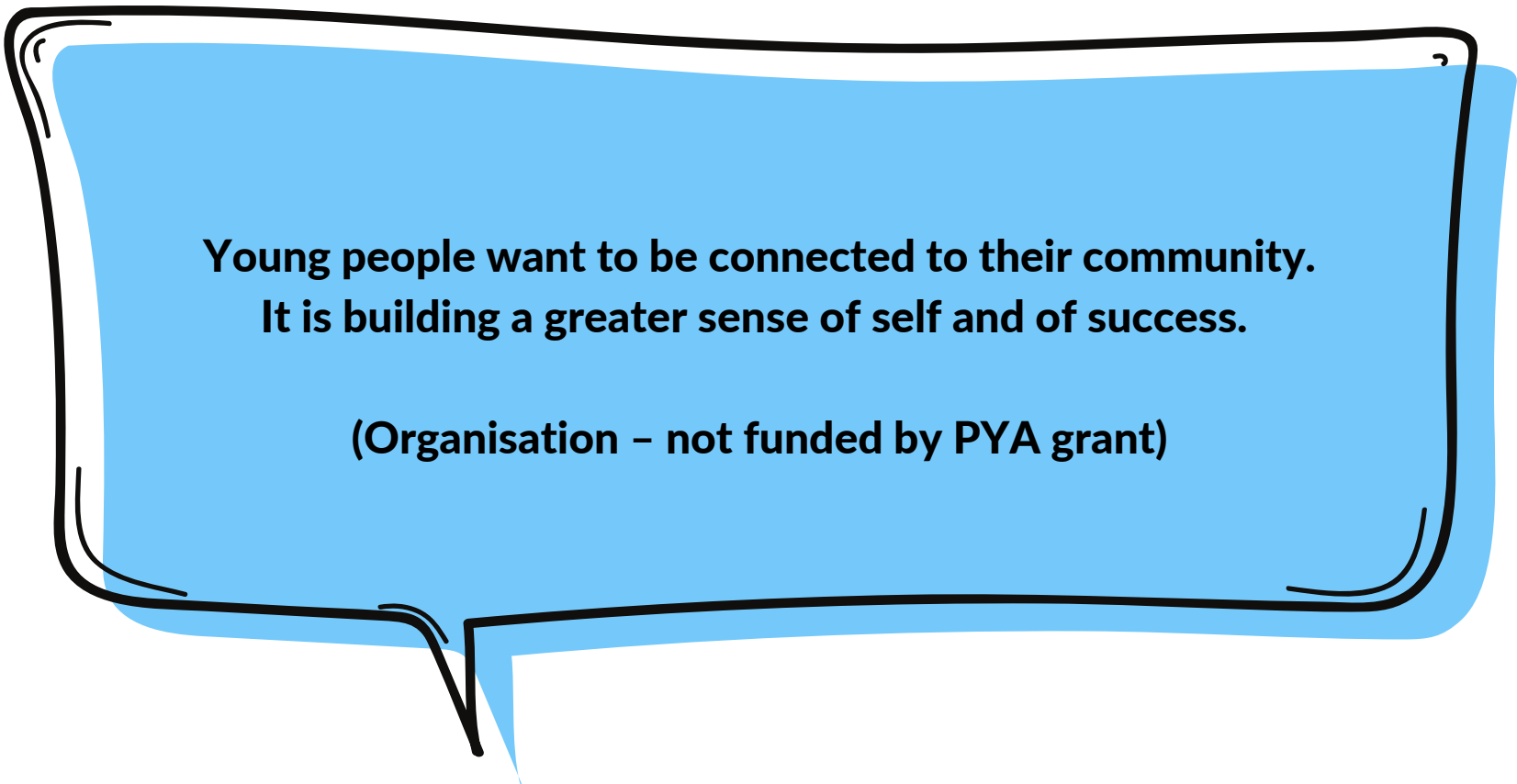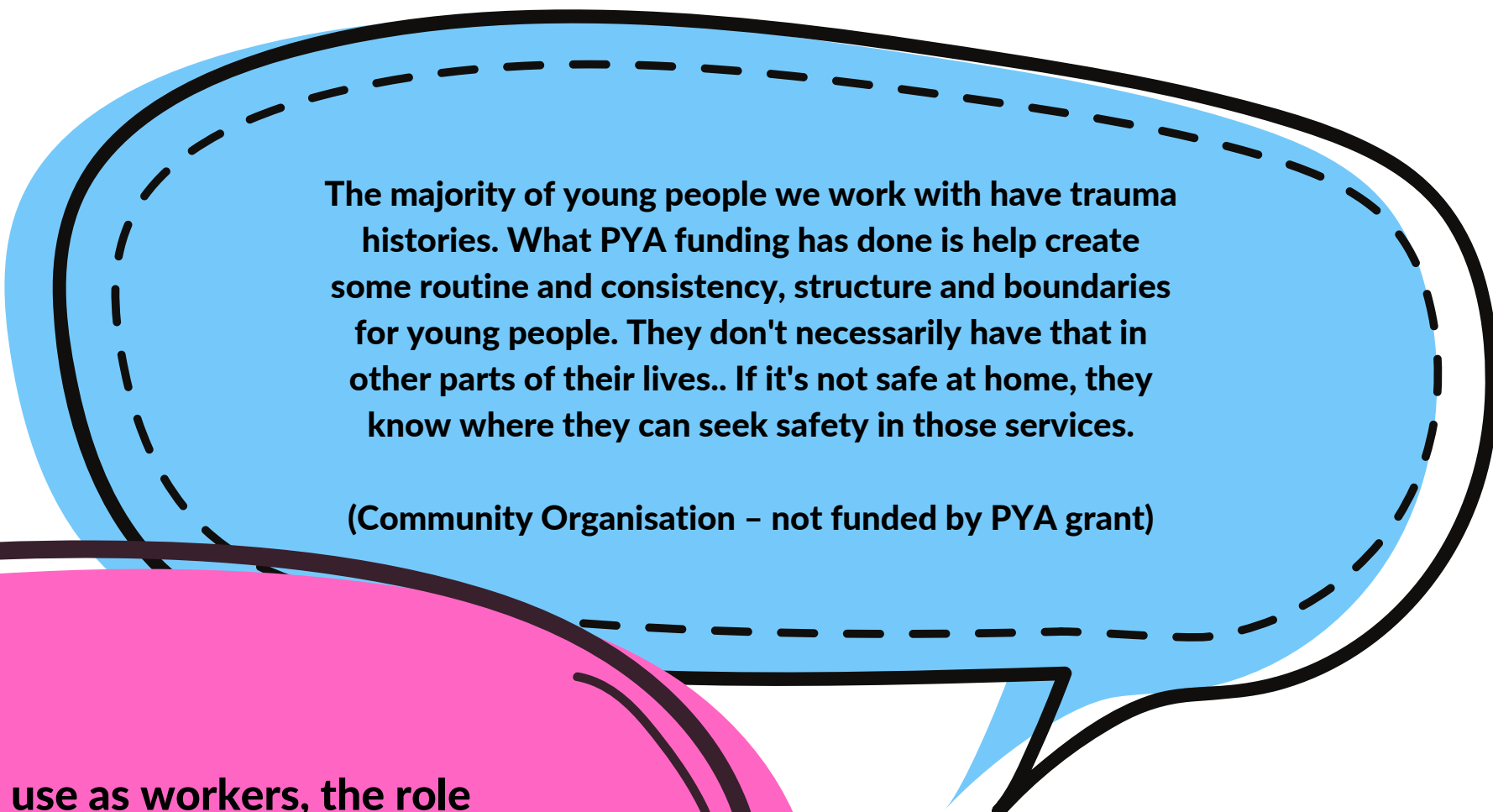
9.5.2 Positive behaviour changes

There were multiple examples provided of positive changes in young people's behaviour. From seemingly small things such as offering to help do the dishes, through to talking other young people out of violent responses to situations. The range of behavioural changes in young people can be seen in the following quote.

