



ACT
Government

YEAR 7 HEALTH CHECK

CONSULTATION REPORT

EPIDEMIOLOGY SECTION
ACT HEALTH DIRECTORATE

AUGUST 2019

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT WE DID	4
TIMELINE OF ENGAGEMENT	5
WHY WE ENGAGED	6
WHAT WE ASKED	6
WHO WE ENGAGED WITH	7
WHAT WE HEARD	9
KEY INSIGHTS FROM CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITY AND YOUNG PEOPLE	9
INSIGHTS FROM THE YOURSAY CONSULTATION	9
INSIGHTS FROM STUDENT CONSULTATION	13
NEXT STEPS	14
ATTACHMENTS	15
A. YOURSAY QUESTIONNAIRE	15

INTRODUCTION

The Year 7 Health Check (Y7HC) is a new school-based program that will monitor risk factors for chronic diseases such as overweight and obesity, and assess the emotional wellbeing of children in the ACT.

Currently in the ACT:

- 1 in 5 (21%) children in Year 6 are overweight or obese¹.
- Six per cent of 12-13 year old children in the ACT reported having experienced an emotional wellbeing problem. This figure increases to 19% in the 14-17 year old age group².



Secondary school in particular, represents a time in children's lives where significant life transitions are made such as adjusting to a new school, study schedules and social structures while navigating developmental and socio emotional changes associated with becoming adolescents. Such changes can make young people more vulnerable to emotional and wellbeing stress.

By detecting health and wellbeing issues early, we are better able to support young people to access appropriate help to become healthier adults.

The majority of a young person's time is spent in the school environment. Therefore, schools provide an ideal opportunity to assess the health and wellbeing of young people.

Community consultation on the Y7HC program was conducted via YourSay from 27 February to 3 April 2019. As part of the consultation, we received email and questionnaire submissions from the community on the proposed program, privacy and sensitivity issues, and things that matter to parents and members of the public. The feedback from the YourSay consultation is summarised in this report, alongside feedback received through other face-to-face conversations with government and non-government stakeholders and the independent student consultations that were commissioned through the Children & Young People Commissioner.

We thank all respondents and participants for their engagement in the consultation process and for sharing their ideas on the Y7HC. All feedback is being taken into consideration and further engagement will take place with school communities, parents and health sectors stakeholders as the program model for the health check is finalised.

¹ ACT Health (2018). Healthy Canberra – Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2018. Available at: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-09/ACT-Chief-Health-Officer-Report-2018.pdf>

² ACT Health (2014). Summary report for the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey.

WHAT WE DID

Evidence review

- Best practice programs, services and measurement tools used nationally and internationally were reviewed.

Engagement with government and non-government stakeholders

- Development of the Y7HC program model
- Health service mapping to determine service availability.

