

Evaluation of Phase 1 of Karakan's Multicultural Youth and Families Navigation Service

June 2026



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Executive Summary

Phase 1 of Karakan's Multicultural Youth and Families Navigation Service (MYFNS) aimed to collaboratively design and develop resources that enable young people (aged 7-21 years) from Pacific Islander, Māori and First Nations backgrounds, to connect with community and the services that matter to them to enhance their social and community participation. The way that the MYFNS team approached this work led to much more than resource development. This community development work was undertaken in Logan, Ipswich, Inner Brisbane and the Gold Coast and was initially funded by a 2-year grant from the federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing secured in partnership with selectability Ltd. Between June 2024 - June 2026. This has now been extended until June 2027. The MYFNS team engaged 2,945 young people, 1,225 family members, and 297 unique community service and support stakeholders in the first two years of the service.

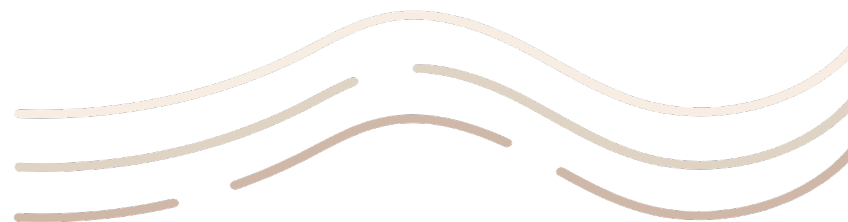
1. How did Karakan navigate the process? Karakan navigated Phase 1 through four ways of working: trust as a foundation, cultural capability as an intuitive strength, a place-based approach, and community-led action. The MYFNS team acted as "bridge builders" between young people, families and support landscapes by listening first, building trusted relationships, adapting to each community, and allowing young people's voices to shape resource development. This approach required time, flexibility and taking action even with uncertainty, but created the foundations for authentic engagement and collaboration.

2. What key messages were heard from young people and families? Young people described challenges that affect how safe, supported and included they feel. These included practical barriers such as cost, transport and knowing where to go for help; cultural and identity-related needs such as belonging, cultural connection and experiences of racism; and social and emotional wellbeing needs, including feeling misunderstood, isolated or unsure where to find trusted support. Young people wanted support that is holistic, low or no cost, culturally safe, visible through social media and digital platforms, but delivered through in-person, peer-led and mentoring approaches.

3. What impacts were experienced? For young people involved in Phase 1, working with the MYFNS team created connection, confidence, voice and leadership. Community service and supports stakeholders reported stronger networks, improved cultural capability, clearer referral pathways and added capacity to respond to community need. For the MYFNS team, the work strengthened confidence, cultural leadership and a sense of meaningful contribution to community. For Karakan, Phase 1 expanded the organisation's visibility and reputation, created new partnerships, and generated organisational learnings that are now shaping the Pacific Islander and Māori Engagement Framework and Strategy.

4. What facilitated or limited this way of working? Phase 1 was enabled by strong demand from community, young people's willingness to share their voices, the MYFNS team's cultural capability, flexible and relational leadership, evaluative practice, and the funding of dedicated Navigator roles in Logan, Ipswich, Inner Brisbane, and the Gold Coast. Key barriers included short-term and constrained funding, limited sector and stakeholder capacity, transport and access barriers for young people, the challenge of working across four regions with a small team, and the need for sustained presence in community.

Overall, the evaluation shows that Karakan's MYFNS team has done more than develop resources. It has demonstrated a culturally grounded model of community navigation that strengthens relationships, builds youth voice and leadership, and positions Karakan as a trusted partner in community-led mental health and wellbeing work.



From this Phase 1 evaluation we can draw some clear conclusions about **recommendations for actions** as the MYFNS team and Karakan move towards Phase 2. Most of these recommendations centre on preserving and protecting the four ways of working and these ways of working should serve as key reflective tools for Karakan as they consider each recommendation implementation.

Recommendations for Organisational Action

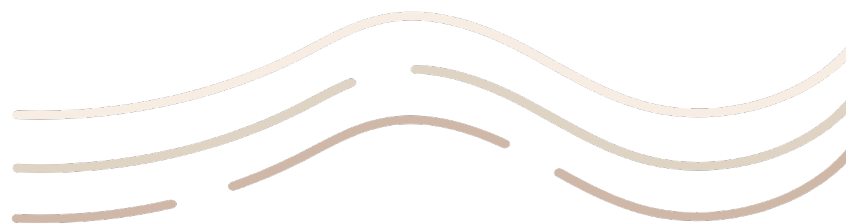
1. **Share** impacts of Phase 1 with stakeholders and celebrate the work
2. **Attract** funding for MYFNS sustainability
3. **Articulate** MYFNS team roles
4. **Retain** place-based roles in MYFNS with targeted recruitment
5. **Spread work** to deepen connections in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane
6. **Ensure** support for MYFNS to undertake mobile work in community
7. **Continue to enable** flexibility and time for community-led agenda
8. **Embed** organisational resources into Karakan practices

Recommendations for the MYFNS program of work

1. **Deepen** partnerships with local councils in Ipswich, Brisbane and Gold Coast
2. **Maximise** the visibility and impact of the Wayfinder series
3. **Formalise** reflective practice on the four Ways of Working
4. **Expand** the capacity of MYFNS team for advocacy

Recommendations for MYFNS evaluative practice

1. **Plan** evaluation of Phase 2 processes and impacts
2. **Refine** monthly reporting templates in MYFNS
3. **Review and refine** the Program Logic Model



Project Background.

What is the Multicultural Youth and Families Navigation Service (MYFNS)?

Karakan are working with young people with psychosocial disabilities from culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) and First Nations (FN) backgrounds, their families, carers, and community members to:

- **Facilitate** engagement with local community organisations that support young people
- **Connect** with young people, their families and carers to support mental health and wellbeing
- **Facilitate** groups and activities to understand the key issues, barriers and service gaps people are experiencing in their community
- **Develop** resources to support social and community participation for young people, their families and carers

This work is collectively known in Karakan as the Multicultural Youth and Families Navigation Service (MYFNS). This program of work was funded by the federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing through an Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) Grant secured in partnership with selectability Ltd in June 2024 (2 years funding), and since then they have received a 12-month timeline extension through until June 2027. Karakan see this grant-funded project as **the first phase in an ongoing area of work.**

The aim of Phase 1 was to collaboratively design and develop resources that will enable young people (aged 7-21 years) with psychosocial disabilities from CALD and FN backgrounds, to connect with community and the services that matter to them, in order to enhance their social and community participation. By supporting participation of CALD and FN young people in a culturally safe way, Karakan expect to see a positive impact on young people's mental health, wellbeing, and quality of life.