> **There is always something every day. A young person may have come and helped do the dishes, the little things, the big things. Even on the more challenging day's there's something - someone's made a good choice, stepped up as their own peer leader, there's always something every day.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

9.5.3 Safe spaces

The creation of a range of safe, welcoming places for young people to go is an important outcome as participants pointed out that it ensures young people feel valued in their community. Having options for different spaces, with clean and comfortable furniture, good facilities, clear boundaries, activities designed especially for young people, nice food and caring adults all help create a sense of safety and belonging as seen in the following quotes.

> The majority of young people we work with have trauma histories. What PYA funding has done is help create some routine and consistency, structure and boundaries for young people. They don't necessarily have that in other parts of their lives.. If it's not safe at home, they know where they can seek safety in those services.
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

> The language we use as workers, the role modelling, helps to create a safe space. We ask the young people to put in place the rules…. about how we will behave. We want them to have fun, to be kids, to enjoy and do the things that their age group do. They need safety to do that. (PYA org)
>
> **(PYA funded organisation)**
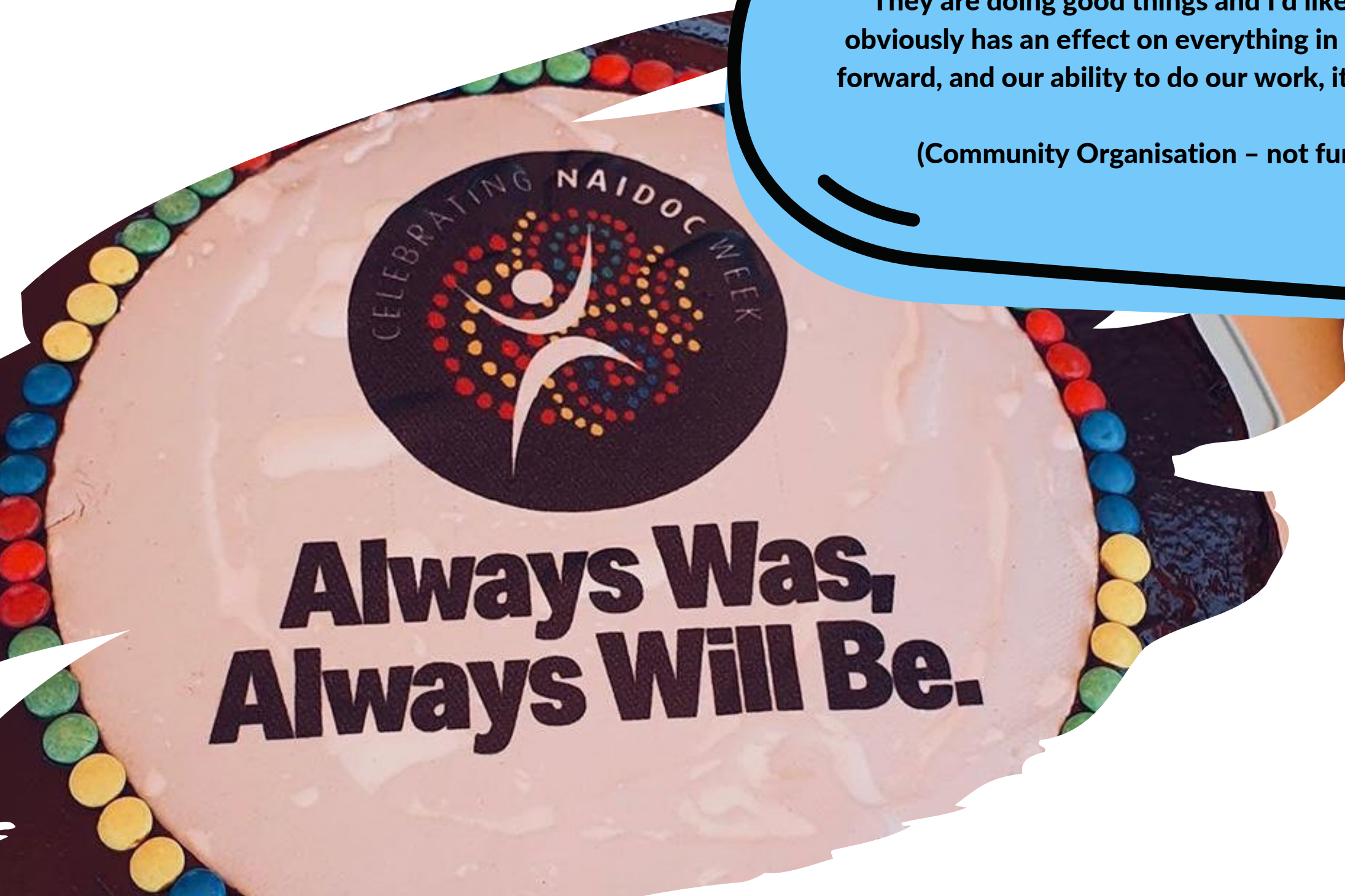
9.5.4 Improving Palmerston as a community

Some participants talked about the way PYA contributed to a broader sense of community in Palmerston, through ensuring young people had connections and ways of interacting with a range of people. These connections can be viewed as threads that helped to create a stronger social fabric.

> They are doing good things and I'd like to see it continue as it obviously has an effect on everything in the community as it goes forward, and our ability to do our work, it affects that, it helps us.
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

9.5.5 Opportunities for young people

Another outcome discussed by participants was the opportunities and encouragement that young people could access through the activities. This range of opportunities, from trying a new art form through to volunteer work and paid employment, were seen as empowering and at times life-changing for some young people. The following comments highlight the importance of these opportunities.

It provides the opportunities that the kids don't have. A lot of our kids, they don't have an opportunity to own a horse and learn to ride it.Families might not be able to afford to take all the kids to the movies, with popcorn and drinks. These activities give our kids opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise.

(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)

We're seeing outcomes from what they do. We had one young person that did community work with [organisation name] and ended up with employment. So just seeing there's a pathway from what they're doing now to a better future, there are positives from other young people seeing that.

(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)

9.5.6 Referrals and support

The linking of young people to services they require was seen as another important outcome of the PYA funding. Young people were gaining support from long term relationships with workers as well. When trusting relationships were in place, referrals were far easier to facilitate.

We listen. We are hearing them, we action things. With the referrals, if they do need that expert help, we will have those conversations and support them in speaking with their own families.

(PYA funded organisation)

9.5.7 Deterring Crime

Participants discussed a correlation between the Palmerston Youth Activities and a reduction in crime in Palmerston over the past three years. Crime statistics for Palmerston from 2015 to 2020 are included at Appendix J. While youth crime statistics are not separated out from general crime statistics, a number of participants comments on the correlation.

> The reduction of antisocial behaviour reflects that there's improvements, and there has been less crime too.
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

> Over the last three years we've seen this getting established, we've seen some improvements in the community space where kids have basically been occupied and had less opportunities to weigh off the other end of things and come into police contact. So, we've seen some good results, especially over the last year
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

9.6 Developing stronger and more collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders and improving coordination across the youth and related sectors.