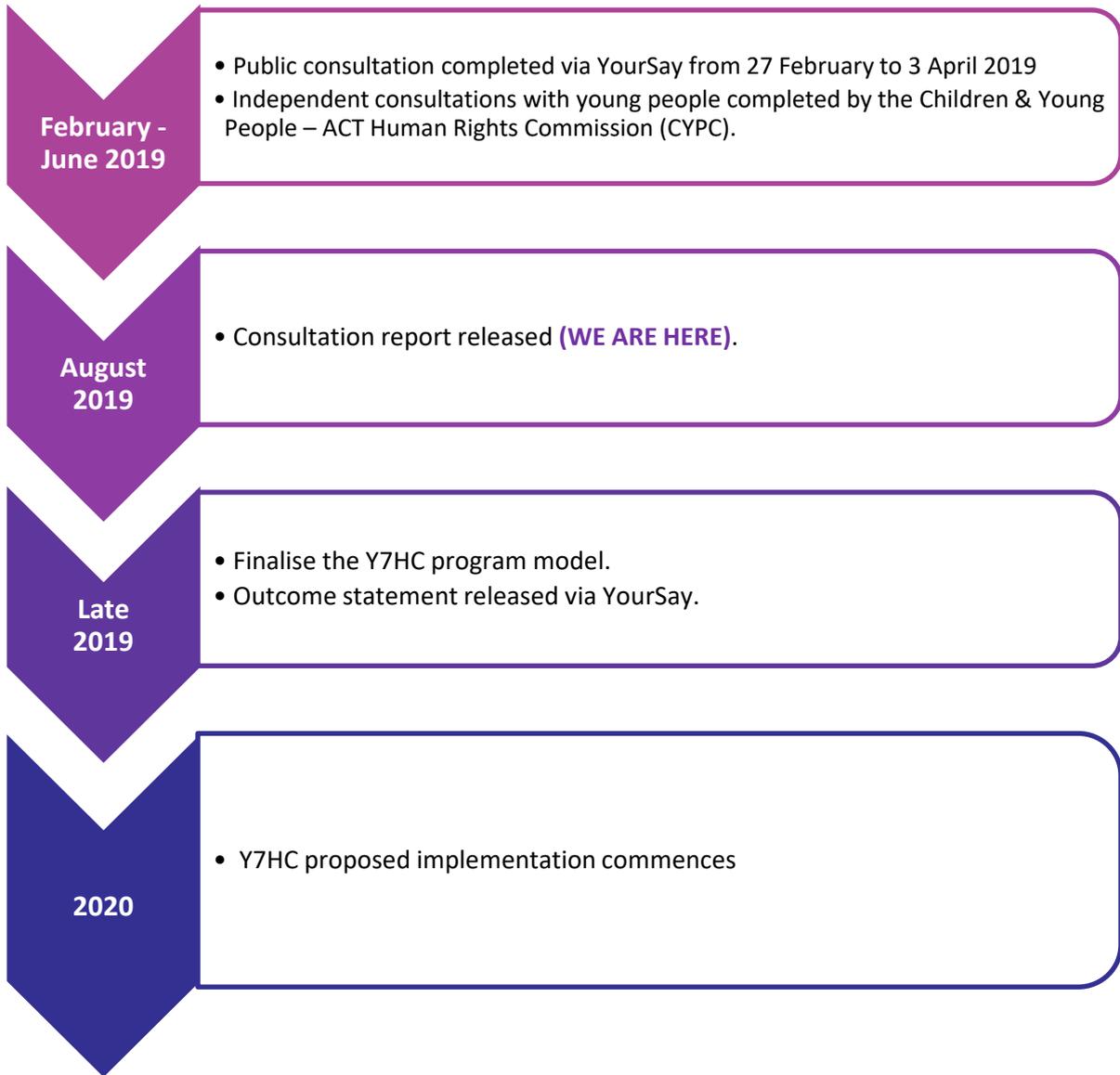
Engagement with community

- Feedback on proposed Y7HC program model
- Interest, drivers and barriers for parental consent were identified
- Preferred feedback mechanisms for results of the Y7HC were investigated.

Engagement with students

- Drivers and barriers for participation were identified
- Preferred feedback mechanisms for results of the Y7HC were investigated.

TIMELINE OF ENGAGEMENT



WHY WE ENGAGED

The Y7HC program is an ACT Government priority and is part of the ACT Government's commitment³ to improving the health of young people by identifying issues early and using the opportunity to do so in the school setting.

We engaged extensively with government and non-government stakeholders including health professionals and service providers to develop the preliminary Y7HC program model.

The Canberra community is at the heart of everything we do. We recognise the importance of community involvement in developing and refining our programs to improve the health and wellbeing of our community. The feedback we received from the YourSay consultation will inform the final model of the Y7HC program including privacy and sensitivity considerations, and future health service design in the ACT.