Karakan has a strategic priority to support Pacific Islander and Māori community members (a strategic priority in the 2023-2025 and 2025-2028 Strategic Plans). Therefore, this project has specifically focused on working with young people from Pacific Islander and Māori backgrounds along with FN young people (primary cohort) and the families and carers of young people with psychosocial disability from CALD and FN backgrounds (secondary cohort). The scope of Phase 1 includes working in Logan, Ipswich, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane, with a starting focus on Logan and Ipswich.

The work in Phase 1 of the program has include three stages:

1. **Community development work:** the Karakan team have acted as bridge builders between existing community services and between young people and community services. Karakan's role here is to help young people and families to navigate the complexity of the service landscape (when needed) and bringing community services together to collaborate to support better outcomes for young people.
2. **Collaborative resource design work:** with young people has centred on the Karakan team facilitating six workshops with eight young leaders (the Youth Advisory Group) between August - October 2025.
3. **Resource production work:** with young people, community stakeholders and an external media provider to create a series of resources between November 2025 - March 2026.

Phase 2 of the MYFNS program will continue to deliver community development work and focus on the implementation, dissemination and evaluation of the resources created in Phase 1.

Why evaluate MYFNS?

Karakan has engaged an external evaluation partner, Enable Health Consulting (ehc), to support a brief evaluation of Phase 1 of MYFNS. The reasons for this evaluation work are to:

1. describe the journey that the Karakan MYFNS team has been on with community in this program
2. hear from young people about their experiences of being a part of this program and what it has meant for them
3. hear from community service stakeholders about the engagement work being done in this program
4. understand the impacts of this program for Karakan as an organisation and for their role in community

This brief evaluation is not intended to capture the impacts of the implementation of the resources on young people in community. Instead, this work will document and describe the way of working that Karakan has undertaken to create the resources and the key messages that have been learned through this partnership.

Project Scope.

Project Language.

The words we choose to use matter. Language can influence our views and understanding, can carry hope and possibility, or can be divisive when used to stigmatise and discriminate. In this evaluation project we will adopt **strengths-based language**. In practice, this means we will describe the opportunities and positive characteristics of the people and places we evaluate, rather than describing what is lacking or missing from a context.

¹ Adapted from: *Shifting Minds: The Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, 2023-2028*

We recognise that the term “mental health” is often used interchangeably to refer to mental illness. In this evaluation project we conceptualise three different and distinct terms: ¹

- **mental health and wellbeing** refers to a state of cognitive, emotional and social wellness
- **mental ill-health** occurs when an individual's cognitive, emotional and social abilities are negatively affected. The term mental ill-health includes people with a mental illness but is also a broader term and includes people without a formal diagnosis
- **mental illness** is when an individual has been diagnosed with a mental illness by a medical or health professional

There are also some **project-specific terms** we want get clear on that will be used. Some key terms include:

- **Psychosocial disability:** a term used to describe a disability that may arise from a mental health issue.² Psychosocial disability is not about diagnosis; it is about the functional impact and barriers which may be faced by someone living with a mental health condition or issue. A psychosocial disability arises when someone with a mental health condition interacts with a social environment that presents barriers to their equality with others. Someone with a psychosocial disability may require support to overcome the barriers to social inclusion they face.

“A lot of people with lived experience object to the use of the term ‘disability’ to describe their experience, people should be clear the word disability is being used to describe life barriers rather than the person.”
- A person with lived experience of a mental health condition^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}

² NSW Health. What is psychosocial disability?

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/psychosocial/foundations/Pages/psychosocial-what-is.aspx>. Accessed on: 23rd June 2026

The term psychosocial disability frames the scope of the funding agreement for this work, but the MYFNS team did not adopt this language in their engagements with community or partners.

- **Co-Design:** Co-design is an approach that attempts to actively involve consumers in the design process, working together to help ensure a resource or service meets the consumer's needs. Co-design acknowledges that everyone has the right to participate in decisions that impact them and everyone has valuable knowledge to contribute to the design process.³

Co-design in this project was conceptualised with community and culture in mind. As a place-based initiative, Pacific Islander and Māori ways of knowing and learning were used in the engagement process – specifically Talanoa and Kōrero. These are inclusive terms that cover informal and formal conversations for learning, transparent information sharing, and building and maintaining relationships. There are parallels between these concepts and yarning in First Nations practices, in that they are oral, relational ways of making meaning: they centre story, reciprocity, and respect rather than “interviewing”.

- **Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD):** is a collective term used to describe individuals or groups whose cultural backgrounds, languages, and traditions differ from the dominant culture in a given setting. Cultural and linguistic diversity can encompass a range of aspects including a person's country of birth, their ancestry, where their parents were born, what language/s they speak, and their religious affiliation.⁴ This term is not used in practice by the delivery team. In practice, the team move beyond the label to recognise the distinct cultural identities.

Rather than grouping communities together, the approach is culturally grounded, relational, and responsive to each community's needs, and ways of engaging.

- **First Nations (FN):** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first peoples of Australia. They comprise hundreds of groups that have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions.⁵
- **Pacific Islander and Māori:** is widely used in Aotearoa, New Zealand to both unite and distinguish these peoples and cultures. As a collective noun of separate peoples, Pacific Islander and Māori are used to acknowledge the common Pacific ancestry that both cultures share, whilst distinguishing Māori as Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa (New Zealand), and Pacific Islander as migrants from other lands in the Pacific region.⁶ This collective noun has been adopted in the MYFNS team and for this report.

Project Values.

The MYFNS Evaluation Reference Group was made up of people from different organisations, with different life experiences and expertise. The group defined core values that guided decision-making processes throughout the evaluation project. These values were:

- Centring on the voices and experiences of young people
- Transparency in decision-making and processes in the project
- Reflective practice to enable honest feedback throughout the project
- Practices that create a safe place for all to be challenged throughout the project

³ The Co-Design Initiative. Co-design: shared perspectives on authentic co-design. The Co-Design Initiative, 2016.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Culturally and linguistically diverse Australians Overview - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Accessed 23/02/2026

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/population-groups/indigenous-australians/overview>. Accessed 23/02/2026

⁶ Enari, D., & Haua, I. (2021). A Māori and Pacific Islander label—an old history, new context. *Genealogy*, 5(3), 1-7. Article 70. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5030070>

Project Partners.

