



**youth options**  
*young lives transformed*

# YEAR IN REVIEW AND IMPACT REPORT



**2023 - 2024**

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which Youth Options and our team work and live, the Kaurua people, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# YOUTH OPTIONS!



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### Front Cover: Youth Options Launch

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## OUR VISION

Creating pathways to living a life of purpose.

## OUR MISSION

To support diverse young South Australians to transform their lives by developing the confidence and skills to learn, earn and live.

## OUR VALUES

### Authenticity:

We live and breathe our culture of being genuine and real, from our board and our leadership team right through to our service delivery team.

### Belonging:

We welcome people in and accept them as part of our community with kindness and empathy.

### Integrity:

We act consistently with the values we uphold.

### Learning:

We learn from our clients and each other to produce better outcomes and greater impact.

### Unconditional positive regard:

We demonstrate an ongoing belief in a young person's potential to achieve their goal.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Focus on client impact  
A holistic and integrated support model  
A youth relevant brand  
Solid foundation  
Active and engaged board leadership



# OUR LEADERS

Dear friends and supporters of Youth Options,

Welcome to Our 2023/2024 Impact Report. We are proud to present this comprehensive overview of our achievements and progress over the past year. This report highlights the dedication and hard work of our Board, staff team, volunteers, and partners in making a significant difference in our community.

Throughout the year, we have focused on expanding the impact of our programs, enhancing our services, and reaching more young people in need. Our commitment to transparency and accountability remains unwavering, and we are excited to share the positive outcomes and stories of impact that have resulted from our collective efforts.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported our mission. Together, we are creating lasting change and building a brighter future for all.



Doug Lyang  
Chairperson



Michelle Braham  
CEO





# BOARD MEMBERS



**Doug Layng – Chairperson**

Doug has been in people management and involved in Rotary for over 30 years with experience in business management, leading teams in sales, leading and encouraging volunteers.



**Tracey Newman – Deputy Chairperson**

Tracey is a Director at Impacto Consulting and shares with Youth Options her extensive experience in senior leadership, team transformation, client centredness, and innovation.



**Stephen Noble – Treasurer**

As a Chartered Accountant, Financial Adviser and Registered Company Auditor, Stephen brings a wealth of experience and knowledge as Youth Options treasurer.



**Sanja Hendrick – Public Officer**

With over 12 years of experience as a board member across various sectors, Sanja brings expertise in business literacy, advocacy, and capacity building to Youth Options.



**Kylie Luciano – Member**

Kylie Luciano joined the Youth Options' Board in 2022, bringing a wealth of experience from her extensive career in the vulnerable sectors, including mental health, justice, and disability. Her commitment to helping South Australia's youth stems from a lifelong sense of purpose instilled by her family's tradition of voluntary work.



**Leanne Isaacson – Member**

A passionate advocate for South Australia's youth, Leanne brings extensive experience in business management, community development, and education.



**Mehmet Kavlakoglu (Westpac Board Observer)**

With close to a decade of experience advocating for Australian young people and a background in Psychology and Law, Mehmet has worked in a variety of roles servicing young people directly and informing policies at a local, state and national level.

**We would like to thank Liz O'Connell for her contributions to Youth Options Board during 2023. Liz resigned from our Board due to changing her employment.**

# OUR WHY

**For over 36 years, we've wanted better lives for young South Australians.**

But in today's world, young people are up against some serious challenges. Many are dealing with social inequities, mental health struggles, economic hardships, and educational barriers. For example, nearly half of young Australians aged 18 to 24 feel emotionally lonely, and more than 1 in 5 rate their mental health as either poor or very poor. Additionally, 86% of young Australians faced financial difficulties last year, with a quarter of them experiencing this often.

Youth Options offers a pathway to meaningful employment through our specialised service model. Our focus is on providing learning and education assistance, emphasising life skills, resilience, and social connection.

We strive to equip all young people with the necessary tools and opportunities to realise their full potential, benefit from work, and achieve social and economic participation.

Adopting a unique person-centered and authentic approach, learning programs, along with skilled staff helps us achieve strong outcomes backed by our practical, evidence-based methodologies.

Over the next few pages you will find:

- Our Theory of Change which provides a visual representation of how we achieve our outcomes across different domains and timeframes
- An overview of our service user's needs and complexities
- An introduction to the team who bring to life our unique service model
- A showcase of the outcomes and impact we've achieved over the last 12 months.