WHAT WE ASKED

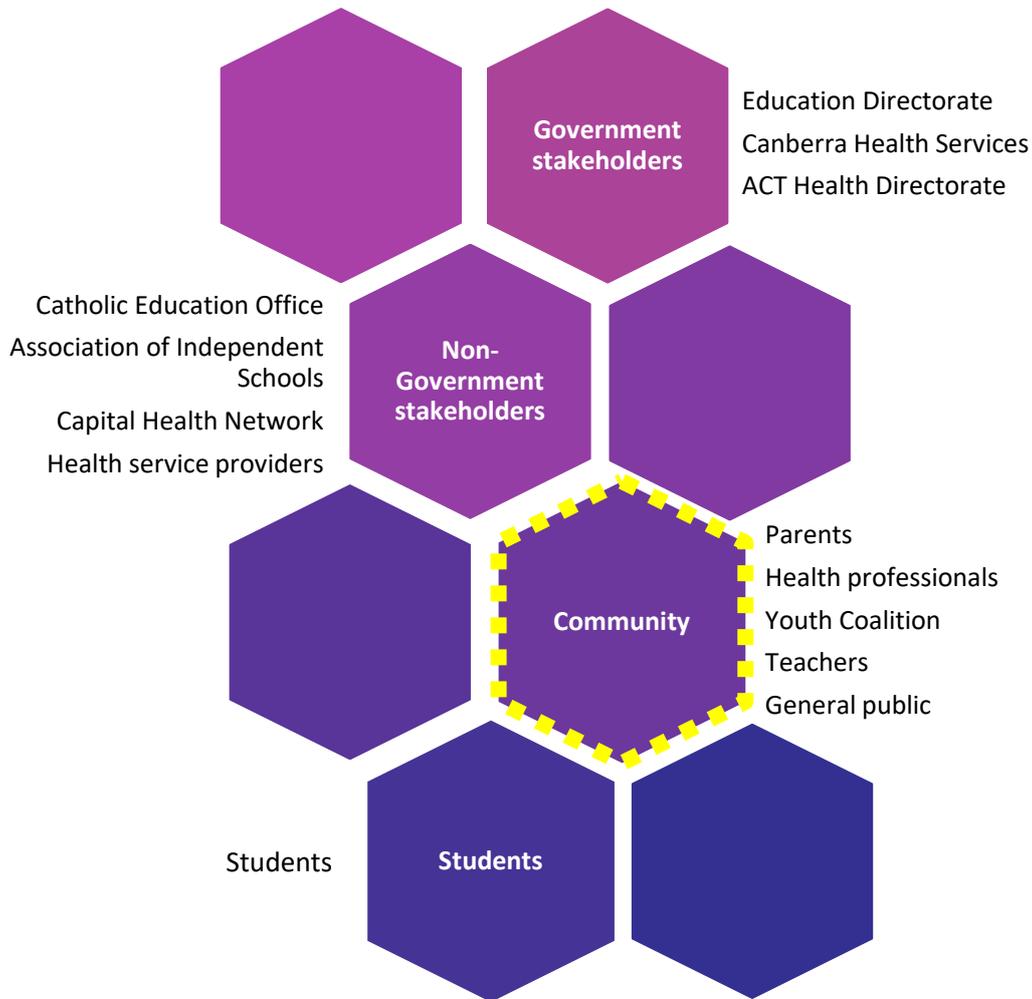
We sought opinions from the community on a range of aspects related to the Y7HC program model via the YourSay consultation.

- We sought interest from the public for the Y7HC program and investigated the drivers and barriers for uptake of the program.
- Responses obtained on questions regarding risk factors affecting the health and wellbeing of children will be used to inform the Y7HC survey questions.
- We also explored whether the results of the Y7HC program should be provided to the child at the time of the data collection. In the proposed model for the Y7HC, the results are provided to parents and/or to a general practitioner of choice encouraging communication of the results to the child in a supportive environment.
- Feedback was also gathered on the likelihood of parents and guardians accessing health professionals or health services to address any health issues identified by the Y7HC. This will inform health service availability and future planning in the ACT.
- Lastly, the public was given an opportunity to raise concerns and opinions related to the program. Feedback received will inform the final model of the Y7HC program.