The key groups of people involved in this project are:

- **Young people:** are people aged 7-21 years from CALD and FN backgrounds living in Logan, Ipswich, Gold Coast or Inner Brisbane
- **MYFNS Navigators:** are Karakan staff who work within a specific community with the aims to understand the needs of community services, young people and their families and to act as “bridge builders” between community services and between young people and community services
- **MYFNS Program Coordinator:** is a Karakan staff member who provides leadership and mentoring to the MYFNS team, has overseen the creation of this way of working in the MYFNS team
- **Community service stakeholders:** are the organisations that the MYFNS team have engaged with that are located in one of the four focus communities (Logan, Ipswich, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane) and that aim to build social connection and wellbeing for young people and their families or carers.
- **Youth Advisory Group (YAG):** this is a group of eight young people who were recruited by Karakan to form an ongoing advisory group to the organisation. The young people in the YAG identify as CALD and/or FN and live in one of the four focus communities (Logan, Ipswich, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane)
- **ehc staff:** are two professional consultants with post-graduate qualifications in the fields of public health and health psychology. They were contracted by Karakan to undertake the MYFNS evaluation project between January- June 2026.
- **MYFNS Evaluation Reference Group:** a group formed for the purpose of this evaluation project. The Evaluation Reference Group will oversee the development, design and deliver of the

project. They will work collaboratively with each other and provide feedback on all project deliverables. This group is made up of:

- **Hayley Abell**, Karakan, Innovation and Impact Manager
- **Patrick Setefano**, Karakan, MYFNS Program Coordinator
- **Brianna Fjeldsoe**, Enable Health Consulting
- **Tayla Lamerton**, Enable Health Consulting

Project Methods.

Evaluation questions.

There were four evaluation questions addressed in this evaluation project:

1. How did Karakan navigate the **process** to develop resources for young people and their families?
2. What were the **key messages** that Karakan heard from young people and their families?
3. What was the **impact** of working in this way on:
 1. Young people and their families?
 2. Community services and stakeholders?
 3. Karakan staff and the organisation as a whole?
4. What were the **facilitators and barriers** to working in this way?

The **scope of this evaluation** was for Phase 1 of the MYFNS work, including the collaborative design process and how this informed the development of resources. The MYFNS team and ehc consultants collaboratively created a Program Logic Model to describe this scope of work (Appendix A). The short-, medium- and long-term outcomes in the Program Logic Model have been divided into three streams to indicate the different beneficiaries of the Phase 1 work: young people (and their families/carers), community services and organisations, and Karakan.

Data collection.

The data included in this evaluation was collected between August 2024 and May 2026. It is a combination of operational data captured by the MYFNS team during Phase 1 and additional qualitative data collected by ehc.

The existing data sources collected by the MYFNS team include:

- **Engagement data.** This includes counts of meetings, events, and workshops with young people, their families, and community service providers. This data was collected between August 2024 and May 2026 by the MYFNS team via a Microsoft Forms™ template.
- **19 x ILC Grant Monthly Service Reports.** These reports include a summary of activities, and reflections from the Program Coordinator on identified enablers, opportunities, and risks.
- **6 x YAG Surveys.** This includes feedback from the young people involved in the YAG on their experience of working with Karakan.
- **515 x youth surveys** completed by young people from the four regions through anonymous online surveys.

The additional data sources collected by ehc include:

- **1 x YAG Focus Group.** This focus group was facilitated by two ehc consultants with 5 YAG members. All YAG members provided informed, written consent before the focus group. The focus group was held at the Karakan office, was audio-recorded and went for 90 minutes.
- **4 x Community service stakeholder Interviews.** The stakeholders for these interviews were approached by a MYFNS team member first and with their permission they were introduced to an ehc consultant. After informed, verbal consent from the stakeholder, the ehc consultant conducted a semi-structured interview that was audio-recorded and lasted 30-40 minutes.
- **5 x Karakan MYFNS team members and Leaders Interviews.** The staff for these interviews were approached by an ehc consultant. After informed, verbal consent from the staff, the ehc consultant conducted a semi-structured interview that was audio-recorded and lasted 30-40 minutes.

Data analysis.

Quantitative data. Engagement data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Data analysis was descriptive only (e.g., summary counts of activities, proportions of engagement) and reports are of counts, proportions, means and standard deviations (SD).

Qualitative data. Interview and focus group data was thematically analysed by two ehc staff. The interviewer/facilitator created a hybrid document of verbatim quotes, emerging content themes, and process reflections after each data collection. Two independent staff read all hybrid documents, coded the qualitative data, and discussed differences and similarities to build consensus on key themes. Example quotes have been selected from interview and focus group transcripts to illustrate themes.



1. How did Karakan navigate the process to develop resources for young people and their families?

What happened in Phase 1?

There are three key staff in Karakan that delivered the work in Phase 1 - MYFNS Program Coordinator, two MYFNS Navigators - and these three are referred to as **the MYFNS team**. The MYFNS team are strongly supported by two managers, Karakan's Innovation and Impact Manager and Karakan's CEO.

Phase 1 of the MYFNS program of work was funded by the federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing through an ILC Grant (June 2024 - June 2027). Karakan see this grant-funded project as the first phase in an ongoing area of work.

The intended outcomes of this specific funding scheme are to develop innovative activities designed with community to support people with psychosocial disability, their families, and carers to:

- Have greater opportunities to participate and contribute in the community
- Have increased accessibility to, and inclusion in, communities.

Alongside community, the MYFNS team have developed an innovative program of work to support young people in their communities who are struggling to access the support they need for their mental health and wellbeing. There were three key stages of work in Phase 1, and these were underpinned by four "ways of working" (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Overview of the stages of work in Phase 1

What were the "ways of working" in Phase 1?

We heard from multiple perspectives that there were four common themes on the way that Karakan approached the MYFNS work in Phase 1. These "ways of working" were deliberately different to some of the ways of working that Karakan have adopted in the past. This work was intentional and values-driven.



"We do work very differently to any other team in our organisation. And it's very much where we're wanting to go as an organisation." - Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager

The MYFNS "ways of working" were:

Trust as a foundation 	Cultural capability as an intuitive strength 
Place-based approach as a priority 	Community-led action as essential 

Trust as a foundation



Trust was discussed in every interview by every stakeholder. Trust was experienced between different stakeholders in Phase 1:

- It **began as trust** between the Karakan leaders and the MYFNS team. This trust came naturally and was given freely because of the capability, capacity and personal integrity of the MYFNS team.

"The starting place of that has been building trust..." - Karakan CEO

- **Trust was shared** between the members of the MYFNS team. The small team of staff have a strong level of trust in each other's ability to show up in community and to consistently enact the ways of working described here.
- And **trust was earned** by the MYFNS team when they worked alongside young people and community service stakeholders. Trust was earned through having MYFNS staff who were from the community they were working in, showing humility, and demonstrating authenticity to counter past experiences of outsiders making promises without follow-through.