This section considers the strengths and challenges of the PYA collaboration and coordination. It draws upon the analysis of the organisations/community leaders interviews and integrates PYA documents.   The section begins with a consideration of the grant application processes and concludes with ideas from stakeholders about improving collaboration into the future.

> Feedback from a client last week was 'we feel really safe and we feel really good because we know the different service providers in Palmerston all work with one another'. They could see that. They could see the collaboration.
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

9.6.1 Grant application Processes

Table 9: Summary of grant application processes feedback from organisations/community leaders

Grant application process and administration	What is working well	Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role is supportive
		Good/Fair processes
	What can be improved	Transparency
		Longer term funding for cornerstone activity providers with a proven track record of PYA Grant Funded activity provision and collaboration.
		Further detail/criteria on application
	Suggestions for the future	Youth representatives on grant decision-making panels.
		Consider evaluation requirements and offer support for this.
		Ensure all potential applicants are aware of grants and are supported to apply
		Develop different tiers/streams of funding according to local activity provision track record

What is working well

Two key elements helped to ensure the grant application process was equitable and accessible.

1 Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator Role

Participants noted that the Coordinator has been helpful and supportive during application processes. The forms are not difficult to complete or too time-consuming.

> **Applying for the grants was really seamless. No issues.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator assistance was available to all who are interested in applying, and this was widely acknowledged. While none of the participants in these interviews discussed any difficulty with the grant applications, some noted that it is important to continue efforts to ensure equitable access.

2 Good Process

The grant application process was considered to be a fair process by most participants. The links to the Palmerston Youth Action Plan were noted and considered important. It was also noted that the grant decision making panel was in itself capacity-building.

> **The grant panel has been done really well and the process is thoughtful. The ethics, confidentiality have been really good. The skill development for people on the grant panel is supportive and important too. The valuing of all the applicants is really important. There is a kindness and understanding that the panel brings.**
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

What could be improved?
Three ideas for improvement were raised. The first of these was most frequently noted participants.

1 Development of funding tiers/streams and longer-term funding
The idea of developing different tiers, or streams, of funding, was discussed by participants. One stream would involve a sizeable pool of long term funding available only to those service providers who have a history of successful PYA Grant Funded activity provision and have demonstrated commitment to collaboration. This would acknowledge the track record of previous grant recipients and allow them access to longer-term funding (up to five years) for the continuation and scaling up of successful programs.

The reasons for access to longer term funding included being able to offer staff long-term contracts to help stabilise and build the critical relationship with young people and all stakeholders, as well as the ability to plan for long term change, strategize, evaluate, reflect and create the intergenerational community change required to prevent young people coming into contact with the justice system. Such an approach is closely aligned to the principles of trauma-informed practice.

> **Long term funding means we can develop relationships over time, and plan to be in young people's lives.....Consistency, stability and mentors for the long term is really important.**
>
> **(PYA funded organisation)**

2 Transparency
Some participants advised that they would like to see further transparency around how the grant decision-making occurred. Linked to this was a curiosity about how decisions are made with the targeted grants. Some wondered if that could be made clearer to all providers. Two participants noted they would like to know more about the processes for being on the grant decision making panel.

3 ore detailed questions/criteria on the application form
One participant advised that they would like to see more detailed grant application questions that require considered responses linked to the Youth Action Plan, evaluation planning, and commitment to attending coordination meetings.

9.6.2   Collaboration & Coordination

> **27 youth activity coordination meetings (2018 to 2020)**
>
> **29 Organisations/Groups represented**

The bringing together of government and non-government organisations, community groups and leaders to focus on providing young people with safe, fun and enjoyable activities during the holidays and after school is one of the most important aspects of the PYA Grant Funding.

PYA Coordination meetings are one mechanism for regular communication between organisations. Figure 13 provides an overview of the different organisations types that have attended PYA coordination meetings.

Figure 13 – types of organisations attending PYA coordination meetings

Organisation Types at Coordination Meetings

■ Private Service Providers ■ Government   ■ NGO
■ Community Group   ■ Sports Assoc.   ■ Education
■ Retail
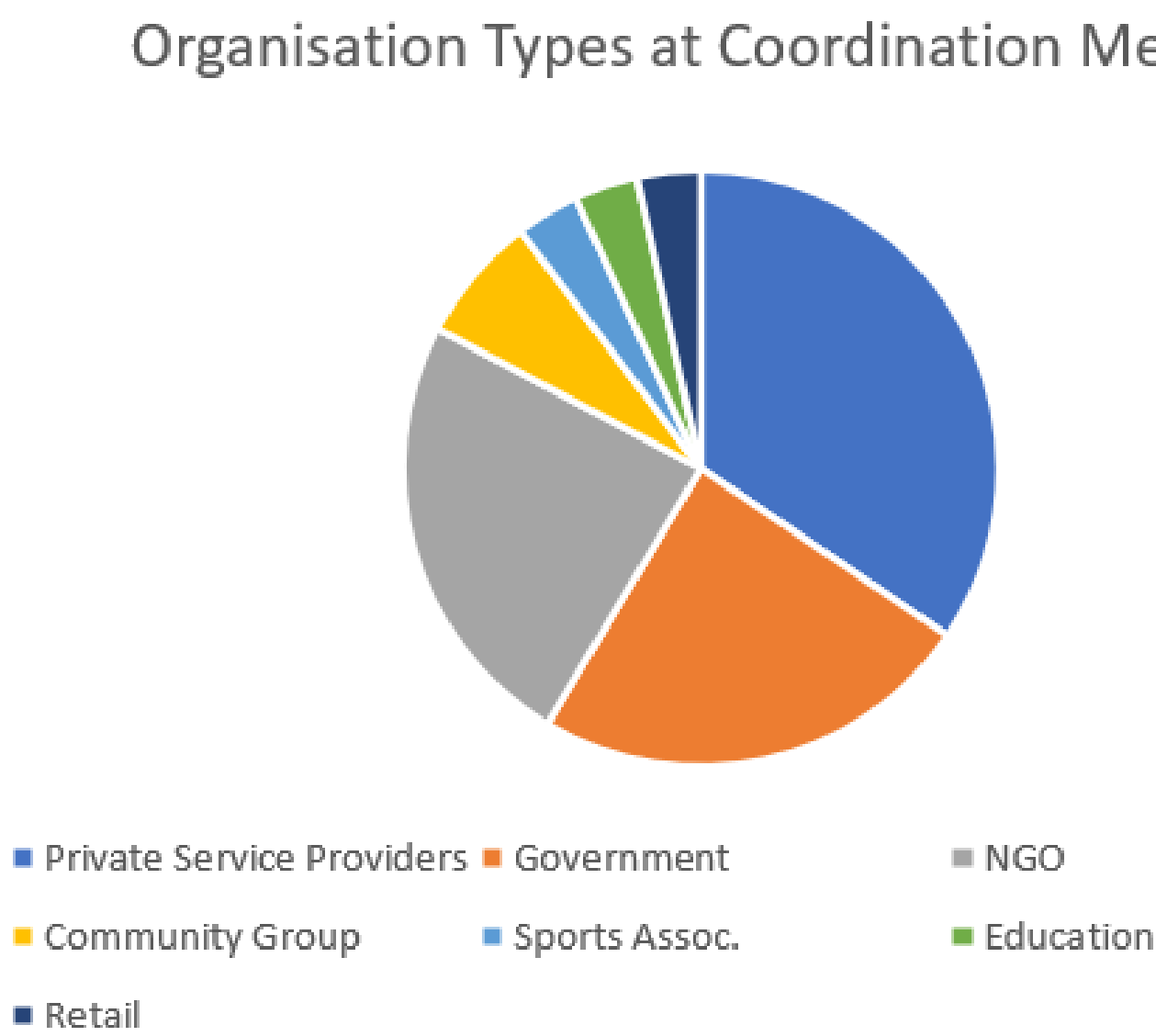
Next, the strengths and challenges of collaboration are presented using the organisations and community leader's voices. These are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Overview of collaborations strengths and challenges

Collaboration & Coordination	Strengths	Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role
		Working together/value adding
		Creating a new culture
		Local voices at forefront
	Challenges	Diverse organisations (size and resources)
		Relationship tensions
		Changing/evolving roles

Strengths of Collaboration

Four main strengths were identified by participants: Having a dedicated Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator with appropriate skills and experience, being able to work together and value add to existing activities, creating a new culture around young people and youth service provision in Palmerston, and putting local voices at the forefront of the work. Each of these strengths is explained in more detail.