We are excited to share with you the validation of our mission-focused approach as we create pathways to fulfilling lives.

Approximately 12% or 384,000 young people aged 15 to 24 are not in employment, education or training.

1 in 5 young people rate their mental health as poor or very poor

34% of young people with Autism are unemployed – eight times higher than the rate for people without a disability.



# Our Theory of Change

## Phase 1

## Inputs



>350 Participants



>50 Referring Agencies



Safe and Positive Environment



Values Driven Qualified Staff

## Phase 2

## Domains



Social and Emotional Learning



Learning Ability and Skill Development



Work Preparedness

## Outcome

## Phase 4

Immediate (0-6 months)



Sense of belonging



Willingness to try



Hope for the future

## Outputs

## Phase 3

# Case Management/Mentoring

# SACE Support

# Independent Living Skills

# Practical Work Skills

# Career Guidance

# Work Experience

# Learning Pathways

# Employment

## Phase 5

## Outcome

Medium term (6-12 months)



Health + wellbeing



Learning mindset



Aspiration + motivation

## Phase 6

## Outcome

Longer term (12 months +)



Resilience + Self Esteem



Further Education and Training



Maintaining Employment



### Key assumptions

- Young South Australians
- Aged 14 – 30 years
- Referred by external source
- Living with multiple complexities causing detachment from community, education and employment

## Impact



Satisfaction with life



Living Independently in a Connected World



Benefit from Sustained Employment



# OUR SERVICE BENEFICIARIES

Youth Options provides essential support to young people who have either missed a lot of school or lost their way after school. Our programs build confidence and skills through activities focused on social and emotional learning, learning ability and skill development, and work preparedness. By addressing these areas, we help young people develop the resilience and capabilities they need to thrive.

We recognize the complexities that many of our service users face which are identified collectively as highly vulnerable and disadvantaged with participation reflecting:

- Indigenous 9%
- State Care 15%
- Disability 52%
- Low literacy and numeracy 30%
- Learning difficulties 42%
- Bullied at school 18%
- Social anxiety 34%
- Family dysfunction 27%
- Domestic violence 10%
- Mental health concerns 40%

Without our help, these young people face uncertain futures with unstable lives. By tapping into their interests and passions, we help them discover their strengths and develop valuable skills essential to learn, earn, and live.

Youth Options is committed to transforming lives by offering guidance and opportunities, walking alongside young people on their journey without judgment, and providing a safety net.

**Average Age - 19**  
**57 % - Male**  
**39 % - Female**  
**1 % - Non-binary**  
**3 % - Trans**

**Complexity**  
**66 % - 5 or more**  
**27 % - 10 or more**  
**7 % - 15 or more**



# MEET TEAM YOUTH OPTIONS

Youth Options' unique service delivery model relies on a team of diverse and dedicated professionals committed to making a positive impact on the lives of young South Australians.