"I think it's also been about me shifting from a strategic management perspective. I value structure. I value clarity around the strategy, the objective, and what we're delivering, and here's the reporting in the governance so they can see touch and feel it. But actually this just had to work a bit differently. Some outcomes are not as explicit. How do you measure trust?" - Karakan CEO

Working in this way enabled the MYFNS team to:

- Take risks and trial ways of engaging with community
- Lean into their own strengths as people and lean on each other as a team
- Open conversations with community that were safe enough for people to share their experiences

Cultural capability as an intuitive strength



This is an asset of the MYFNS team, and this cultural capability comes from their personal, cultural, spiritual and professional ways of showing up in spaces with people. This way of working was identified by community service stakeholders, by young people and by leaders within Karakan.

- This **cultural capacity is intuitive** to members of the MYFNS team and was not explicitly realised in early stages of Phase 1.

"Probably the biggest learning was that the team has so much knowledge, particularly from that cultural lens, that they didn't realise they had. When they step into a space of working with young people and stakeholders from a relational perspective, they've got a lot of internal assets they can draw on in their way of being with people." - Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager

"They've got cultural capability, they're cultural people, so they know what relationships are about."
- Community Stakeholder in Ipswich.

- Cultural capability is embedded in how the MYFNS team's own cultures **approach community development**. For example, Talanoa is a way of working in Pacific Islander communities, and the MYFNS team enacted this concept intuitively. This approach looks like open, inclusive, and participatory dialogue that emphasises storytelling, empathy, and mutual respect.
- The MYFNS team are **cultural leaders in their communities, and in Karakan**. This cultural capability spreads from the MYFNS team to other staff in Karakan. The MYFNS team are becoming central knowledge sharers on how to show up in community for other Karakan staff and leaders.

"We see every person on our team as a cultural leader. So, when they [MYFNS team] step out into community, that's the framing for us: you are a cultural leader in your community. We want them to come from a place where they have the authority to speak on behalf of Karakan and make things happen in that community." - Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager

"The way we put on food and connect together whenever our staff from Pacific Islander or Māori backgrounds come [together]. The whole room is set up to reflect their culture. I'm coming in to just sit down and listen and learn and what I've loved is really tuning into the fundamental importance of that relational approach"

– Karakan CEO

Working in this way enabled the MYFNS team to:

- Follow their intuition in how to relate to people
- Share their knowledge, beliefs and approaches to wellbeing, support and community navigation
- Create safe space for all staff to learn and share perspectives

Place-based approach as a priority



The MYFNS team recognised early in Phase 1 that each community needed a unique approach. A place-based approach is supported best by having a **dedicated MYFNS team member to embed** themselves in a place, because:

- the work is relational and requires genuine, consistent relationships with young people and community stakeholders
- there are very different **support landscapes** in each place

Place-based approaches also align with First Nations ways of conceptualising **connection to country**. Taking this approach means that the MYFNS Navigators can sit with First Nations Elders in each place and understand what place means to them and how this story of land, water and sky is being shared with young people.

Working in this way enabled the MYFNS team to:

- Focus on the voices from each community and their unique aspirations, whilst learning about cross-cutting needs
- Develop deeper relationships with community service stakeholders and community members



Community-led action as essential

The voices of young people and their families are the driving force of planning and action in the MYFNS team. This goes beyond a rigid co-design framework (which was the original framing of this work in the early days). Being community-led to the MYFNS team means:

- taking time to listen to all levels of community
- sharing decision-making power with community
- sitting in uncertainty until community brings clarity
- reflecting on what's working (or not) at every step with community

"If I have enough time to do it, I'm gonna do it, because that's my job, not only my job, it's my community... let's not let KPIs get in the way of why we're here." – MYFNS Navigator

"We want to deliver services that actually aren't driven by contracts necessarily, but you're actually driven by human need and starting from there. And there's a real passion here. There's a real appetite for that and I love being part of that and we're surrounded by wonderful humans."

– Karakan CEO

[The MYFNS team] continuously adjust to meet the needs and the gaps within the community based on what they are saying, not based on what government is saying." – Community Stakeholder

Working in this way enabled the MYFNS team to:

- Create genuine community connections and foster long-term relationships
- Take actions that are needed from the grassroots up
- Gain momentum in community as the MYFNS team and Karakan broadly become known as a trusted, long-term partner in community development with Pacific Islander, Māori and FN groups.

Stage 1: Community Development Work



The MYFNS Community Development work is ongoing and forms the foundation for the work in stages two and three. There was some uncertainty at the start of this stage. The nature of community-led work means that at the beginning the team had a vision, but the path was undefined.

"It was very uncomfortable for the team at first - standing in that uncertainty of knowing we wanted to develop resources and not necessarily knowing exactly how to do that. We learnt it's not about the destination, it's actually about the process and what we're going to learn along the way."

- Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager

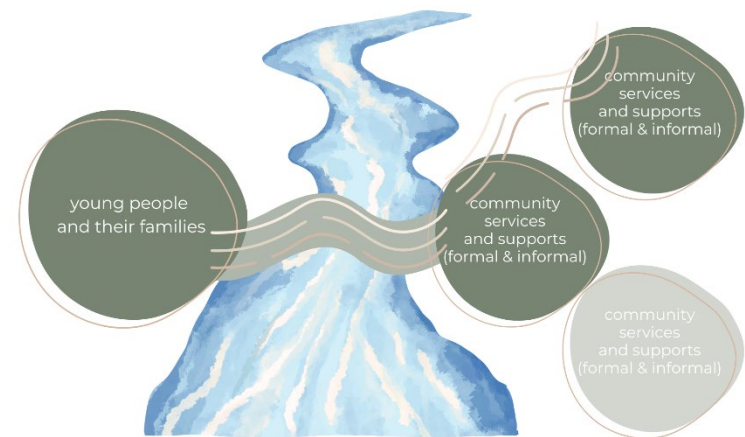
The metaphor we used to talk about this community development work was two sides of a river - on one side of the river are young people and their families, and on the other side of the river are the support landscapes. The MYFNS team are in a navigator role - supporting community to cross the river when they are ready to access the support they want.

The findings from these engagements are in Evaluation Question 2.



The MYFNS team enacted their navigator role by:

- **Understanding both sides of the river:**
 - learning about each community's unique strengths and their young peoples' needs and aspirations
 - learning about the service and support landscapes and networks (both formal and informal), and those that are culturally appropriate, safe and accessible
- **Understanding the river:**
 - hearing the voices of young people to understand what the barriers are to accessing support, what makes it easier to 'swim', and who is not taught to 'swim'
- **Building the (right) bridges:**
 - building trusted relationships with community, service providers and leaders through showing up and listening
 - creating new pathways for community to access services
 - fostering connections between services and supports to expand their capacity to support community better
- **Advocating for upstream changes**
 - amplifying the needs of young people and their families by taking what has been shared to local networks to reshape the support landscape through resourcing, policies, and practices.