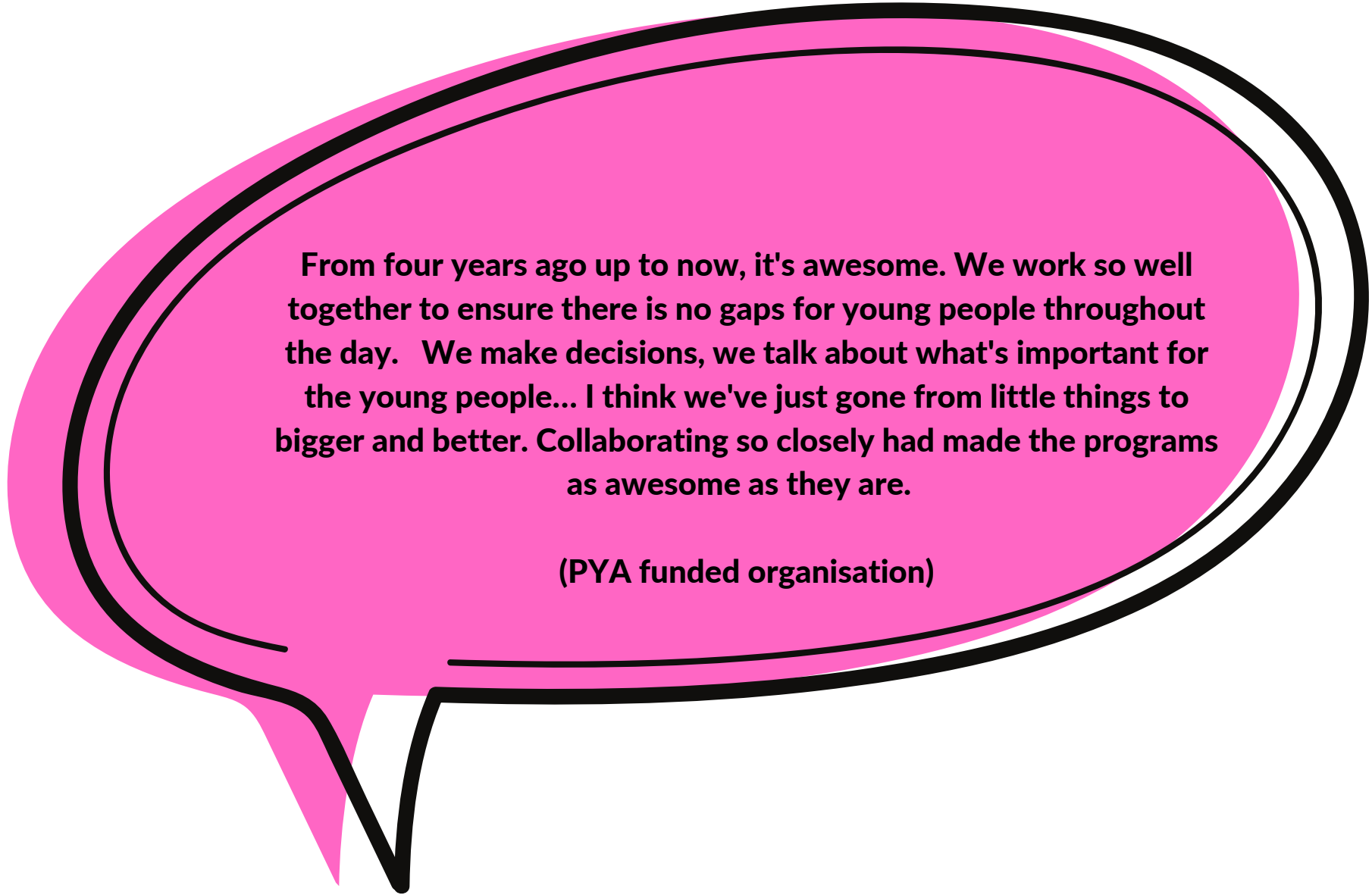**1 Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role.**

The importance of the Coordinator role was discussed by almost every participant. Critical elements of the role included: Convening regular meetings to build collaboration and connection, connecting people and services, relationship support, access to information, referrals and resources. This was in addition to developing the school holiday calendars and facilitating grant processes and administration.

> **They have struck gold with having this position. The networking, it's a connector role and it's done so incredibly well..... It's absolutely essential to this working..... A designated, neutral person who knows the sector, has a very good capacity for relationship building and does it in a way that brings everyone together.**
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

2 Working together and value-adding to programs

All participants talked about the critical importance of working together to ensure there is a range of coordinated activities after school and during the holidays. Collaboration not only helps with providing great activities and events but means that services come together to provide a safety net of connections for young people.

