

MISSING PIECES

A consultation on connection and belonging with young people involved in the youth justice system

In 2023 & 2024, we asked young people with experiences of Australia's justice system to share what 'connection and belonging' means to them.

We listened to everything that was shared, and are seriously considering it so that we can learn how to better bring more of the good stuff about connection and belonging into young people's lives.

Here's what we learned:

- **Doing things with and for your family** makes you feel connected. Things like hanging out together at a BBQ or fishing to make sure everyone gets a feed.
- It can be really **hard to keep in contact with your family when you're in juvi**, which can make you feel disconnected and make it harder to feel like you belong when you go back.
- Even though friends and family matter most in helping you feel connected and like you belong, **sometimes the people that build you up are the same people that bring you down.**
- **You want to be seen for who you are**, and not be judged because of your past, other people's choices, or things you can't control.

- How people communicate really matters. **You want good communication and encouragement**, not being yelled at, arguing or put-downs.
- Having **older young people to look up to**, who get where you've been, and can give you good advice.
- It's really helpful when **support workers understand what's culturally important to you** and respect your connection to Place. They should make sure there's ways for you to feel culturally connected even when you can't be in community or are off country.
- You need access to help and **activities you're interested in and that help you build supportive connections**, especially when you live in a remote community.
- You want **support workers who stick around, who get you, follow through** on what they say they'll do, and who stand up for what's important to you.
- You want to participate in **support services that respect you** and make you feel welcome.

How are we being accountable to what young people shared?

54 reasons is reviewing the way we work and exploring how we can strengthen what we do with participants' advice in mind.

We are creating a public summary of what we learned to share with other adults so they can learn too.

We are talking about what we've learned and what's important to you in spaces where support services meet to learn from children, young people and each other.

If you have other ideas, or want to talk about anything in this report, reach out to Oliver Hill, Practice Development Manager: call 0452 219 542 or email oliver.hill@54reasons.org.au

54 reasons exists to make rights real for children and young people in Australia.

We deliver quality, rights-based services for more than 25,000 children and families across the country every year, and we're lifting a national conversation on child rights to change systems, hearts and minds.

Find out more at 54reasons.org.au