³ ACT Government (2017). Ten Year Health Plan – Caring for Canberrans when and where they need it. <https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget-2017-2018/better-care-when-you-need-it/10-year-health-plan>

WHO WE ENGAGED WITH

We consulted with a number of government and non-government stakeholders during the development of the Y7HC program model. The graphic below provides a list of stakeholders involved in the consultation on the program.



We held face-to-face conversations with government and non-government stakeholders to plan the initial model of the program. Community consultation on the program model was then conducted via YourSay from 27 February to 3 April 2019. In addition, independent student consultations were commissioned through the Children & Young People – ACT Human Rights Commission for feedback on the proposed program.

From the 314 YourSay survey submissions received, the majority of respondents (68%) were parents and guardians, followed by other interested members of the public, health professionals and teachers (Figure 1). We also received written feedback from the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Association via email.

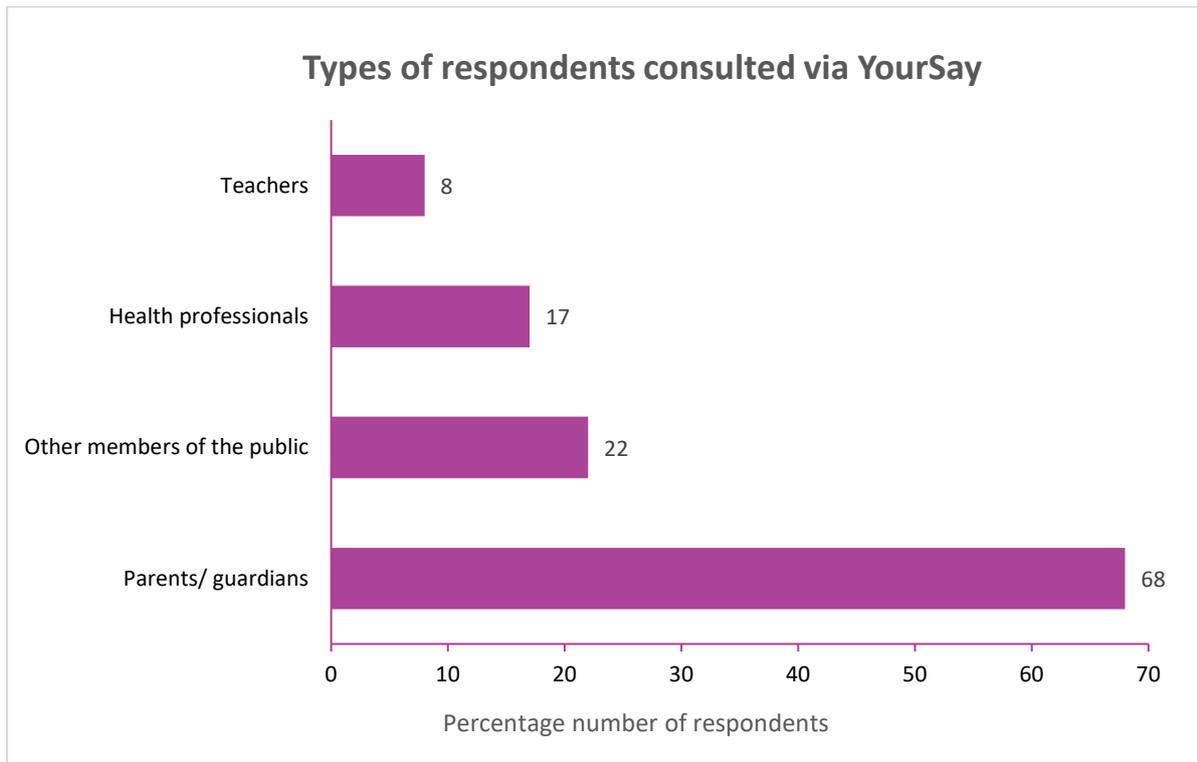


Figure 1: Types of respondents consulted via YourSay*

*Percentages in Figure 1 add up to more than 100% due to respondents being able to choose multiple answers.

