

# Wellbeing in Wills during COVID-19

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A Report by the Wills Youth Advisory Committee

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**Wills Youth Advisory  
Committee**

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# Wellbeing in Wills during COVID-19

## Background

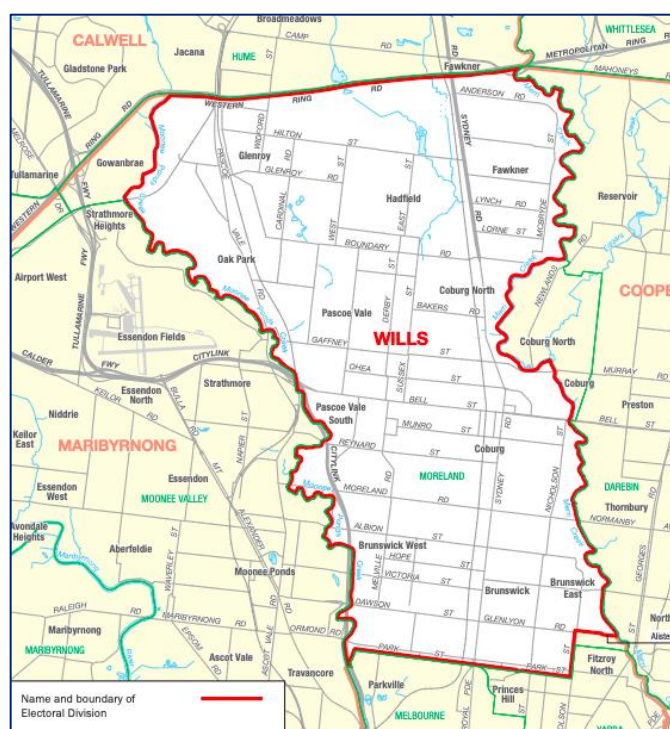
The Wills Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is a team of people aged between 15-25, who aim to discuss and act on issues affecting fellow young residents of Wills. In 2020 we had an opportunity to meet regularly to discuss some of the unique challenges faced by the community in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In this report we hope to summarise some of our key efforts over the last year and hope it provides some insight into the lives of young people in the Wills region.

## The Year That Was 2020

- In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives of millions of Victorians.
- COVID-19 restrictions, stay-at-home provisions, social distancing significantly impacted the lives of thousands of people in the Wills region.
- Young people are generally recognised to have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with their education, social life and work plans all disrupted.
- Findings from Headspace's 2020 National Youth Mental Survey found 34% of young people to be reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress as of June 2020.<sup>1</sup>
- Many young people lost employment with data showing that between March and April 600,000 Australian workers lost their job of which almost 1/3 were aged between 18-24. Young women were found to more affected than males.<sup>2</sup>
- Young people's education was affected, with remote learning found to be much harder for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>3</sup>

## In Wills

Recognising the immense challenges faced nationwide by young people, our team aimed to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 in Wills. We conducted a survey open to people aged 15-25 aiming to find out the social, mental health, education and employment related experiences of fellow young people. The survey was conducted over December (2020) – February (2021) and included responses from residents in Coburg, Brunswick West, Brunswick, Fawkner and Pascoe Vale. Whilst we hope that the survey results provide a snapshot of the experiences of young people in 2020, we recognise that we had a small number of respondents, which is a significant limitation. Nonetheless, it highlights some of the issues faced by young people in the Wills Region and may provide a basis for future research.



<sup>1</sup><https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Insights-youth-mental-health-and-wellbeing-over-time-headspace-National-Youth-Mental-Health-Survey-2020.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://theconversation.com/5-charts-on-how-covid-19-is-hitting-australias-young-adults-hard-147254>

