

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal,

We are inviting your school to participate in the 2026 Mission Australia Youth Survey. This letter provides background to the Youth Survey, an overview of the methodology, and information about how to get your school involved.

Q. What is the Mission Australia Youth Survey?

Now in its 25th year, the Mission Australia Youth Survey is Australia's largest annual survey of young people of its kind. With 17,155 respondents in 2025, the Youth Survey helps schools, community organisations, governments and policymakers to gain an understanding of young people's values, concerns, challenges and ambitions.

Q. What does the Youth Survey involve?

The survey seeks to gather a range of insights into the lives of young people aged 14 to 19 across Australia. The survey enquires about sociodemographic information; issues of national importance; study and work; mental health and wellbeing; sources of support; community support connections; housing and financial situation; social media; climate issues; as well as sources of stress across a range of topics such as body image, cost of living, school, and friends/family. The 2026 survey also includes additional questions about local community involvement and neighbourhood changes that could improve young people's lives.

The study will involve the completion of an online questionnaire that takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Most of the questions require young people to check a box to indicate their response (such as yes/no questions or scales that rate the response from 1 to 5). There are a small number of questions that allow for free-text responses.

Q. How will my school benefit from being involved in this study?

Participating schools are eligible to receive a complimentary, tailored report detailing key Youth Survey findings specific to your school. Over 100 schools and organisations received a report in December 2025 and many commented on their importance as a resource for planning wellbeing and school engagement programs.

The report must be arranged in advance. To do this, please complete the '[School Principal Consent Form](#)' and tick the box to indicate you wish to receive a report for 2026. A member of our Research team will then allocate your school a unique, five-digit code. **Students will need to enter this code when they complete the survey online.** Schools with 100 or more responses from students will automatically receive a report. If less responses are likely, an alternative response number must be agreed upon prior to data collection. Please discuss this with the Research team.

"The Mission Australia Youth Survey is helpful in educating and supporting our students. For example, the results are used in Year 11 HHD as part of the youth health and data components. We compare our survey results with the state and national results and find that having current and reliable data helps engage the students in discussion of youth health issues. As a health teacher, the results help inform my curriculum/lesson planning and discussions with senior students about issues/supports available."

- Teacher, VIC Government School

Q. How does Mission Australia maintain ethical conduct in this research?

The 2026 Mission Australia Youth Survey methodology and procedure have undergone ethical review by University of Melbourne's Human Research Ethics Committee¹, the Mission Australia Ethics Committee and the Department of Education in ACT, NSW, NT, SA, TAS, QLD, VIC and WA, as well as a number of the Catholic Education Offices.

All information provided by your students will be treated in the strictest of confidence. The survey is conducted through Alchemer, an online survey tool based in the USA. Data provided through this survey is encrypted and transferred to Alchemer's server in the USA. By completing this survey, participants agree to this transfer. All data will be stored securely on a password protected drive at Mission Australia, accessible only to the project research team. Data we collect will be used to produce reports, publications and presentations for a variety of forums. Data will also be retained for use in future reports. In any public reporting we will only use national, state and/or postcode-level results. Your school and your students will not be identified in any reports resulting from the survey.

Q. How does Mission Australia maintain a duty of care for the young people who participate?

Mission Australia is committed to child and youth safety and has extended this responsibility to the young people who participate in the 2026 Youth Survey. In line with approvals obtained from State and Territory Education Departments and

¹ University of Melbourne researchers involved in the Youth Survey: Dr Kate Folia, Prof Eoin Killackey, Dr Caroline Gao

Catholic Education Offices, Mission Australia will report re-identifiable information back to School Principals or the appropriate Child Protection Authority, if a student's free-text response indicates that the young person is at potential risk of harm, abuse or neglect, and/or if a student's response indicates they are experiencing symptoms of psychological distress. Re-identifiable information includes respondent date of birth, gender and postcode. Upon receiving the notification, we recommend you re-identify the student (where possible) and provide support as necessary. You may receive notifications on a twice weekly basis (Wednesday and Friday), should a student/s response indicate potential risk of abuse, neglect or harm and/or psychological distress.

For more information on the reporting risk of harm procedure please see the '*Young person's guide to reporting the risk of harm*'. We encourage you to make this document available to your students and parents.

We anticipate few risks from your students' involvement in this study. There is no contact between researchers and participants or parents. We have been careful to make sure that the questions in the survey cause little distress. We have built in information about sources of support (Kids Helpline, headspace, Lifeline, QLife, Butterfly Foundation and 13YARN) throughout the survey to make this information available for students, should the questions cause anxiety.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Both you, as School Principal, and your students are able to withdraw from participation in the Youth Survey at any time. Students' data will not be used if they choose to withdraw from the study; any incomplete responses will be removed and destroyed to protect their information.

Q. How can I get my school involved?

There are five steps to take to get your school involved in the 2026 Youth Survey.

1. After reading the above information, please complete and sign the '[School Principal Consent Form](#)'.

Tick 'yes' or 'no' to state whether you are interested in receiving a report for your school.

- ➔ If you ticked 'yes' to receive a report, we will allocate your school a unique 2026 code for students to enter when completing the survey online. A copy of the survey will be sent to you as part of the email containing your school code. We encourage you to read the survey and consider if it is appropriate for your school.
- ➔ Please note that if you have previously participated in Mission Australia's Youth Survey you may have been given a code – please **DO NOT** use this code for the 2026 Youth Survey. Instead, **please use the new code** allocated for your school.

2. Send out the 'Information for Parents' and 'Parent Consent Form' and request they sign and return the form as soon as possible. Please keep the returned consent forms (either electronic or paper) for your school records.

- ➔ You may distribute parent consent forms via paper, or by circulating the consent information via your usual online permissions platform (which you may use to distribute permission slips for excursions), if your school has this technology available.

3. Organise a time in your school calendar for students to complete the survey. The survey is open **between 19th March and 14th August** and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete per student.

4. You may wish to organise an appropriate staff member—such as a member of your school's wellbeing team or a student counsellor—to be available during and immediately after students complete the survey, in case the survey raises any issues or concerns for students. This staff member can then provide immediate support and assist students to access further, appropriate support if/as necessary.

5. Ask teachers to share the survey link and your school code with students. Students can also take part via www.missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey and will enter the school code on the second page of the online survey, when prompted. Students can take part in class time or in their own time outside of school, and the survey can be completed on a laptop, computer or via smartphone.

Q. How can I get more information?

If you have any questions about the Youth Survey please email the Mission Australia Research Team at youthsurvey@missionaustralia.com.au. For additional information about the Youth Survey, please go to our website at www.missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey. The University of Melbourne's HREC can be contacted on Ph. 136 352.

We are eager to have your school involved in 2026 and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

The Mission Australia Research & Insights Team

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w missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey

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