Engagement with Young People in Phase 1

During Phase 1 the MYFNS team engaged young people through different channels. They iteratively tested and adapted their approach to engaging with young people over the two years of Phase 1 work, moving from designing their own events and surveys to engage young people to attending existing events, networks and social opportunities to meet young people where they were at.

The MYFNS team reached many young people in Phase 1 through:

- **515 surveys** completed by young people across Logan, Ipswich, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane
- **2.945 young people** directly engaged through events, workshops, service navigation consultations and other community-setting interactions, which built in volume over the first six months and then stabilised at approximately 205 young people engaged per month (Figure 2).
- **1.225 family engagements** through events, workshops, service navigation consultations and other community-setting interactions (Figure 2)
- **365 events, workshops or information sessions** attended by the MYFNS team in community

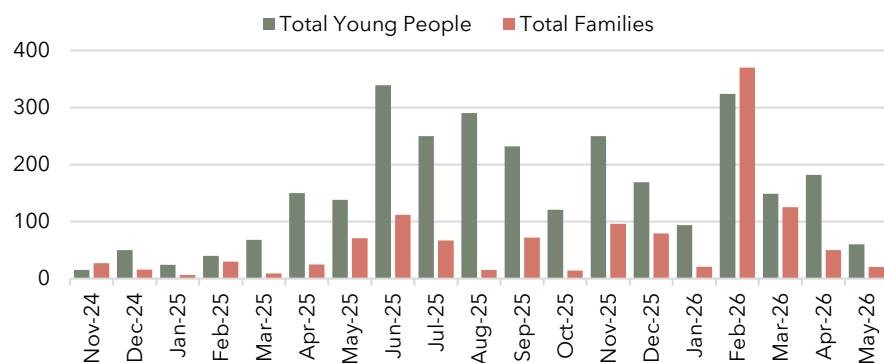


Figure 2. Number of engagements with young people and their families undertaken by the MYFNS team per month over Phase 1

Engagement with Community Services and Supports Stakeholders in Phase 1

In Phase 1 the MYFNS team recorded **805** engagements with **297** unique community services and supports stakeholders. The team have averaged **42** engagements per month during this phase of work. The KPI set by the funding contract was 5-10 engagements per month, in each of the four locations. On average, the MYFNS team were working at the upper end of this KPI, and once they built momentum were often far exceeding the monthly KPI (dotted line in Figure 3).

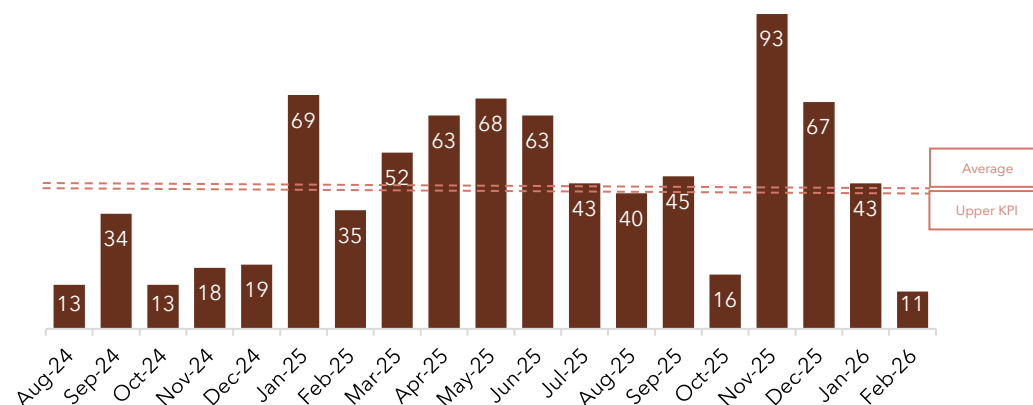


Figure 3. Number of Community Services and Supports Stakeholder engagements undertaken by the MYFNS team per month over Phase 1.

Community Services and Supports stakeholder by depth of contacts

As Phase 1 progressed the MYFNS team were undertaking repeat engagements with some stakeholders and less with new stakeholders (Figure 4). This pattern demonstrates a transition to deeper relationships with key stakeholders within communities (especially in Ipswich and Logan) and less canvassing of the landscape to understand all of the available connections.

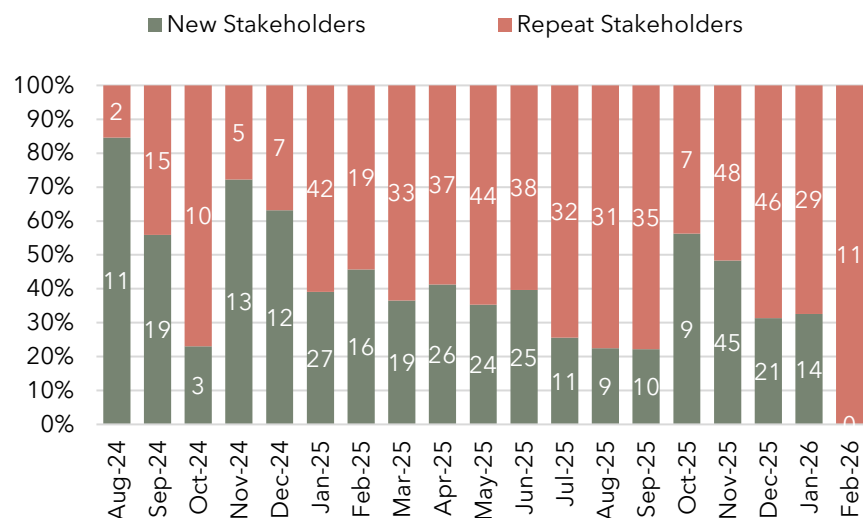


Figure 4. Proportion of engagements with new community service and supports stakeholders (green) and repeat stakeholders (red) undertaken by the MYFNS team by month in Phase 1.

Community Services and Supports stakeholder by location

The community service and supports engagements by the MYFNS team to date have focused on the Ipswich and Logan service areas, accounting for **89%** of all engagements (Figure 5).