> **From four years ago up to now, it's awesome. We work so well together to ensure there is no gaps for young people throughout the day.   We make decisions, we talk about what's important for the young people... I think we've just gone from little things to bigger and better. Collaborating so closely had made the programs as awesome as they are.**
>
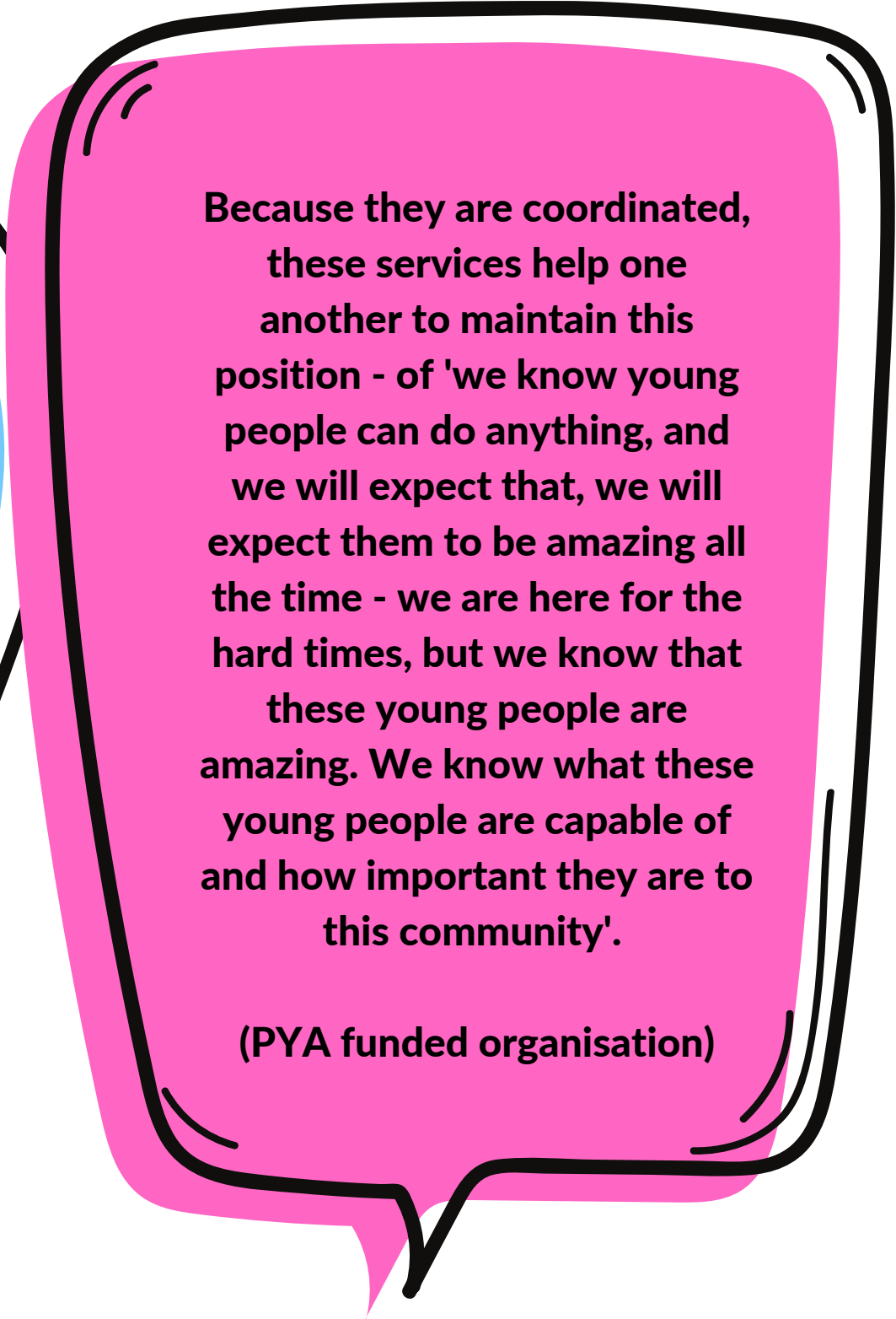> **(PYA funded organisation)**

3 Creating a new culture

Participants discussed the gradual formation of a different way of talking about, thinking about, and working with young people in Palmerston. This 'new culture' was more positive, hopeful and celebrated the good choices young people make.

> **This is not a time and place to compete for anything. This is where we show how well breaking down the barriers can help our people around us. And I've seen that a lot, the change. I've seen the change from the beginning to now, and now it's second nature.**
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

> **Because they are coordinated, these services help one another to maintain this position - of 'we know young people can do anything, and we will expect that, we will expect them to be amazing all the time - we are here for the hard times, but we know that these young people are amazing. We know what these young people are capable of and how important they are to this community'.**
>
> **(PYA funded organisation)**

4 Local voices at the forefront (including the PalmerstonYouth Action Plan)
Participants discussed the benefit of having a local panel to make decisions about the funding and having a Palmerston Youth Action Plan. Most participants had strong professional links to local community networks and groups. These things helped to keep local voices at the forefront of planning and delivery of activities.

> It's driven by local people. Many of us live here and we want to see a difference in the local community.
>
> **(Community Organisation – not funded by PYA grant)**

Challenges of Collaboration
Bringing stakeholders together has challenges, and the following three issues were discussed by organisations and community leaders.

1 Different organisation sizes, types and focus - different levels of involvement
Participants acknowledged that the collaboration involved organisations with a wide range of staff sizes, funding sources and foci. A number of smaller community groups and private providers have also been involved. These differences can mean there is also varying participation in collaboration work (attending meetings and keeping up with all communications).   Some felt strongly that attendance at the coordination meeting was critical to collaboration success and therefore should be a requirement of all grant recipients, others highlighted that in a 'one-person' operation, this was logistically difficult to ensure.

2 Relationship tensions
Relationships between the partners in the collaboration were generally productive and positive. However, tensions can arise. These tensions were considered a challenge by some participants, but all acknowledged that focusing on the needs of the young people helped put things in perspective and allowed them to move forward. The Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role was viewed as particularly helpful in keeping this focus.

> The nature of collaboration is that it is never easy. Different people in the collaboration have different relationships with each other and these can work at times and not so well at other times. The main thing is that problematic or difficult relationships shouldn't get in the way of our focus which is the young people.
>
> **(PYA funded organisation)**

RESET Session - City of Palmerston

3 Changing/evolving services, locations and roles

As organisations involved in the PYA have developed over time, there have been many changes. This includes changes to staff, roles, focus, structure and the associated skills and knowledge required.

The opening of the Palmerston Youth Centre (PYC) and the YORET drop-in space have provided exciting new locations for young people in Palmerston. This has changed some of the community dynamics and provided more options for young people. Adapting to the positive as well as the more difficult aspects of evolving to meet new circumstances can be both challenging and rewarding. Keeping up with 'who does what and where' requires constant revisiting and has implications for service providers ability to make referrals with young people.

10. Covid 19 response and learning.

> **The outreach really changed our perceptions and built our knowledge about our community - meeting kids on their turf and understanding the issues they are working with.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

10.1 How activities were impacted

In early 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic began impacting life in Australia with rising cases and subsequent lock-downs in various locations across the country. Impacts were felt in the Northern Territory, with borders closing, quarantining requirements, temporary closures of many businesses and public locations and strict limits for people gathering together. All of this impacted the ability of organisations to provide their usual youth activities in Palmerston, meaning the April 2020 school holiday activities could not go ahead as planned.

Rather than simply stop all activities, PYA providers worked together with the Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator to develop new, Covid safe activities and strategies to keep connected to young people in Palmerston.   This involved developing a food delivery program to young people and their families, bringing activities to houses and streets, and developing an art-based Palmerston Post Card Project where young people worked with artists to develop artworks for postcards that were printed and sent to community members who were socially isolated.

This section of the evaluation considers what was learned during this time. Interviews with organisations and community leaders highlighted a range of impacts and learnings and these are outlined here.
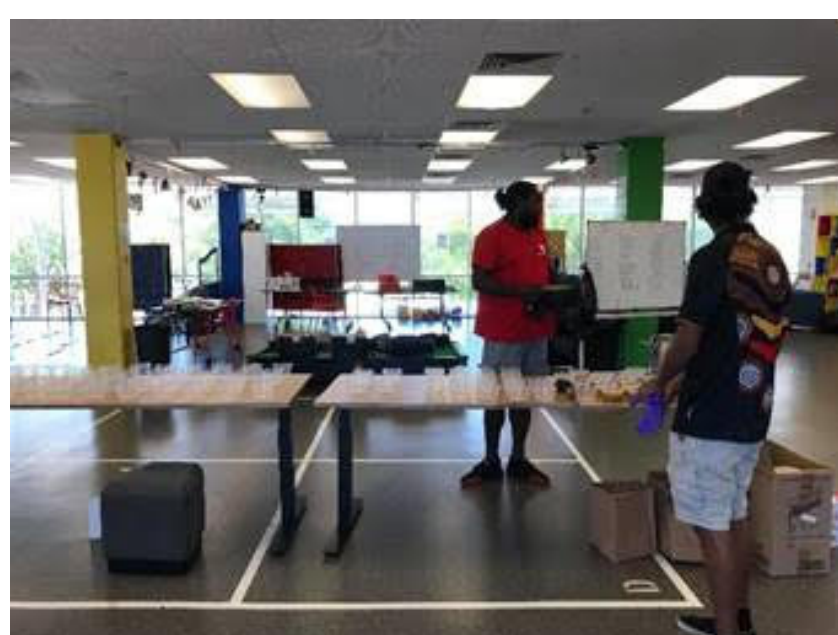
Putting together care packages for young people and families at the YMCA

