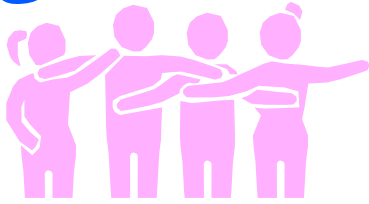


# THE BIG CONNECT




## WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR

### SOCIAL CONNECTION MATTERS

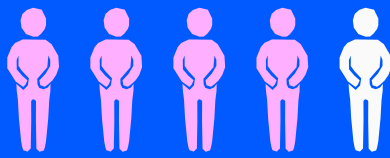
We asked, and they told us! Hundreds of young people and parents/carers right across Victoria have shared with us their experiences and challenges with staying socially connected. And they've shared their ideas of how to make things better. Their visions for a future that is healthier and brighter.

This is your opportunity to immerse yourself in their world and then share with us your solutions. How could you meet their needs? How could you create more social connection opportunities? How will you rise to the challenge and create a future that is healthy?



**71%**  
**OF YOUNG PEOPLE SAY STAYING SOCIALLY CONNECTED HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN COVID-19**

(Future Healthy Wellbeing Survey 2021\*)



**4 in 5**  
**YOUNG PEOPLE SAY BEING SOCIALLY CONNECTED IS IMPORTANT FOR THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING**

(Future Healthy Wellbeing Survey 2021\*)

## THE CHALLENGES

### Young person:

"I think over the past 2 years, it's definitely been quite challenging. For me, the lack of connection and not being able to see family and friends has been quite hard."

### Young person:

"It's been really hard to maintain our relationships and also been really hard on our mental health."

"Moving forward, it is vital that young people in Victoria find projects that cater to them."

### Young person:

"It can be hard to find really fun spaces to share with people like your neighbours at times."

### Young person:

"From the community centre to the playground there is a need for young people to feel safe and that you are welcome to be there."

### Carer:

"We need to expose kids to different types of activities to build resilience and we need to think creatively."

# 90% OF PARENTS BELIEVE THAT SOCIAL CONNECTION IS IMPORTANT FOR THEIR CHILD'S MENTAL WELLBEING

(Future Healthy Wellbeing Survey 2021\*)



# 2 in 5 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 18 TO 24 FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO CONNECT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY DURING THE PANDEMIC

(VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact studies, 2020)

### Young person:

Someone who is LGBTIQ+ "might not have come out to their parents yet. And then they're feeling that social isolation, which they can't really be themselves with their friends. They can't really be themselves with their family."

### Young person:

"I have a particular barrier of when I go out. You know, there's physical barriers everywhere for a wheelchair for access."



# THE IDEAS

## Young person:

"...I wish our society valued creative spaces and had a welcoming, rewarding and safe public community area. I'd love there to be more undercover areas in parks, spaces for music, and art, and studying."

## Young person:

"I would love to have more people with a shared experience to talk to, and for there to be more programs and more opportunities for us to connect."

## Young person:

"Sport is not just a way to stay fit and healthy. It's a good social platform and place to connect with people you'd never otherwise meet along the way."

## Young person:

"I think the future that I envision would be bigger green spaces and people going outdoors, enjoying the sunshine a lot more. I think just creating this space both physically and virtually is very important to mental health."

## Young person:

"For some, social access may be limited, so online networks where people can be themselves, express themselves and feel safe and included are very important."

## Young person:

"What I'd love to see is our community having community festivals. Let's have hotpot together. Let's come together and share our cultures and our experiences together."

## Parent:

"Spending time in nature brings us a lot of joy. Whether we're walking in urban environments or out on vast beaches down on the surf coast, these settings provide an opportunity for us [her family] to connect with each other."

## Young person:

"A program where people come along and they cook with each other and they connect, I think that would be awesome."

## Young person:

"It would be great to have community dinners, which are popular in rural towns where everyone brings a plate, and it is more about social connectiveness and sharing and being out with people."

## Young person:

I believe a healthy future is "one where people can have safe spaces to express themselves and connect with others in healthy ways."

## Young person:

"I would love to see a healthy future that enables me to connect with my friends in different environments, whether that's indoors or outdoors."

## Carer:

"Young people after the bushfires and then the lockdowns just want to have fun... and want experiences and to be able to connect more."

## Young person:

"People with disability want to stay social, and we want to be involved in groups, join trivia nights, just be interactive within our community."

## Young person:

"I'm really excited for us to be able to really just build a community and new people to feel welcome and safe and feel like they have friends in their neighbours. I'm excited for a future like that."



## THE IDEAS

### Young person:

“Being healthy to me means feeling connected with a community or group of people that you know and you have healthy support around you.”

### Young person:

“I’ve never met another person with my condition. [A healthy future] would just feel like community. It would look like friendship and it would be beautiful.”

### Young person:

If you find a space where you feel safe, “you can build self-confidence and improve either physically, mentally, emotionally or socially.”

### Young person:

“One thing that I would really like to see that would help with the lack of social connection across Victoria, is the bringing back of communities. I think we’ve lost the sense of community and what that word actually means – people being together, even little things like knowing your neighbours.”



## Feeling inspired?

We know you’re full of ideas and solutions – and we want to hear them. We have up to \$5m to bring your solutions to life!

Programs must be for young people and should be informed by, and respond to, what we have heard from them. Whether it’s a challenge to be overcome, a new opportunity or a way of working – show us in your application how you have responded to the voices of young people.

If you have an amazing idea to improve the social connection of young people in your community, then **apply today!**

### Further information

Future Healthy [Community Champion stories](#).

For deeper insights on social connection, check out these stories from [Ashika](#), [Coco](#), [Danica](#), [Josh](#), [Manahil](#), [Mark](#) and [Ravi](#).

[VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study, 2020](#)

[VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study: Follow-up survey, 2020](#)

\*Future Healthy Wellbeing Survey, 2021. This data was sourced from a VicHealth survey of 757 young people aged 18–25 and 751 parents and carers of kids aged 6–17 in Victoria.

*VicHealth thanks the young people aged 18 and over and parents/carers across Victoria who provided quotes that are used within this document.*