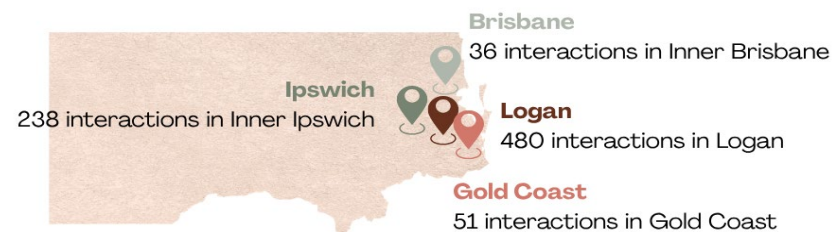


Figure 5. Number of engagements in Phase 1 by service area.

The focus of engagement work in Ipswich and Logan was intentional by the MYFNS team. The decision to focus on these two communities was due to the limited workforce capacity, with 3.0 FTE working across four regions. The team made the decision to have two dedicated Navigators for the Ipswich and Logan regions because Karakan had existing service presence in these communities through other programs. The MYFNS Program Coordinator was allocated Inner Brisbane and Gold Coast to support engagement but had limited capacity for engagement due to the nature of his leadership role in the team. The MYFNS Team targeted Logan and Ipswich from the start, whilst acknowledging that the depth of the community engagement and development work they undertake would necessarily mean less was done in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane.

Community Services and Supports stakeholder by organisation type

The MYFNS team have engaged with a wide variety of services and supports across Phase 1. Figure 6 shows the number of engagements by broad organisational categories. This work centres on youth from multicultural backgrounds and this is reflected in the focus of the engagements being with people from Youth and Family Services (23%, dark brown bar, Figure 6) and with people from organisations that work with multicultural community or specific cultural groups (25% red bars, Figure 6). Figure 6 also highlights the breadth of engagement the MYFNS team have intentionally undertaken, which has enabled them to work with stakeholders to understand the breadth of social determinants of youth mental health and wellbeing.

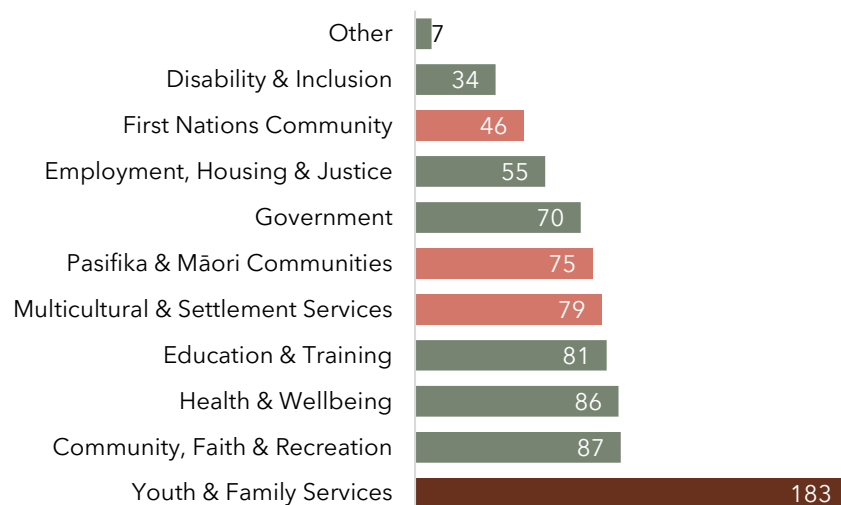


Figure 6. Number of engagements undertaken by the MYFNS team by the type of organisation.

We can also explore how the proportion of engagements undertaken by the MYFNS team in Ipswich and Logan were distributed among the different types of organisations (noting that there were too few

engagements to date in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane to cut the data by organisation type). Figure 7 shows there are differences between Logan and Ipswich.

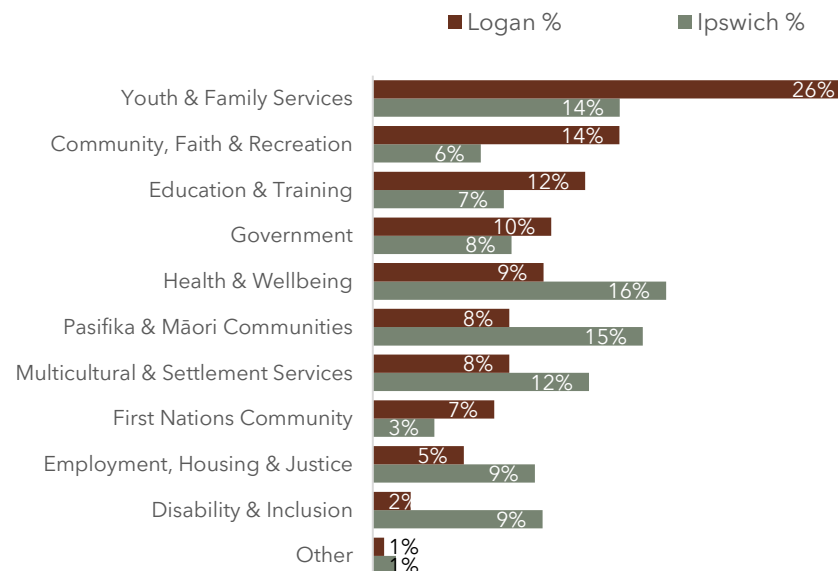


Figure 7. Proportion of engagements undertaken by the MYFNS team in Ipswich and Logan (n=716) by organisational type.

There were differences in the pattern of engagement in Logan and Ipswich, which reflects the aspirations of the youth and families in these areas, the availability of organisations and stakeholders in these areas and the traction that the MYFNS Navigator has gained in each area within specific sectors. The top three organisational types engaged in each area to date have been:

Logan	Ipswich
1. Youth & Family Service - 26%	1. Health & Wellbeing - 16%
2. Community, Faith & Recreation - 14%	2. Pacific Islander & Māori Communities - 15%
3. Education & Training - 12%	3. Youth & Family Service - 14%

Stage 2: Collaborative Design Work



The collaborative work undertaken by the MYFNS team in Stage 2 initially focused on the co-creation of resources designed to support young people and their families to the supports they are seeking. However, over the course of Phase 1 other resources have been generated (see callout box on Page 21).

The collaborative design work in Stage 2 was borne out of the MYFNS team's priority to have young people lead the work of defining and developing a resource to support their needs, and by the funding agreement call to "co-design" activities with community.

The MYFNS team recruited eight young people from Ipswich, Logan and the Gold Coast to form a Youth Advisory Group (YAG). They recruited young people through informal social networks (Stage 1 engagements, family and friends). A member of the MYFNS team met with each young person to build rapport one-on-one and to explain the purpose of the YAG. Then they brought the YAG together and held six 2-hour interactive workshops in the Karakan office. The YAG workshop themes were:

1. Growing Our Seed - Building Trust
2. Finding Our Voice - Exploring Identity
3. Connecting Our Roots - Mapping Supports
4. Building Our Resources - Resource Ideas
5. Celebrating Growth - Reflection & Recognition
6. Sharing our Voice - Community Leadership

Each YAG workshop was facilitated by a MYFNS Navigator and had other MYFNS team members present to support facilitation work (as needed). The YAG also shared food at each workshop.

