Regional Youth Development Opportunities Network Inc.

A Conference That Recharged a Sector: Reflections from the 2026 RYDON Conference

The 2026 RYDON Conference brought together youth practitioners, educators, community leaders and service providers from across the region for two days of learning, connection and inspiration. Judging by the feedback from attendees, the event delivered far more than a professional development opportunity. It created a space where people felt energised, united and reminded of why they do this important work.

With 43 participants completing the post-conference evaluation, feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees rated their overall experience highly, with the vast majority selecting "Excellent" or "Good", and the event achieved an outstanding average organisation score of 4.93 out of 5.

More Than a Conference

When participants reflected on their highlights, keynote presentations, workshops and networking opportunities were consistently identified as valuable components of the event. Yet many people pointed to something deeper: the culture and sense of connection that emerged over the two days.

Attendees fondly recalled the daily "60 Seconds of Purpose" sessions, opportunities to hear from colleagues across the sector, the Welcome and Smoking Ceremony, moments of music and celebration, and even the local kangaroos that became an unexpected part of the conference experience.

One participant summed it up simply:

“Just everything. I haven't experienced a conference like this before.”

Another shared:

“This conference was hosted honestly the most energised and well run event. I am leaving with renewed energy and focus and so many new connections.”

Learning That Matters

Professional learning remained at the heart of the conference. Participants reported gaining a significant amount of new knowledge and skills, with keynote presentations and workshops receiving strong satisfaction ratings.

Attendees particularly valued the diversity of workshop topics and approaches, highlighting opportunities to explore different ways of engaging young people and collaborating across services.

The conference also provided a platform for meaningful conversations about the challenges and opportunities facing young people and the professionals who support them every day.

Building Connections Across the Sector

One of the strongest themes throughout the feedback was the value of bringing people together.

Participants spoke about the opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals, exchange ideas, learn from one another and build new networks. Many described feeling reassured to discover others facing similar challenges and passionate about creating positive outcomes for young people.

As one attendee reflected:

“Thank you for organising such a wonderful conference. It was heartwarming to be in a room of likeminded people doing important work. I am going back to my role feeling inspired and with a few new ideas tucked in my back pocket.”

Another noted:

“I appreciated the chance to be around like-minded people facing the same obstacles and barriers. I got so much out of meeting people.”

Exceptional Value

Feedback also highlighted the conference's affordability and value for money. Participants consistently described the event as accessible, worthwhile and an investment they would happily make again.

Comments included:

“This was such value for money for such a well-run conference.”

“Thank you for a fabulous 2 days! Affordable is the key!”

The overwhelming majority of attendees reported that they would recommend the RYDON Conference to colleagues and friends.

Looking Ahead

Alongside their praise, participants also shared thoughtful suggestions for future events. Requests included greater multicultural representation among speakers, more youth-led sessions and youth panels, and continued exploration of emerging issues impacting young people and communities.

Perhaps the clearest message from attendees was simple: they want more.

Comments such as “More please!”, “I will be back,” and “We need this” appeared throughout the feedback, reflecting a strong appetite for continued opportunities to learn, connect and collaborate through the RYDON network.

As RYDON looks ahead to future conferences and training opportunities, the 2026 event stands as a powerful reminder that when passionate people come together with a shared purpose, the impact extends far beyond the conference room. It strengthens relationships, sparks new ideas and renews the energy needed to keep supporting young people across our communities.