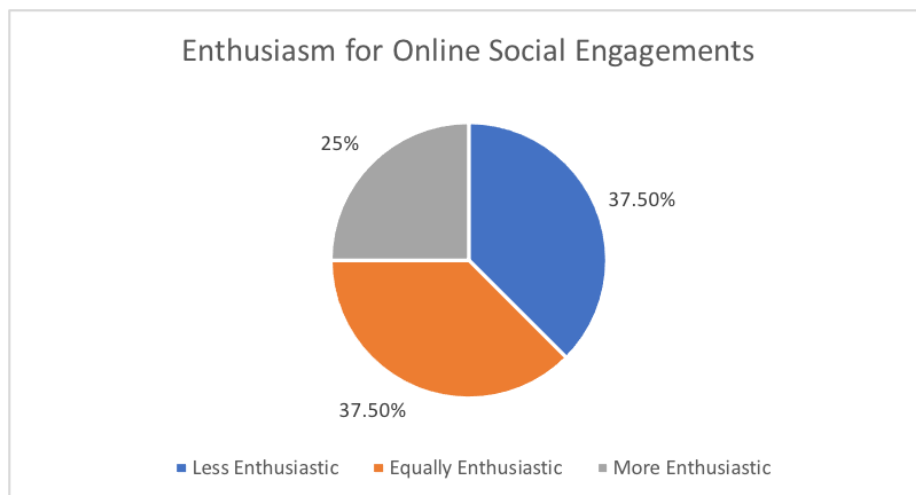
<sup>3</sup><https://grattan.edu.au/news/disadvantaged-students-may-have-lost-a-month-of-learning-during-the-covid-19-disruptions/>

## Wellbeing in Wills Survey

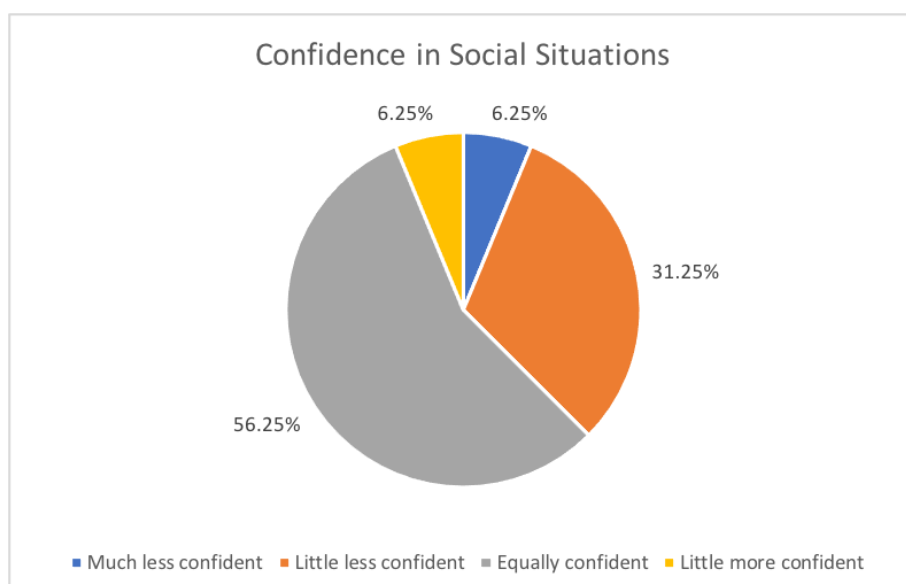
- Optional anonymous survey for people aged 15-25 years old.
- Distributed to young people primarily via online social media platforms and email.
- Featured a combination of closed and open answered questions.
- Focussed on the experiences of young people in the following domains: mental health, education, social life, working life.
- 16 Respondents

## Social

When asked about the experience of interacting with friends and family online, the majority of respondents indicated their level of enthusiasm towards online social engagements had fluctuated throughout the pandemic. 37.5% of total respondents indicated they had become less enthusiastic towards online social interaction since the beginning of the pandemic, while 25% indicated they now felt more enthusiastic about online social interaction. 37.5% of respondents indicated their level of enthusiasm towards online social interaction had remained unchanged since the beginning of the pandemic.