Of the eight young people recruited to the YAG, one left before the first workshop and one left after the third workshop. None of the YAG members had participated in this type of advisory work before and none of them seemed particularly driven to attend based on the topic or concept. They were all very hesitant about the YAG at first and talked

about wanting to leave the first session due to feeling anxious to meet new people.

"I felt like going home. This is too much. I think it's the first time I've done something that's outside." - YAG member

"It was hard and awkward for me to meet and interact with a group of people I had never met before." - YAG member

However, at the end of the workshop series, the YAG were connected and reported having a very positive experience. Six YAG members completed an anonymous feedback survey after the sixth workshop.



6 out of 6 YAG members reported:

- the overall experience was "Awesome - I really enjoyed it and got a lot out of it"
- the activities in the workshops were "Really engaging - I wanted to be involved"
- feeling comfortable to share their ideas "Totally - my ideas were valued and heard"
- that their culture and identities were respected in the workshop "I felt included and represented"



5 out of 6 YAG members reported that:

- the workshops were useful in creating a resource

A common experience expressed by the YAG was that they could express their opinion and that it was valued by and helpful to Karakan staff. The word a lot of YAG members used was "voice".

"It was good to be able to voice my opinions and to have them be considered as part of this thing that will go on to help other young people." - YAG member

"No one got judged for voicing their opinions. Everyone got to speak." - YAG member

The YAG explained that a reason that having a voice was so valued to them was because they had not experienced this often in other settings. The

young people felt the YAG experience was unique, because at other times when they tried to speak up, at school for example, it wouldn't change anything or have the impact they had wanted.

"Like at school, if you were to say, like talk to them and say this, they'd be like, oh okay, and just sort of brush it off. Whereas you knew in this room, in these sessions, if you said it, they were listening and something would come of it" - YAG member

The six-session YAG Co-design Workshop model developed by the MYFNS team supports youth leadership, consultation and co-design processes. The model could be adapted for use across schools, youth services and community settings to strengthen youth participation and community voice in other work.

The impacts of these YAG workshops on young people are shared in Evaluation Question 3.

The content creation was outsourced to Motley Content, who worked loosely with the MYFNS team and the YAG to craft the scripts, recruit local actors from Ipswich and Logan and shape the narratives in each film. The films were launched at a community event in June 2026.

"The Wayfinder project created a sense of ownership, where young people and families are actively involved rather than passive participants. Stakeholders who align with this approach are engaging more consistently, and our ongoing presence has strengthened those relationships which in turn will support the delivery of the resources to community. This combination of relational practice, community voice, and shared purpose is what continues to drive strong engagement outcomes for our team and community"- MYFNS Program Coordinator

Stage 3: Resource Development Work



Community-facing resources

From Stage 2 there was a clear direction from the YAG that they wanted to create a series of short films. This was not the original views of the MYFNS team that went into Stage 1 thinking it would be a website or digital platform that the young people would want. Over the course of the YAG workshops the resource evolved into different mediums (e.g. podcasts, apps, event calendars, digital platform), then finally landed with a short film series to be shared via social media platforms.

The Wayfinder film series is made up of three short films. These films aim to bring to life the voices of young people, exploring what it truly means to feel a sense of belonging and the brave steps it takes to shape the future they want to create.

CALLOUT: Additional resources created in Phase 1

The original focus of this funded work was to collaboratively design resources for youth, with youth. However, due to the ways of working in the MYFNS team, there have been other valuable resources generated in Phase 1.

The MYFNS team have created two **internally-focused resources**:

Karakan Pacific Islander and Māori (PIM) Engagement Framework:

The MYFNS team used their intuitive cultural capability to adopt Māori and Pacific Islander engagement strategies during their community development work. This engagement worked well and was recognised by leaders and other staff within Karakan as a valuable way of working and one that could be shared with others internally. The MYFNS team are collaboratively designing a PIM Engagement Framework, which has included: a series of internal workshops with staff, validation and insights from youth and family stakeholders, a series of five community co-design workshops to collaborate on elements of the engagement framework, outsourcing a PIM consultant and engaging a concept design studio.

Karakan Pacific Islander and Māori (PIM) Strategy: This is being driven by the MYFNS team and their leaders and is a dedicated strategy to strengthen cultural governance, leadership, visibility and accountability in how Karakan services are designed, delivered and evaluated alongside Pacific Islander and Māori communities.

These additional resources will have impacts on Karakan staff and Karakan as a whole and are discussed further on Page 32.

The MYFNS team have also contributed to **resource creation in partnership with community stakeholders**:

LE VOYCE Youth Cultural Camp Blueprint: The MYFNS team collaborated with LE VOYCE to deliver the LE VOYCE Youth Cultural Camp at YMCA Camp Warrawee, Joyner. The camp was developed to strengthen cultural identity, connection, leadership, confidence and wellbeing among multicultural young people through culturally responsive activities, mentoring and peer engagement.

Hanz On Life - Samoan Cultural Workshop: The MYFNS team worked alongside the Hanz on Life (HFL) facilitator to develop a workshop as a culturally grounded wellbeing resource. The workshop uses Samoan cultural knowledge, storytelling and community participation to strengthen cultural identity, resilience and social connection for young people. The resource was designed to be delivered in community settings, includes supporting workshop materials and participant evaluation tools to inform future delivery and continuous improvement.

Ngā Mānia Onewhero - Tuakiritanga (KIWA) Youth Program: MYFNS partnered with Ngā Mānia Onewhero to support the development of the KIWA Youth Program, an eight-week school and community based Māori cultural program designed to strengthen cultural identity, wellbeing and leadership. MYFNS contributed to the wellbeing and wairua components of the workshop and supporting resources for ongoing opportunities to deliver this program in community settings for all youth.

These additional resources will have impacts on Community Services and Supports Stakeholders and are discussed further on Page 27.



2. What were the key messages
that Karakan heard from
young people and their families?



Surveys with young people

Who they are...

The MYFNS team heard from a large and diverse group of young people through three anonymous surveys. These survey responses provide an important picture of who young people are, where they are from, and what they need to feel connected, supported and well.



Young people described their cultural identities **in their own words**, reflecting the diversity and layered identities within the communities MYFNS is working alongside.

