



2026 Conference

DAY 1: EMPOWER & PREPARE NSW 2026

Day One focuses on strengthening the capacity of the regional youth sector to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters alongside young people and communities. Through keynote presentations, interactive workshops and practical activities, delegates will explore community-led recovery, youth participation, preparedness strategies, wellbeing, health literacy and collaborative approaches to resilience-building.

Time	Session
8:30 - 9:00am	Registration & Networking : Tea/coffee available. Informal networking opportunity for delegates to connect prior to the commencement of the conference.
9:00 – 9:20am	Welcome by Uncle Warren Smoking Ceremony & Welcome to Country
9:20 – 9:30am	Conference Introduction Conference overview: Themes and objectives

9:30 – 10:15am | Keynote 1 – Plan C

“Youth at the Centre: Community Led Disaster Resilience”

Presenter: *Dr Jean Renouf*

This keynote explores the lessons learned during the 2022 Northern Rivers floods and highlights the importance of community-led responses during disaster recovery. Jean will speak to lessons learned during the 2022 Northern Rivers floods, the power of community-led response and the role of youth in it, and how empowering young people is central to future preparedness and resilience. In 2024, Plan C ran two pilot youth disaster resilience programs (NextGen Navigators). The learnings from this year of testing ideas provided the foundation for a successful long-term grant for developing youth disaster resilience in the Northern Rivers.

10:15 – 11:00am | Keynote 2 – Vinnies CARE Team (St Vincent de Paul Society NSW)

“Empower to Respond: Engaging Young People to Volunteer in Disaster Recovery and Community Resilience”

Presenters: *Bec Nездinal & Willem Booker*

This keynote provides insight into how community-based disaster recovery teams operate in real recovery settings and the role young people can play in volunteering, response and community resilience initiatives.

Presenters will explore how disaster volunteering can build practical skills, confidence and leadership capacity in young people while strengthening social connection and wellbeing.

Time

11:00 – 11:30am: Morning Tea & Networking

11:30am – 1:00pm | Workshop Round 1 (Choose One)

Workshop 1

Surviving Disasters: Practical and Fun Preparedness for Young People

Presenter: *Jen Smith (Plan C)*

This highly interactive workshop showcases practical and adaptable activities from the *Surviving Disasters* program that support youth engagement in disaster preparedness.

The session will explore tools for youth engagement in practical preparedness, critical thinking and spotting misinformation, Psychological First Aid and Stay-or-Go planning using hands-on exercises that build confidence and capability.

Workshop 2

Supporting Young People to Develop the Skills and Resilience to Prepare for, Manage and Respond to Disasters

Presenter: *Andrew Cummings (Andrew Cummings Training & Consultancy)*

Drawing on 40 years of experience working with young people, Andrew introduces tools and activities from the *Prepare to Grow (P2G)* toolkit designed to strengthen resilience, coping skills and preparedness.

The workshop will highlight tools from the P2G toolkit that support young people to develop the skills, knowledge and resilience to prepare for natural disasters, and the coping skills to manage the aftermath of these disasters. The workshop will be fun, informative and interactive, using practical activities from the P2G toolkit, as well as outlining Andrew's Top 10 Tips for delivering effective life skills programs for young people.

Workshop 3

From Stories to Strength: Using Action Methods for Community Recovery

Presenter: *Dimitrios Papalexis*

This experiential workshop invites participants to explore community recovery through storytelling, connection and creative action methods inspired by psychodrama, sociodrama and participatory facilitation approaches.

Participants will engage in reflective and interactive activities that foster connection, belonging and shared understanding while exploring ways these approaches can be used in their own work to foster belonging, recovery and renewed hope.

Time

1:00 – 1:45pm: Lunch & Networking

1:45 – 3:15pm | Workshop Round 2 (as above)

Delegates will have the opportunity to participate in a second workshop session from the morning stream.

Time

3:15 – 3:30pm: Afternoon Tea

3:30 – 4:45pm | Practical Workshops (Choose One)

Pollinator Pots: *Anna Noon & Anna Scobie (The Groundswell Collective)*

A creative, hands-on workshop where participants will create their own pollinator pot filled with pollinator-friendly plants and handmade nesting materials.

This activity explores how environmental connection, creativity and practical activities can support wellbeing, recovery and community rebuilding following disasters and disruptions.

Designing a Toolkit: *Dimitrios Papalexis & Andrew Cummings*

This collaborative workshop brings delegates together to contribute ideas, tools, strategies and resources to a shared youth sector disaster resilience toolkit. Participants will identify practical approaches and resources that can support young people, services and communities before, during and after disasters.