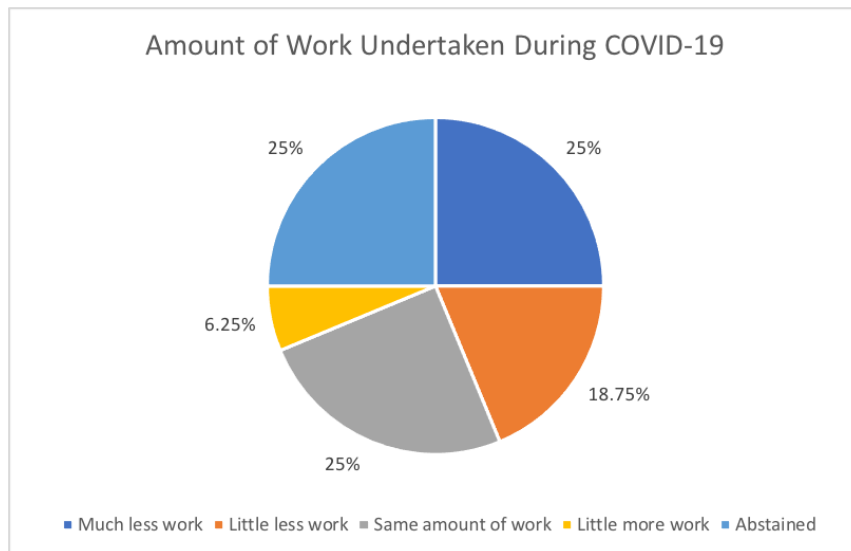


Despite the decreased opportunities for socialising in 2020, the majority of respondents (56.25%) indicated that they felt their confidence in social situations was unchanged since before the pandemic. Only 6.25% of respondents indicated they felt 'much less confident', with 31.25% of respondents indicating that they felt a 'little less confident' in social situations. 6.25% of respondents reporting feeling a 'little more confident' in social situations since before the pandemic.



## Work

When surveyed on the effect COVID-19 had on employment, 31.25% of respondents reported they had lost a job as a result of the pandemic. Many respondents also indicated the amount of work they had undertaken since before the pandemic had changed. 43.75% of respondents reported they had 'much less work' or a 'little less work' compared to before the pandemic, with 6.25% of respondents reporting having had a 'little more work'. Only 25% of respondents reported having the "same amount of work" as before, with 25% of total respondents abstaining from the question due to ongoing unemployment before and throughout the pandemic.



## Education

Young people in Wills were asked whether their education had been impacted by COVID-19 and 62.5% of respondents agreed that their learning had been affected. Participants were also asked to rate from 1 to 5 how supported they felt by their school/university/TAFE during the pandemic and 50% of respondents rated their support at a 3 – suggesting that some institutions were able to provide useful and impactful support for their students, while others were unsuccessful in their attempts or lack thereof.

## Physical & Mental Health

We asked young people whether they were trying to look after their physical health during the COVID-19 Pandemic and 56% of respondents said yes to maintaining a healthy diet, and 37% of respondents agreed that they had engaged in regular exercise. 63% of respondents also confirmed that they weren't getting sufficient sleep or keeping a regular sleep schedule.

62% of young people who completed this survey confirmed that they continued to access medical treatments as they normally would have prior to this pandemic. When asked to rate from 1 to 5 if they had spent more or less time before COVID-19 engaging in physical health promoting activities (1 being much less and 5 being much more), 93% of respondents rated themselves at a 3 or below – indicating a significant drop in activities such as cooking healthy meals and keeping active.

Three quarters of the survey's respondents said that prior to the pandemic they did pay attention to their mental health. When asked to rate from 1 to 5 how the pandemic affected their mental health, 68% of respondents provided a 4 or above as their answer.

## Quotes from Survey Respondents

In response to open answered questions, we received various responses – some recognising the immense challenges of life during the pandemic, whilst some reported their positive experiences and learnings.

### Mental Health

- *"I found telehealth psychology appointments didn't really work for me"*
- *"The waiting period for access to mental health specialists is far too long"*

### Physical Health

- *"Since the beginning of the second lockdown I have been actively trying to promote my physical health, particularly through healthy eating and exercising every day"*

### Social Connectivity

- *"I used social media a lot more as a way to keep connected and made new friends form this"*
- *"Made a number of new friends through Zoom which I have had contact with post lockdown"*
- *"I found it harder to maintain the same amount (of) communication that we would"*

### Education

- *"Initially I didn't think online learning was very effective, but as the year has gone on I've begun to enjoy it more"*
- *"Some things work really well online and can make things way more convenient, however you lose a lot more of the social side of uni"*

## Looking Forward – Issues Important to Young People in Wills

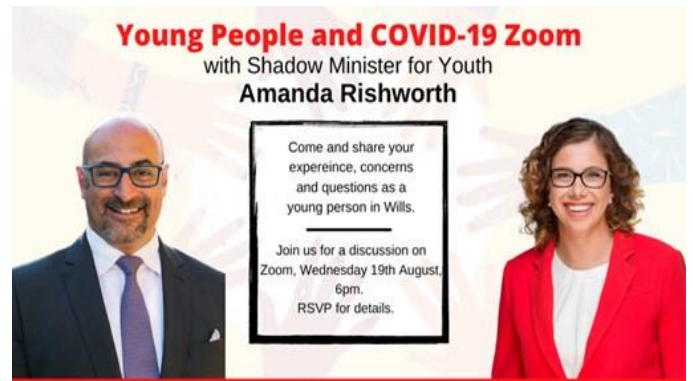
Survey respondents were asked if they had one message for the federal government about what they hoped will come out of the pandemic, what would it be?