10.2. What was learned: The importance of outreach

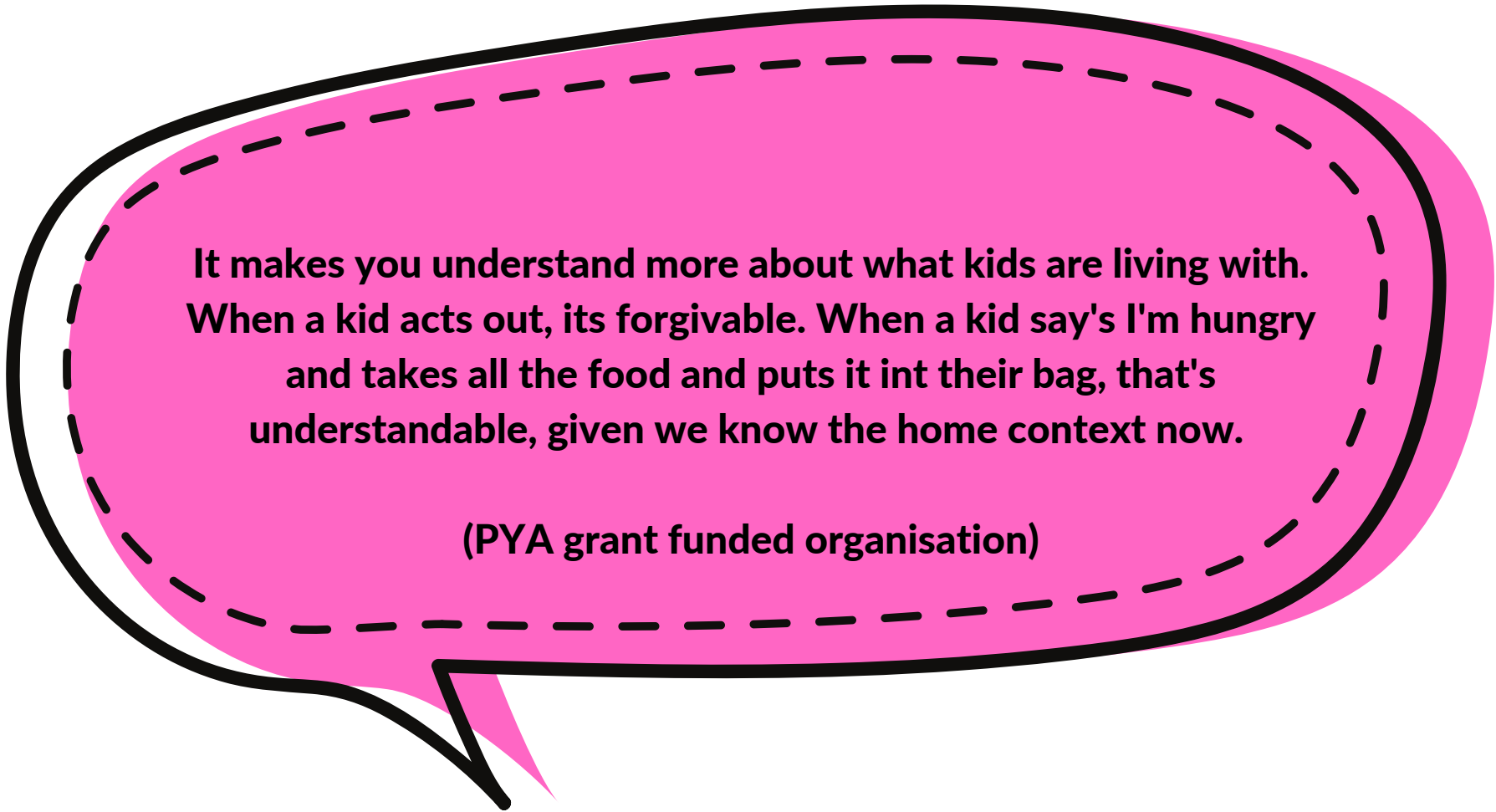> **Every day they went out and they took food and treats like ice blocks - every day - and the kids just appreciated the human contact, that somebody was still keeping an eye on them. They took tennis balls, chalk, free wi-fi, sports equipment and played on footpaths and in the park.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

10.2.1 A deeper understanding of young people's home life

Going out into people's homes provides a deeper insight into the diverse lives of young people who engage with PYA. The provision of outreach activities, including food and wellbeing packs, to over 40 families each day, meant activity providers such as PaRBA, YMCA and Larrakia Nation had regular contact with families across Palmerston. The following quote demonstrates how the deeper understanding of young people's lives gained through being invited into homes, has helped activity providers become better at the services they provide.

> **It makes you understand more about what kids are living with. When a kid acts out, its forgivable. When a kid say's I'm hungry and takes all the food and puts it int their bag, that's understandable, given we know the home context now.**
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

10.2.2 Meeting families and making stronger connections

The connections activity providers made with family members of the young people who attend their activities were an unexpected benefit of the outreach programs. Along with helping services better understand their participants, some long-lasting connections were made. Sharing stories, cooking and playing games with families in their homes, yards and streets meant that many families felt comfortable to come into the activity locations themselves once Covid restrictions lifted. Activity providers discussed how staff now feel more connected to families as a result of the outreach activities.

