

The Northern Territory Youth Health Declaration

Darwin, September 2019

We, participants in the Northern Territory Youth Health Summit, meeting in Darwin on 19th – 20th September 2019, declare the following major priorities and call on government and non-government organisations to act on the following priorities to achieve a healthier, safer future for all young Territorians.

These priorities were identified and developed by youth attendees at the Summit, and are subsequently endorsed by researchers, policy makers and practitioners in attendance.

Youth must be part of the solution. Each of these priorities should be underpinned by principles of partnership, specifically that young people should be included in consultations and decision making.

1. **A healthy mind is just as important as a healthy body.** A significant number of young people in the NT do not experience optimal mental health. Suicide and self-harm rates are alarmingly and unacceptably high. Compounding factors include: intergenerational trauma, racism, harassment, and a lack of social connectedness. We call upon policy makers and practitioners to ensure their work supports young people by appropriately addressing these underlying factors.
2. **Sexual and reproductive health and safety concerns all people.** Historically, this issue has not been discussed openly and honestly. To change this, there must be relevant sexuality and gender diverse education, which fosters healthy expectations and relationships. This should include a focus on consent and young people's rights. Accessible and approachable services are required to achieve this shift. These services must be adequately and sustainably funded.
3. **The health sector across the NT must commit to talk, walk and work with young people in addressing health in its broadest definition.** We recognise the inequity of access to services between urban and remote dwelling youth, which is unacceptable. Systematic change is required to support accessibility and responsiveness, with respect to both service provision and policy development. While we must appreciate and understand the impact of the digital age, we must also strive to be present with young people and offer meaningful support and connection.
4. **The above priorities cannot be addressed without confronting the reality of the climate emergency.** We assert that the climate crisis is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century, and young people are the generation who will most feel the impact of this. This nexus is not currently acknowledged within the health research space in the NT. We recommend that the impact of climate change is recognised and integrated into work to address youth health.