These are some responses received:

- *"I hope that there will be more focus on the impact of school on people"*
- *"supporting young people and the working class financially"*
- *"Young people want hope and that starts with being able to afford a house!"*
- *"We can make big change happen in response to science. Let's make a change for ourselves, for our environment and for our futures in response to climate science"*
- *"As a young person I hope that this pandemic shines alight on the importance of mental health and well-being"*

## Young People and Covid-19 Zoom

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, the Wills YAC had the privilege of chairing a discussion about issues affecting young people with the Federal Labor Member for the Seat of Wills (Mr Peter Khalil) and the Shadow Minister for Youth (Ms Amanda Rishworth). The discussion covered a vast range of issues including employment, education and housing. The audience had the opportunity to ask questions and it was a fantastic opportunity to discuss how the federal government could be better supporting young people through the COVID-19 crisis.



## Youth Education in Wills

Over the year, the Wills YAC learnt of a number of young people in Wills who have been actively involved in organising educational workshops and support for high school students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Embrace Education**, an education-focused not-for-profit that runs free after-school homework clubs for disadvantaged high school students in Brunswick and Fawkner was also able to find a silver lining amidst the difficulties of 2020. Within 3 weeks of physical distancing restrictions being imposed, Embrace Education launched a new online tutoring program, which dramatically increased the number of students able to access free one-on-one tutoring during a very difficult year for learning.



**ASHA Lectures**, also an education focused not-for-profit organisation offers a range of educational programs for students and has worked with a number of schools in Wills including Fawkner Primary School, Moomba Park Primary School and the Australian International Academy. In 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASHA Lectures ran weekly VCE Biology Tutoring Sessions for students for Darul Ulum College of Victoria (Fawkner) providing additional support in a very difficult year for VCE students.



In a difficult year for everyone, it was encouraging to see the commitment of young people to assist their peers and fellow residents through volunteering.

Please feel free to contact Embrace Education (<https://www.embrace-education.org/>) or ASHA Lectures (<https://ashalectures.org/>) if you would be interested in participating in volunteer tutoring in Wills!

## Resources

Please find below a list of some of the resources and locations which may be of interest to young people in the Wills region. Please also feel free to contact the office for Mr Peter Khalil who is the Federal Labor Member for Wills. (<https://peterkhalil.com.au/connect/>)

### Health Centres

- Brunswick Baths, 14 Dawson St | <https://www.activemoreland.com.au/aquatic-and-leisure-centres/brunswick-baths/>
- Coburg Leisure Centre, Bell St | <https://www.activemoreland.com.au/aquatic-and-leisure-centres/coburg-leisure-centre/>
- Coburg Olympic Swimming Pool | <https://www.activemoreland.com.au/about-us/centre-locations/coburg-olympic-pool/>
- Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool | <https://www.activemoreland.com.au/about-us/centre-locations/pascoe-vale-outdoor-pool/>
- Fawkner Leisure Centre | <https://www.activemoreland.com.au/about-us/centre-locations/fawkner-leisure-centre/>

### Youth Centres

- Oxygen Youth Space | <https://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/community-health/moreland-youth/oxygen-youth-space/>

### Mental Health Services

- Headspace Glenroy | <https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/glenroy/>
- Lifeline | Call 13 11 14

### LGBTQIA+ Support Services

- QLife | <https://qlife.org.au> or Call 1800 184 527
- Switchboard | <https://www.switchboard.org.au> or call 1800 184 527

## Applying to the WYAC 2021

Applications for the WYAC 2021 will be open in February!

Wills residents aged 15-25 are encouraged to apply – it is more important now than ever to try and make a difference to the things you are passionate about.

For more information, visit <https://peterkhalil.com.au/wills-yac/>