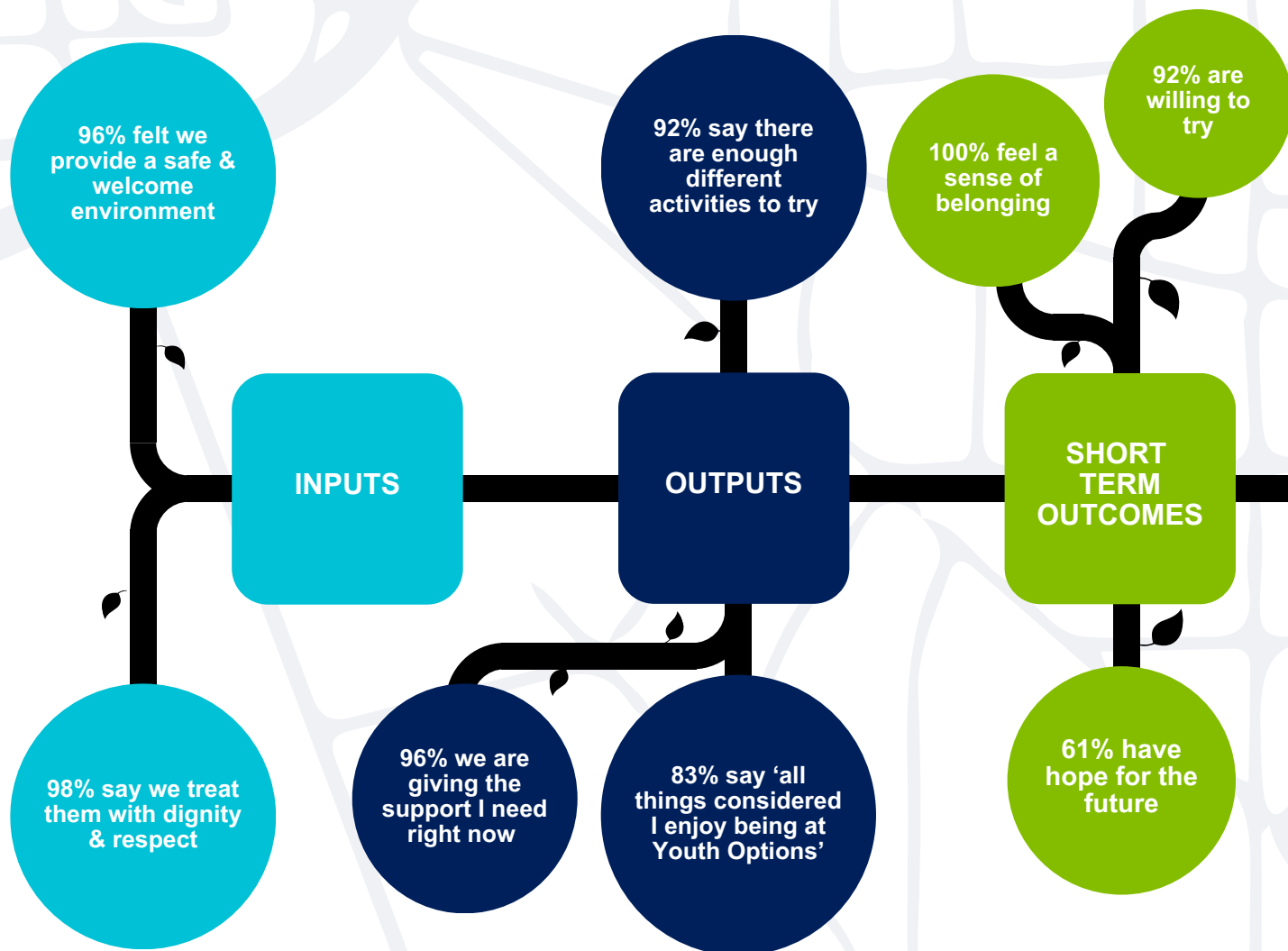
Our service delivery team consists of individuals with formal education and qualifications in counselling, psychology, social work, youth work, career development, education, training, and community services. In addition to their qualifications, our team members bring skills and experience in specialised areas such as driver education, barista training, welding, woodwork, automotive maintenance, Information Technology, and QA for gaming. This diverse combination of qualifications, skills, and experience creates valuable learning experiences for our service users.

Supporting the service delivery team are those who work behind the scenes to ensure Youth Options runs smoothly and remains a safe and welcoming environment for all staff, volunteers and service users. The internal services team includes staff and volunteers with qualifications in business management, leadership, accounting, human resources, information technology, research, and service design.

Our overall team possesses a unique skill set essential for supporting young people in developing both confidence and skills, ensuring they are well-equipped to achieve their goals.



# VISION: TRANSFORMED YOUTH PATHWAYS







# IMPACT QUOTES

"Being surrounded by people who had the best intentions of helping me, has drastically changed the path my life has gone down"

"We are thrilled about the positive impact the service has had on her and never imagined the turn around that has been achieved"

"I can't recommend these people (Youth Options) enough if you want to learn some new skills"

"Your facility and spaces for our young people provide a sense of calm and warmth, no wonder you have such positive outcomes for our young people (and many others)"

73% say they can bounce back after set backs

81% are taking steps towards achieving goals

LONGER TERM

64% maintain employment

62.5% report improved health

MEDIUM TERM

94% have set goals for the future

88% are forming ideas about future learning, work + life goals

# OUR STORIES - DRIVE ME PROGRAM

Youth Options is addressing the over-representation of young South Australians (16 to 23 years) in road trauma statistics through their comprehensive driver training program, Drive Me. This evidence-based program provides a safe, supportive, and structured journey through the Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS). It includes financial support for test fees, 75 hours of supervised driving, and four annual workshops on road safety.