> **During Covid, all of these Youth Activity providers - - they all had to flip into this outreach service that was so valuable, because they got to meet the families and made connections that wouldn't probably have happened if covid hadn't happened.**
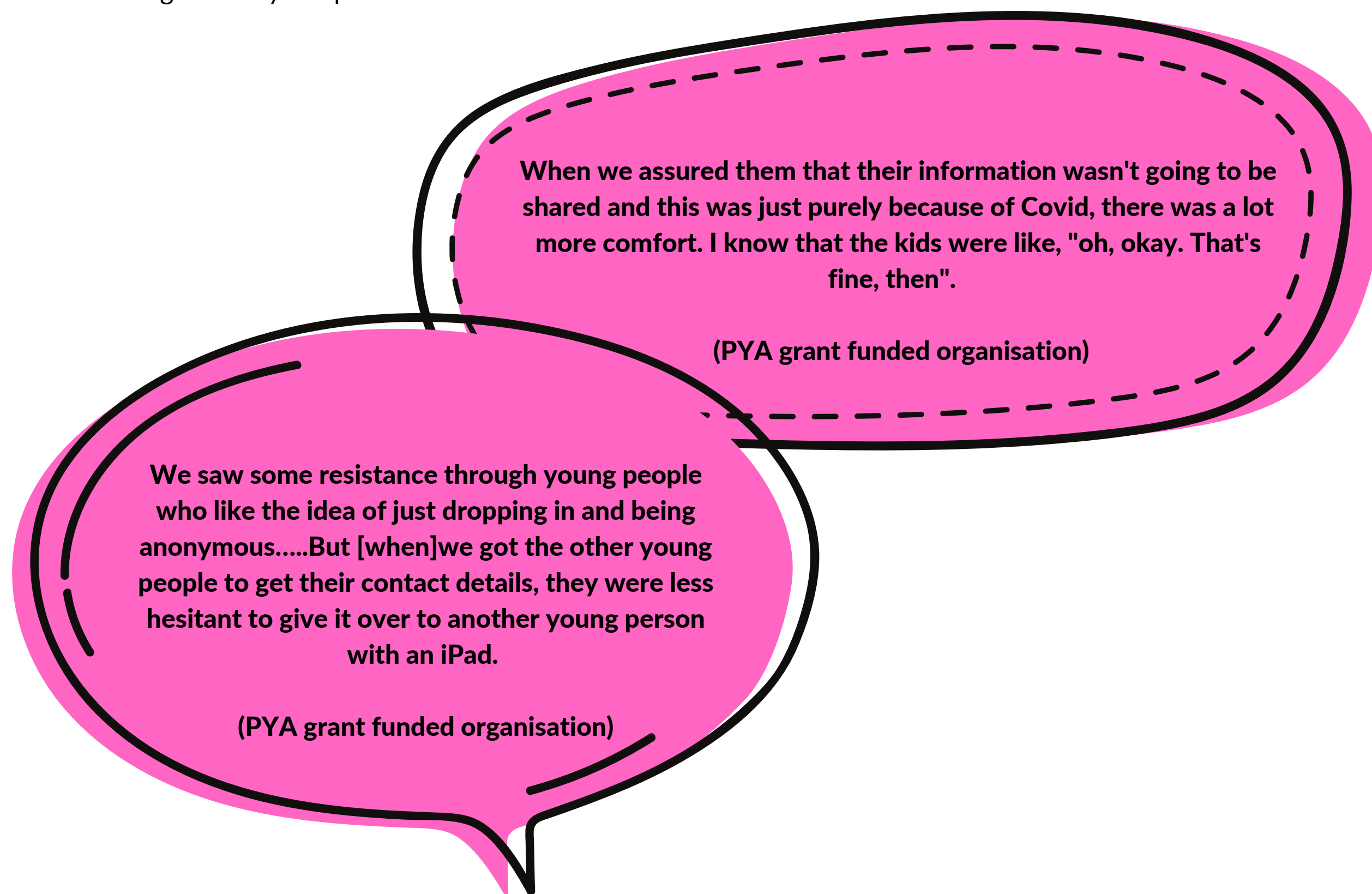>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

10.2.3 Practical changes to practices

When restrictions on gatherings eased in the NT, organisations needed to develop and enact their Covid safety plans so young people could re-enter the activities spaces. Complying with safety requirements had some interesting impacts on services, workers and young people. These are summarized here.
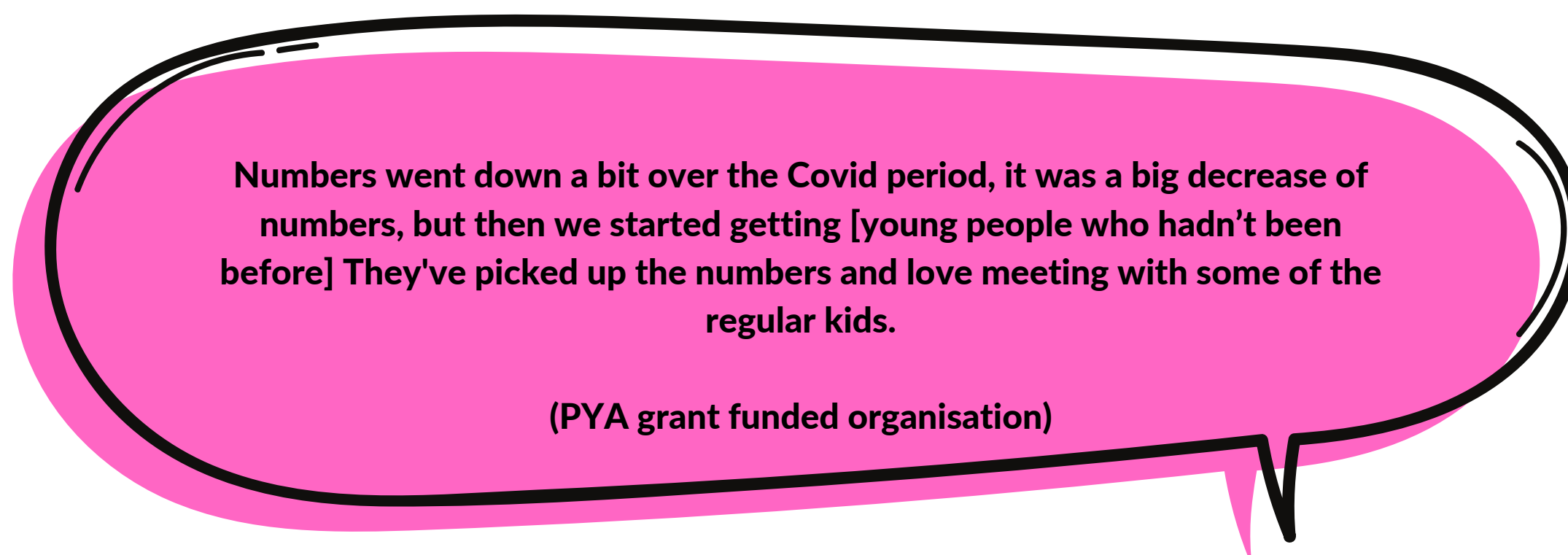
Contact tracing Information

Knowing who is attending activities and having ways to contact them should an outbreak occur, is a key element of Covid safety planning. However, for some young people attending drop in spaces, privacy is very important, particularly when they are new to the space and just trying it out. The following quotes show that having information explained and gathered in thoughtful ways helped with this.

> When we assured them that their information wasn't going to be shared and this was just purely because of Covid, there was a lot more comfort. I know that the kids were like, "oh, okay. That's fine, then".
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

> We saw some resistance through young people who like the idea of just dropping in and being anonymous…..But [when]we got the other young people to get their contact details, they were less hesitant to give it over to another young person with an iPad.
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

Being flexible with planning and managing attendance fluctuations

Because activities changed quickly and regular activities were not scheduled for some time, there was a feeling of 'stopping and starting' for some providers when activities were able to be run again. Strict limits on numbers post-shutdown, changes in some activities and difficulty in planning too far in advance, all meant that attendances could also be unpredictable. This required flexibility in planning and responding quickly to situations as they arose. However, as the following quote demonstrates, the changes to the usual activities may also have brought in some young people who hadn't previously attended as they sought out new and safe places to go.

> Numbers went down a bit over the Covid period, it was a big decrease of numbers, but then we started getting [young people who hadn't been before] They've picked up the numbers and love meeting with some of the regular kids.
>
> **(PYA grant funded organisation)**

Food packaging and serving changes

Covid related changes also involved some very practical things. As demonstrated throughout the evaluation, the provision of food is a critical element of the success of the youth activities. However, options for preparing and serving food became more limited under the Covid safety requirements. For some activities providers, this meant some ongoing changes as described in the next quote.

Now with COVID everything is a grabbable snack, so everything is pre-packaged. So, they can take whatever they need.

(PYA grant funded organisation)

Shack and Kay - PaBRA and Larrakia Outreach Collaboration

This concludes the evaluation results section of the report. It is clear that the elements of an emerging model of practice are coming together with the PYA Grant Funding. This includes the Palmerston Youth Program Coordinator role, the grant funding itself, the coordination group, the Youth Action Plan, and the local decision making group. Working together to further develop these elements into a community practice model would help to consolidate learnings as well as assist other locations embarking on similar programs.   The following section provides recommendations for the Palmerston Youth Activity Grant Funding to grow and develop into the future.