The majority of respondents had a child or children studying in public schools (53%) while 12% had children in Catholic schools and 11% in independent schools. Less than 1% of the respondents had children who are home educated. Thirty per cent of respondents classified themselves as not being a parent.



WHAT WE HEARD

KEY INSIGHTS FROM CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITY AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A wide range of views and suggestions were received on the design of the Y7HC program. Key insights from consultation with the community and young people included:

- The health and emotional wellbeing survey component of the Y7HC program was well received by the majority of respondents
- Young people trusted a medical professional to complete the healthy weight assessment of the Y7HC and would like to complete the health and wellbeing survey online
- Young people want to be able to decline participation in the Y7HC at any given point, even if they have parental permission
- The majority of parents felt that results of the Y7HC should only be provided to parents and guardians and/or to a nominated general practitioner. While all young people who were consulted felt that results should be provided as a report to both parents and the child.

INSIGHTS FROM THE YOURSAY CONSULTATION

Support for the Y7HC program

- Overall, 63% of respondents welcomed the proposed Y7HC with 41% strongly supporting and 22% supporting the program.
- 11% remained neutral about the implementation of the program.
- 11% of respondents opposed and 14% strongly opposed the program.

Health and wellbeing risk factors

- Most respondents ranked depression/anxiety and bullying as the major risk factors affecting children's health and wellbeing followed by unhealthy food and drink consumption, overweight and obesity (Figure 2).