Now in its 4th year, we have upped the ante by introducing the Drive Me Further Project aimed to enhance current training by introducing a Driver Simulation experience (myDRIVESCHOOL®), which combines simulation, gaming, and AI to help early-stage learner drivers. This innovative use of technology will assist students with learning disabilities and neuro-diverse conditions in understanding road rules and gaining driving experience in a safe environment.

Funding secured through the National Road Safety Grants program is providing support for ongoing costs, including paid mentors for in-car driving time, workshop costs, learner's permit fees, and replacing an older training vehicle with a new MG3.



# OUR STORIES - NDIS

## AN AMAZING JOURNEY

Scott's journey with Youth Options began four years ago when he faced challenges with his mental health due to bullying in high school. Initially lacking confidence, Scott wanted a job and independence but couldn't see a path forward.

Through Youth Options' career development service, Scott explored various job opportunities, including the Garden Squad program and woodworking, before rediscovering his interest in welding. Over 17 months, he built his technical and employability skills. With the support of resilience and social skills programs, Scott gained employment skills with a Disability Employment Provider and improved his social interactions. Consistent mentoring and a case management approach were key to his success.

In partnership with Multiple Solutions, a Disability Employment Service provider, Scott gained a welding role.

Testimonial from Scott's family:

*"We would like to take this opportunity to express that Youth Options have a high level of integrity and commitment that has worked above and beyond helping Scott achieve many goals over the last 4 years.*

*It has been an amazing journey seeing how Scott has challenged himself with all the wonderful caring compassionate support from all the team at Youth Options and his Mentors. Scott has become a confident young man by choosing growth and breaking through many difficult barriers. Youth Options team had taken the time to understand and interact trying different things when it was recognized that one of Scott's strengths was in welding.*

*Thank you we will be forever grateful."*





# OUR STORIES - ROAD TO RIVER RECOVERY

The River Murray Flood event occurred between November 2022 and February 2023 and it was the largest flood since 1956 and the third highest ever recorded. This impacted the Mid Murray community and the Mid Murray Council extensively.

During the year, Youth Options continued a collaboration which supported the local council with rectification and backlog works through providing training and development to over 20 Murraylands local participants.

This was delivered through a combination of accredited training from the Introduction to Civil Construction skill set and First Aid, supported by non-accredited learning, fitness and wellbeing sessions and live work experience in the field in conjunction with Mid Murray Council.

In a win:win:win outcome the participants gained skills and a significant number gained employment, Mid Murray Council gained a resident group which is more employable and significant manual assistance with the backlog of work caused by the flood, and the taxpayer though the government investment in this program has a cohort of participants which is less reliant on benefits.

Facilitated by Greg Nichol who came out of retirement to help and co-facilitated by David Dew and later by a participant who became a staff member, Stephen Oatway.



## Key stakeholders working with Youth Options are:

- Workforce Australia – Local Jobs funding
- Workforce Australia Murray and South East Regional Employment Facilitator
- SYC Ltd
- Red Earth Training Solutions (Intro to Civil Construction skill set)
- Mid Murray Council
- Zak Muirhead Personal Training
- Madec Training (First Aid)
- Mannum Football Club
- Career Partners Plus (specialist career coaching sessions)
- Local employers (providing employer visits to the group)

# OUR STORIES - RAISING THE GAME

Raising the Game is an innovative initiative launched by Youth Options in 2024, aiming to create a social enterprise that addresses both the needs of the gaming industry and the untapped potential of neuro-diverse young people. This initiative fosters inclusivity, promotes career opportunities within the Quality Assurance (QA) sector of the gaming industry, and creates a pathway for neuro-diverse young people to make best use of their skills, knowledge, and aptitudes.