Ask for Health: Tara Schmidt (Youth Action)

This workshop aims to strengthen the capacity of youth workers and services to support young people navigating the NSW healthcare system. Participants will explore health literacy, young people's healthcare rights and practical strategies for helping young people access reliable health information and services.

Time	Session
4:45 – 5:00pm	Day 1 Wrap-Up & Reflections: Reflections from delegates and presenters & key learnings and themes from the day.
5:30 – 7:30pm	Networking Dinner & Drinks: An informal opportunity for delegates, presenters and stakeholders to connect, collaborate and continue conversations from the day. Venue TBC

DAY 2: RYDON Conference 2026

Theme: Regional Youth Sector Policy, Insight & Action

Day Two focuses on sector consultation, policy discussion and strengthening regional youth sector collaboration. Delegates will engage directly with sector leaders, Youth Action, the Office for Youth and young people to help shape future priorities, regional policy directions and advocacy opportunities.

Time	Session
8:45 – 9:10am	Registration & Connection Tea/coffee on arrival and informal networking opportunity for delegates to reconnect and prepare for the day's consultation and collaboration sessions.
9:10 – 9:20am	Welcome by Uncle Warren
9:20 – 9:30am	Introduction by RYDON: Overview of the day

9:30 – 10:00am | Scene Setting: Sector & Policy Context

Youth Action

- What they are hearing across regional NSW
- Emerging trends and challenges impacting young people and the youth sector
- Current advocacy priorities and sector needs

Office for Youth

- NSW Strategic Plan consultation overview
 - Key focus areas and priorities requiring sector feedback
 - Opportunities for regional input and collaboration
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10:00 – 10:30am | Plenary Session

Led by Office for Youth & Youth Action

This plenary will establish the framework for the day's consultation process and ensure delegates have a shared understanding of the objectives, discussion themes and intended outcomes.

Key discussion areas:

- Purpose and goals of the consultation process
 - How delegate input and feedback will be used
 - The role of regional youth services and stakeholders
 - Opportunities for collaboration and advocacy
 - Creating meaningful sector participation and contribution
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Time

10:30 – 11:00am: Morning Tea & Networking

11:00am – 12:15pm | Consultation Session

NSW Strategic Plan for Children & Young People – Live Workshop

This interactive consultation workshop provides delegates with the opportunity to contribute directly to discussions shaping the NSW Strategic Plan for Children & Young People.

Participants will explore how the plan reflects the realities and needs of regional communities and identify the supports and investment needed for successful implementation.

Focus Areas

- Is the plan fit for regional communities?
- What does the sector need to effectively deliver on the plan?
- How can government and the sector work more collaboratively?

12:15 – 12:45pm | Youth Work NSW Update

Presenter: Sam Kettlewell

An update on current Youth Work NSW initiatives, sector developments and emerging priorities impacting youth workers and services across NSW.

12:45 – 1:30pm: Lunch & Networking

1:30 – 2:30pm | Youth Hubs Presentation

Youth Action

This session explores Youth Action's Youth Hubs work and discussion paper, examining innovative approaches to integrated youth support and place-based service delivery.

Delegates will hear about emerging models, opportunities for collaboration and the key questions Youth Action is seeking sector feedback on.

Key discussion areas:

- Overview of Youth Hubs research and consultation work
 - Models of integrated youth support
 - Regional opportunities and challenges
 - Key questions for sector feedback
 - Future directions for collaborative youth service delivery
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2:30 – 3:15pm | Young People's Panel Conversation

Format: Facilitated Q&A

A conversation with young people sharing lived experience perspectives and reflections on regional service access and the future priorities they believe matter most.

This session aims to centre young people's voices and ensure their experiences and ideas remain at the heart of sector and policy discussions.

Themes may include:

- Experiences of regional young people
 - Access to services and supports
 - Disaster recovery and resilience
 - Youth participation and leadership
 - What young people want from the sector moving forward
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3:15 – 3:30pm | Closing Plenary

A final collaborative session drawing together the key themes, priorities and ideas identified throughout the day.

Office for Youth

- Key reflections and themes heard throughout the consultation
- What can be progressed or taken forward

Youth Action

- Sector implications and advocacy priorities
- Opportunities for ongoing collaboration and engagement

Final Wrap-Up

- Thank you and close
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Afternoon Tea & Informal Networking

**3:30pm
onwards**

Opportunity for delegates, presenters and stakeholders to continue conversations, strengthen connections and discuss opportunities for future collaboration.