12. Recommendations

The PYA Grant Funding has been successful in achieving its stated aims. In accordance with early intervention and prevention focused approaches the grant funding is assisting in the creation of well-coordinated youth and community sector which not only provides engaging activities but acts as a support and safety net for young people in Palmerston and their families. As a result, the funding program is well placed to continue its's successes into the future.

The recommendations have organised into five different categories
- Building on current grant funding & administration
- Enhancing collaboration and coordination
- Increasing capacity for community engagement and outreach activities
- Strengthening training and learning support for activity service providers
- Continue to enhance existing activities

12.1   Building on grant funding and administration

12.1.1   The development of different PYA funding streams is recommended. One (smaller) pool of funding for new activities and innovations, and another that ensures the ongoing provision of the 'cornerstone' activities by local providers (PaRBA, YMCA, Larrakia National and City of Palmerston) with a proven track record of youth engagement and collaboration commitment. Long-term funding for these providers would assist in building positive long term community change and provide the consistency of staff and planning that trauma-informed practice requires.

12.1.2   It is recommended that the overall funding allocation for the PYA grant program be increased to ensure the ongoing high quality of activities is sustained and developed as per these recommendations.

12.1.3   Ensure that grant applications emphasise the time that will be required for attendance at PYA coordination meetings and encourage applicants to address their ability to do this in their funding application. In addition, they should be encouraged to budget for this attendance and participation.

12.1.4   Ensure that grant applications require applicants to carefully consider their proposed activity target group. In particular, the balance between engaging at-risk young people, and others not considered at-risk. This has implications for activity type, location, timing, support required and staff qualifications. It also has implications for how activities are promoted.

12.1.5   Develop a transparent system and/or open invitation to young people to join the grant decision making panel. This could be for one grant assessment session only, or for a specific time frame. Young people who are interested could be supported to participate by a youth mentor or a worker from a service they trust.

12.1.6   While there is no indication of problems in this area, for the sake of best practice, it is important to proactively share information about the composition of the grant decision making panels and the targeted funding decision making. This assist in maintaining trust and confidence in the systems and the collaboration as a whole.

12.2   Enhancing collaboration & coordination

12.2.1   Development of a shared online space for all information related to the youth activities. There may be different levels of access or visibility for different groups such as funded organisations, other organisations, community members, and young people to share what they are doing, making and learning and to highlight activities and events.   The online space could serve multiple purposes such as promotion and information sharing and is also linked to the next recommendation (12.2.2)

12.2.2   Develop a web-based 'data dashboard', located in the same online space as the above recommendation (12.2.1). All PYA funded service providers could share appropriate data about their funded activities. This may include attendance information (broken down into appropriate demographic information) types of activities and other indicators that are meaningful to the collaboration.

12.2.3	Regular forums or workshops where funded activity providers come together to share reflections and learning. Topics could include current issues young people are facing, evaluation best-practices, being trauma-informed in practice, de-escalation and communication, intercultural practices among others. Events could also build in guest speaks and offer appropriate skills and training options so that each activity provider can better understand and share the processes, outcomes and impacts of their work.

12.2.4	Some coordination group members and activity providers are currently using a web-based communication app to ensure information relevant to the safety and security of young people moving between activity locations is shared quickly. This practice appears to be working well and it is recommended that it be kept in place.

12.2.5	Attendance at PYA coordination meetings helps to keep the collaboration strong through the sharing of information, ideas and resources and provides opportunities for creativity and network building. As such, attendance at the meeting should be a requirement of acceptance of a grant offer. This recommendation links to recommendation 12.1.2.

12.2.6	Strengthening each service providers knowledge and understanding about when and how to refer young people to other services is important. Because the service environment constantly changes, there is a need to regularly re-visit referral information and processes so that all activity providers understand what is available for young people and when they made require linkage to specific supports.

12.2.7	It is important to allocate time for seeking clarity around the target group requirements, as some of the activity providers were unclear about which young people were the 'target' and why. A workshop to more deeply consider the implications of activities being open to all or to a specific target group and to seek clarity about providers assumptions of what 'at-risk' means to them– so that everyone is using the same language around 'risk' in the coordination group and working from the same understanding.

12.2.8	The coordination group is encouraged to work together to reflect on and develop the various elements of the PYA Grant Funding program into a model for community based early intervention practice. Alternatively, it could integrate the elements into a Collective Impact framework, to create knowledge that may be useful for current and future activity providers, and for youth activities in a broad range of similar contexts in other locations.

12.3   Increasing community engagement and outreach

12.3.1	Develop a PYA hands-on experiential presentation which can be used to engage 'hard to reach' young people in the locations they currently engage with, such as Clontarf Programs, schools and alternative education centres. Going into schools/Clontarf/alternative education with mentors who work in the activities, over a number of sessions, can allow young people to make a safe connection that may encourage further activity attendance.

12.3.2	Assess the feasibility taking existing activities such as Youth Drop In Sports Nights and Urban Jams, into the suburbs, streets and parks to engage with people with they live. There were multiple comments by young people and organisations about the success of previous street-based sports and activities. Investigating options for the safe delivery of this type of event would be beneficial.

12.3.3	Continue to build on existing relationships with NT Police to strengthen their relationships with young people in Palmerston. Kids vs Cops is a popular event, and more activities that bring NT Police and youth into the same space for positive interactions can support community connection.

12.4   Strengthening training and learning-support for activity providers

12.4.1   Explore each provider's staff training needs in relation to youth work, communication skills, trauma-informed practice and strengths-based practice. Once determined, training providers could deliver training which would bring together all the youth activity providers to learn and increase their networks. This recommendation is linked to Recommendations 12.2.3 and 12.2.6.

12.4.2   The PYA Coordination group could consider the development of an informal training framework for organisations delivering activities to build local workforce capacity ad enhance skills and experience for working well with young people in Palmerston.

12.4.3   Facilitate access for all activity providers to an online or phone-based 24/7 support service for practice advice and information, critical reflection, legal and referral information and debriefing support. Information from such a service might also be used to determine training and education opportunities for service providers.

12.5   Continuing to build on existing activities

12.5.1   Build on the success of the Larrakia Nation Youth Bus. Consider further transport ideas such as supplementing the Youth Bus with mini-vans or cars during busy periods. The Larrakia Nation bus services work well, but during peak times more options are required so that young people are not congregating for long periods of time outside venues at the end of activities.

12.5.2   Develop leadership options and supported pathways to leadership roles within each activity, for older young people. This could include clear pathways from participant, to volunteer, to training and employment.

12.5.3   Investigate the idea of starting a community action/social change activity. This should involve determining what issues or social movements are important to young people in Palmerston. It should also include a scoping study to find out what young people are already engaging in within the social change space and how they could be supported to build on their actions.

12.5.4   Ensuring continued access to excursions to adventure and action-based activities (such as ice-skating, trampolining, ten-pin bowling) which were very popular.

12.5.5   Investigate options for overnight holiday camping trips. This idea may appeal to the 'harder to reach' 15-17 year old young people. It could be linked to cultural learning experiences and to 12.5.6 below.

12.5.6   Consider more outdoor-education type activities for older young people (15 to 17) which involve learning a range of outdoor, survival and camping skills term time (after school). These new skills could then be applied to camping excursions during the school holidays.

12.5.7   Continue to keep the youth voice at the forefront of activity selection. This can occur through supporting activity providers to access current information, such as youth strategies, research, evaluation and planning documents concerning young people in Palmerston (and similar locations) and to engage and collaborate with young people in all aspects of activity decision making that young people express an interest in.

12.5.8   Investigate options for late-night activities that are specifically for 15-17 years old young people only.

Postcard by Tyren

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