Raising the Game serves a dual purpose: providing independent QA services to external video game studios while simultaneously empowering neuro-diverse young people through the QA for Gaming Micro-Credential Training Program. Six micro-credentials were developed in consultation with industry and endorsed by the Skills Commission on 21 September 2023. They are:

1. Play Testing
2. Bug Testing
3. Organising Play Testing
4. Writing Test Cases
5. Writing Test Plans
6. Working as a Freelance Tester



The QA for Gaming Micro-Credential Training Program is designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue a fulfilling career within the gaming industry's QA sector such as:

- Within a video game studio as part of a video game development team with roles ranging from a junior QA tester, lead QA tester to a QA manager.
- Casual/project based for video game studios during the video game development process by a QA studio/consultancy which provides services for multiple video game studios.
- As a freelancer providing a QA consultancy service.
- Testing software/apps in roles similarly to above.

Participants who achieve one or more Micro-Credential will have the opportunity to gain work experience through the Raising the Game social enterprise enabling the opportunity to expand employability and work preparedness.

Julia Farr M S McLeod Benevolent Fund has provided financial support to this project. Funding was also received from the South Australian Government Department for Education to engage the Action Learning Institute in the development of the Micro-Credentials and course materials.

  
**JFM Fund**  
INVESTING IN INCLUSION



# OUR STORIES - YOUTH SPACE

## SOPHIA SWIFTLY SURGES, SEEKING SUCCESS WITH STEADFAST STRENGTH

Sophia began her journey at Youth Options in January 2023, during Year 9. Her vibrant personality quickly made a positive impact, and she formed friendships almost immediately. She actively participated in various programs, including cooking, workshop warriors, intro to auto, and MIG welding. Her leadership skills shone through in the cooking program, where she excelled as a peer mentor.

In the welding program, Sophia's confidence grew significantly as she tackled new challenges and impressed both staff and students with her skills. Her long-term goal is to secure an apprenticeship in welding, and she is currently exploring different industries where these skills are crucial. She has also obtained her white card and is working towards gaining her Learner's Permit and First Aid training certificate.

Sophia's success in the welding program reignited her interest in her SACE, leading to the completion of one of her stage 1 SACE compulsory subjects. She has transformed from hesitation and doubt to self-efficacy and increased self-knowledge. In a brief phone interview, Sophia mentioned that FLO programs like Youth Space are more flexible and teach important skills such as self-management, responsibility, and communication.

Well done Sophia and congratulations on your achievements!!





# SPARK GRANT - FAY FULLER FOUNDATION

## WELLBEING PROJECT + MENTAL HEALTH

Youth Options embarked on a journey to better understand and support the wellbeing and mental health needs of our community, thanks to the generous support of the Fay Fuller Foundation.

Through a Spark Grant, we delved deep into the factors that contribute to the wellbeing and mental health of young people by exploring the questions of:

- What does satisfaction with life look and feel like for our community?
- How can we empower independence, social connection, wellbeing and better mental health beyond our services?
- What conditions are needed for successful transition to further education, learning and work opportunities?

Young people in our services, staff, the wider community and external stakeholders contributed to our learning. We learned that maintaining wellbeing requires more than just crisis intervention; it requires a focus on prevention. By fostering connections, imparting skills, and sharing knowledge, we are able to build a strong foundation for our young people's mental health. We realised that while we excelled in crisis intervention, true prevention meant equipping our youth with the tools they needed to thrive independently.

Already, we are bringing young people together through activities like health and fitness, resilience training, art, and cooking. These initiatives help build friendships based on common interests, aligning with our experiential learning philosophy. We also recognised the importance of supporting young people beyond our services, ensuring they have a robust support network and strategies to maintain the conditions needed for wellbeing and mental health, even after transitioning out.

With this knowledge and experience, we are looking forward to the next stage of this initiative. Stay tuned!



We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Fay Fuller Foundation for your generous support throughout our Spark Grant.

# FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

## WALLIS FAMILY CINEMAS



On a warm evening, the Wallis Cinema buzzed with excitement as 60 loyal supporters gathered to watch the highly anticipated movie, "Furiosa." This special event was organised to raise funds for Youth Options, a cause close to the hearts of many in the community. The atmosphere was filled with camaraderie and a shared sense of purpose as attendees settled into their seats, ready for an unforgettable night.

As the lights dimmed and the movie began, the sense of unity and support was palpable. By the end of the evening, the event had successfully raised \$420, a testament to the generosity and dedication of everyone involved. But the support for Youth Options didn't stop there. In June, Wallis Cinemas had chosen Youth Options as their charity of the month, resulting in an impressive \$2000 being raised over the course of the month.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to BNI United for their invaluable assistance in organising the event. Their dedication and hard work were instrumental in making the evening a success. Additionally, a special shoutout to Bianca from Wallis Cinemas for her energetic support and enthusiasm, which truly made a difference.