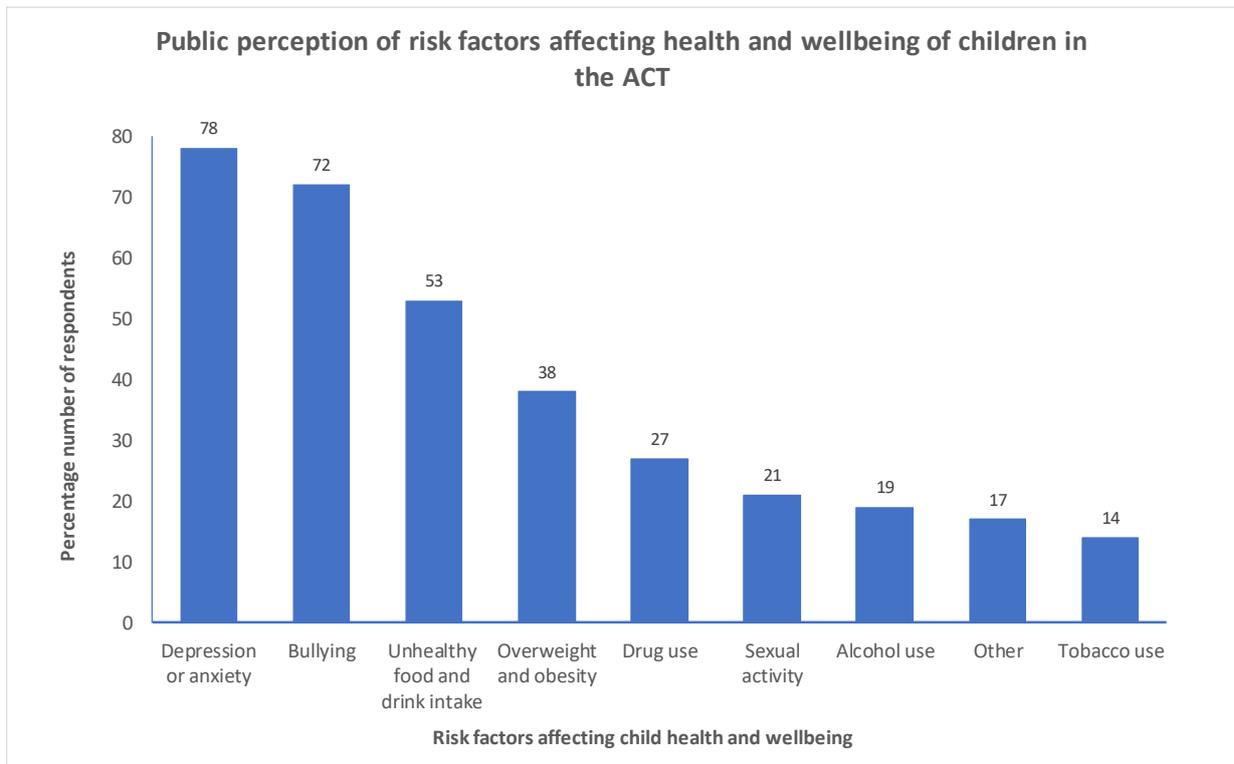


Figure 2: Public perception of risk factors affecting health and wellbeing of children in the ACT

Feedback on the proposed Y7HC model

- The health and emotional wellbeing risk factor survey as part of the Y7HC program, was well received by the majority of respondents. It was interesting to note that some respondents who opposed or were neutral to the program welcomed the health and emotional wellbeing survey component.
- However, there were differing views on the assessment of the healthy weight component. Approximately 21% of respondents felt Body Mass Index (BMI) is an inadequate measurement of healthy weight assessment.
- Concerns were expressed over potential body image issues, eating disorders, low self-esteem, bullying and depression that may result from the proposed healthy weight assessment.
- Respondents highlighted the importance of educating adults who are both involved in implementing and receiving the results with advice on how to create a supportive environment when discussing the results with their children.
- The majority of respondents preferred the results of the healthy weight component being provided to parents and legal guardians (84%) and/or general practitioners (51%), rather than the children.

YEAR 7 HEALTH CHECK

- Similarly, for the emotional wellbeing component, respondents preferred results to be provided to parents and legal guardians (88%) and/or to general practitioners (52%). Thirty eight per cent of respondents thought the results of both components should also be provided to the child.
- Approximately 51% of respondents reported that they are likely to seek health services or the advice of a health professional for weight management of their child or children as a result of the Y7HC program. This increased to approximately 64% for the emotional wellbeing management of their child or children.
- Feedback from the community consultation highlighted the importance of expanding services for nutrition, emotional wellbeing, overweight and obesity management for this age group (11-14 years) prior to implementation of the Y7HC program. Most respondents reported current services are at capacity or have limited availability.



Suggestions and other improvements for the program

There were a range of suggestions for improvements to the proposed program model received as part of the consultation. This feedback from respondents has been summarised into groups and includes:

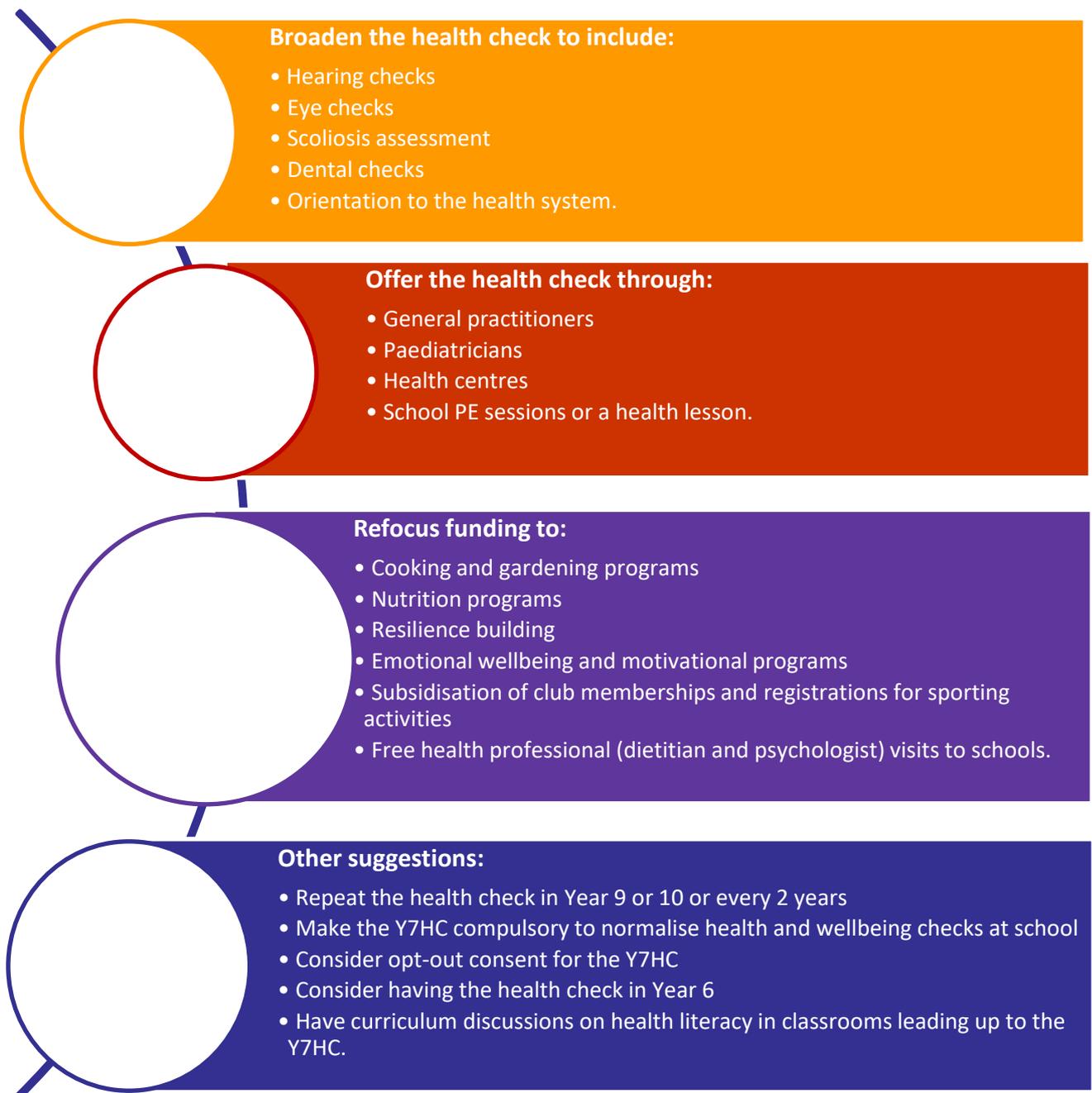


Figure 3: Other suggestions and feedback received from the YourSay consultation

INSIGHTS FROM STUDENT CONSULTATION

We also commissioned independent student consultations through the Children & Young People – ACT Human Rights Commission (CYPC) for feedback on the Y7HC program. Year 8 students were chosen for a focus group style workshop by the CYPC.

A summary of the consultation findings is outlined below:

The Y7HC needs to be safe and feel safe for young people

- Students trusted a medical professional known to the students—such as the school nurse—to conduct the physical check.
- Participants recognised the importance of having adults around for support, including teachers or family members as well as their friends and peer group, to feel safe through both the physical check and survey. For example, they would like teachers to be available to give support but not to do the actual physical check.
- Information collected should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, for example if teachers need to know in order to meet a student’s learning needs.
- Information provided about the Y7HC and how it will be conducted needs to be consistent with students’ understanding of information sharing and security. The health check also needs to be consistent with existing messaging to young people about online safety and protection of personal information.

The Y7HC needs to be flexible enough to respond to individual needs

- Students wanted to be able to complete the Y7HC survey online either on Chromebook or on their phones.
- The design and implementation of the Y7HC needs to consider how best to accommodate the individual needs of the participants, for example:
 - The online survey could be available for a set period such as a week. This would allow students to complete the survey at different points over the week and let them decide where, when and with whom the survey is filled out.
 - The physical check requires the same flexibility and will need to have ways for students to choose whether they would like peers, teachers or others present for support.

The Y7HC needs to ensure informed consent is an active process

- The Y7HC needs to be designed to allow for students to consent to one, both or neither the physical check and survey, as well as having the ability and knowledge to withdraw their consent at any stage of the check. This includes the ability to skip or not answer questions in the survey.
- A student’s consent needs to be respected and there should be no force applied to complete any part of the check if consent is declined.

Y7HC information and results need to be provided to students and parents

- Participating students were unanimous in requiring a copy of their results to be provided to them, not just their parents or guardians. They felt that this should be in the form of a report or email, as would be provided to their parents or guardians.
- The students also envisioned that information relevant to their learning may be shared with teachers.

Other suggestions

- Consider creating an environment with adequate space, a good atmosphere, and a relaxed vibe, with food and music for the physical check of the program.
- The physical check should be conducted in a way that is comfortable, non-intrusive and child-centred. An example given by one participant indicated that they should not be made to line up for hours.

NEXT STEPS

All consultation feedback is being considered by the Y7HC Advisory Committee, with the program model expected to be finalised later this year and proposed implementation of the Y7HC program in 2020.

There have been many learnings from the feedback that has been received and the phased implementation of the Y7HC is being revised in order to conduct further engagement with school communities, parents and health sectors stakeholders as the program model is finalised.

We thank all respondents and participants from the government and non-government sectors, the community and, in particular, students for their engagement in the design of the Y7HC to date.

Once the program model for the Y7HC is finalised, an outcome statement will be published to report back to the community on the final program model.

Further information and updates on the program can be found at health.act.gov.au/

ATTACHMENTS

A. YOURSAY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. If you have a child/children attending upper primary school (year 6) or high school in the ACT, which schooling system do you use?

- Public School
- Catholic School
- Independent School
- Home School
- I do not have a child/children attending school in the ACT

2. How supportive are you of the proposed Year 7 Health Check?

Please select the response most applicable to you

- I am extremely supportive
- I am supportive
- I am unsure
- I am not supportive
- I am opposed

3. What risk factors concern you most about your child's health and emotional wellbeing?

Tick any that may apply

- Bullying
- Depression or anxiety
- Overweight or obesity
- Unhealthy food and drink, i.e. processed food and sugar sweetened drinks
- Alcohol use
- Drug use
- Tobacco use
- Sexual activity
- Other (please specify): _____

4. Would you like feedback about your child's health (weight, height and emotional wellbeing) from the Year 7 Health Check? If answered 'No' skip questions 5-7

- Yes
- No

5. If you would like to receive feedback from the survey, who do you think should receive this feedback? Please select the response most applicable to you

- The child only
- The parent or legal guardian only
- Both child and parent or legal guardian

YEAR 7 HEALTH CHECK

- Nominated health professional only
- The parent or legal guardian and nominated health professional

6. If your child's weight was indicated at risk levels how likely are you to use a feedback letter to seek a health service/the advice of a health professional?

Please select the response most applicable to you

1. Highly unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Unsure
4. Likely
5. Highly likely

7. If your child was indicated at risk of emotional distress, how likely are you to use a feedback letter to seek a health service/the advice of a health professional?

Please select the response most applicable to you

6. Highly unlikely
7. Unlikely
8. Unsure
9. Likely
10. Highly likely

8. What else would you like to say about the Year 7 Health Check?



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