Together, the community's efforts have made a significant impact, and Youth Options is deeply grateful for the continued support. Here's to many more successful events and the positive change they bring!

# WallisCinema

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-2025

Youth Options is excited to unveil our new strategic plan, developed in collaboration between our Board and leadership team. This plan reflects the insights and feedback from staff and service users, as well as external stakeholders including parents and referral partners. We are committed to enhancing our services and impact, guided by the voices of those we serve and collaborate with. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Karen Miller from Leading Growth for her exceptional facilitation of workshops and unwavering support throughout this process.

Priorities	Objectives
<b>FINANCIAL STABILITY</b>	<p>Operate in an impactful and profitable way enabling investment to build critical core capabilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing partnerships with at least three philanthropic organisations, public ancillary funds and/or corporate sponsors.</li> <li>• Build a brand that supports fundraising and attracts annual donations.</li> <li>• Growing successful initiatives to be adapted in new contexts.</li> </ul>
<b>DOOR OPENING OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<p>Develop, trial and implement a “pathway to learning and earning” model offering youth the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to learn within a secondary school environment.</li> <li>• Gain work experience within our social enterprises such as Raising the Game and Youth Options Garden Squad.</li> <li>• Improve resilience and wellbeing needed to engage with life, learning and work.</li> <li>• Introduce a new digital learning platform with interactive resources and personalised learning pathways.</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	<p>Innovate for impact by involving youth, families, staff and other stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a replicable and scalable model that achieves opportunities to improve pre-defined outcomes for youth within our services.</li> <li>• Co-design and trial a portable toolkit that travels beyond our services.</li> <li>• Implement learnings from our Theory of Change to achieve overall impact of satisfaction with life, living independently and sustained employment.</li> <li>• Involve Board members in listening and learning from our youth.</li> </ul>
<b>OPTIMISATION</b>	<p>Ensure the “right” people are doing the “right” work by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upskilling staff in innovative teaching techniques and technology integration.</li> <li>• Implementing a performance management system to track and evaluate program outcomes in real-time.</li> <li>• Improving processes, staff digital literacy, capabilities, and satisfaction by implementing professional development and wellness programs for YO staff</li> </ul>
<b>EXPANSION</b>	<p>Scale impact and numbers by working across communities in need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open new alternative learning centres in areas of high need.</li> <li>• Increase community engagement and awareness of YO services through outreach events and partnerships.</li> </ul>



**THANK YOU!  
WE COULDN'T HAVE  
DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!**

**BENT CREEK**  
McLAREN VALE AND ADELAIDE HILLS  
AUSTRALIA

**Wallis  
Cinema**

**CITY OF  
ADELAIDE**

**PALMERS**  
FIRST AID  
TRAINING & SUPPLIES

**GAME  
PLUS**

**intojobs**  
int@work

**ATEC**  
Adelaide Training & Employment Centre

**Efm**  
HEALTH CLUBS  
The right fit for you.

**SS**  
Strategix

**Westpac Foundation**

**Local Jobs  
Program**  
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

**adelaide**  
CHRISTIAN CENTRE  
Empowering People for Life Change

**CRISP**  
& CO.

**Action  
Learning**  
Institute

**pe**  
PERFORMANCE  
EDUCATION

**HIT** **sa**  
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

**BNI**

**JFM Fund**  
INVESTING IN INCLUSION

**syc**

**Mid  
Murray  
Council**

**BLACKBIRD IT**

**Fay Fuller  
Foundation**

**reclink  
australia**

**Flinders  
University**

**Skills SA**

**University of  
South Australia**

**LEADERS  
INSTITUTE**  
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**TORRENS  
UNIVERSITY  
AUSTRALIA**

**citysouth  
association**



**youth options**  
*young lives transformed*

📍 40 Sturt Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000  
☎ (08) 8388 6600  
✉ [hello@youthoptions.org.au](mailto:hello@youthoptions.org.au)  
🌐 [www.youthoptions.org.au](http://www.youthoptions.org.au)  
📘 @YouthOptionsOrg  
🌐 [linkedin.com/company/youth-options-org](https://linkedin.com/company/youth-options-org)