The cultural groups represented included:

Pacific Islander Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island, Niuean, Fijian, Tahitian	Māori and New Zealander
Indigenous Australian and Australian	African Congolese, Ghanaian, South Sudanese, Egyptian
Asian Filipino, Chinese, Laos, Pakistani, Indian, Thai	European British, Albanian, Welsh, Austrian



The most common cultural backgrounds are shown in Figure 4.

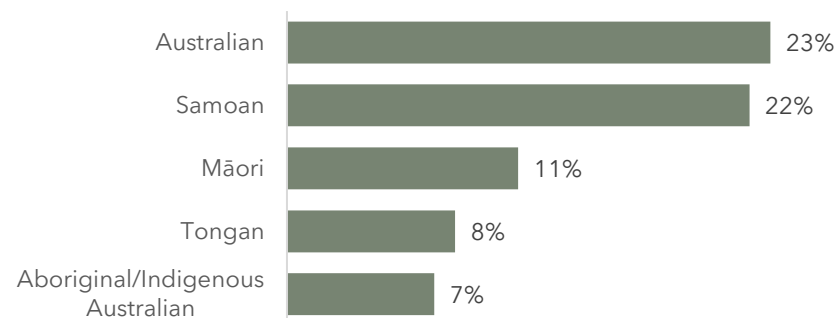


Figure 8. Top five most common identified cultural backgrounds of young people surveyed (described in their own words) (n=513).

Nearly one in five young people identified with more than one ethnicity or cultural background, highlighting the importance of allowing young people to describe their identities in ways that feel true to them.

Young people came from the four main communities across South East Queensland the MYFNS team are working in.

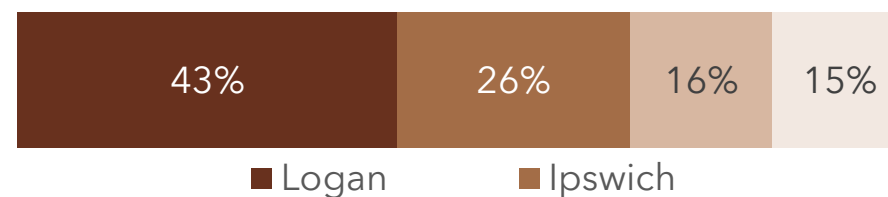


Figure 9. Proportion of young people from different locations in South East Queensland (n=508).

The surveys captured a strong breadth of young people's voices across the communities MYFNS is supporting.

What they said...

Understanding the river...

Young people are navigating very real and connected challenges. The “river” represents what they are trying to overcome, including practical barriers, disconnection from culture and community, racism, mental health challenges and uncertainty about where to find the right support.

Practical barriers	Culture, identity and belonging	Social and emotional wellbeing
• Affordability of support • Lack of accessible transport • Finding secure, well-paid work • Knowing where to go for the right information <i>“Not having financial help and having to help my family financially, also not having transport to get to and from places.” – 13-17 year old Samoan young person.</i> <i>“Being able to get to events when my parents are working.” – 7-12 year old Māori young person.</i> <i>“Being broke.” 18-21 year old Samoan, employed young person.</i>	• Feeling disconnected from culture and identity • Experiencing racism • Not having enough places to learn or practise culture • Feeling disconnected from neighbourhood and community <i>Being a light skin Samoan (not “brown” enough to be Polynesian, known as a “plastic”). Not having as much cultural background information as everyone else. Struggling with learning both Samoan and Māori due to lack of support meaning I’m not too sure how to learn.” – 13-17 year old, Samoan, Māori, Australian citizen</i> <i>“Learning more about my culture” – 13-17 year old Aboriginal young person.</i>	• Struggling with mental health • Feeling disempowered • Concerns about belonging with peers and community • Not feeling understood <i>“Not being understood.” – 7-12 year old Māori young person.</i> <i>“Temptations from wrong crowds, peer pressure, underestimations, hanging with the wrong crowd, trying to fit in. Being seen as too weak.” – 13-17 year old Samoan, Tongan, Australian citizen young person.</i> <i>“Finding a strong support system.” – 18-21 year old Cook Islander, Tongan and Australian young person.</i>

Young people did not describe isolated issues. They were describing connected challenges that shape how safe, supported and included they feel in their communities.

These challenges overlap very closely with the barriers young people said they experience in accessing support (Figure 10).

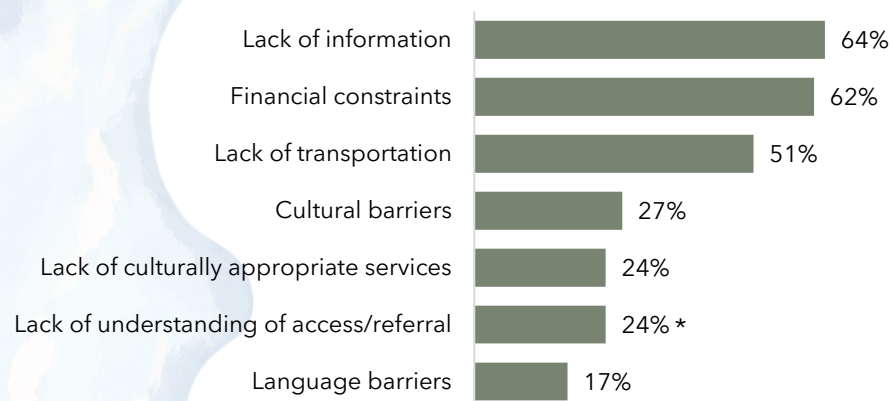


Figure 10. Barriers experienced by young people in accessing support services (n=513).

*Only asked at Survey 3; may underrepresent importance.

“Young people are struggling to access timely mental health support, navigate education, training and employment pathways, and identify safe and inclusive spaces in their community.” – MYFNS Program Coordinator

Young people need holistic support, at low or no cost, that supports them to feel connected to community and culture. They need to know the support exists and how to access it.

How this understanding of the river is shifting...

When the MYFNS team were first listening to young people, the emphasis was on practical challenges, especially access to information and support. Over time, cultural, social and emotional challenges were spoken about more, and in more depth.

As the MYFNS team became more trusted, and started to understand the right questions to ask, their understanding expanded.

Period	Primary Focus Areas
Nov 24-Feb 25	Foundational issues: mental health access, homelessness, educational pathways, employment eligibility. Understanding emerges around lack of awareness, confusion around eligibility, HECs access, transportation barriers, navigating systems.
Mar-May 25	Shift toward youth voice: identity, belonging, safe spaces. Growing emphasis on culturally appropriate services
Jun-Aug 25	Focus expands to family support: parenting resources, intergenerational needs, family counselling access. Youth leadership development emerges.
Sep-Oct 25	School engagement becomes prominent: attendance issues, educational support, career pathway confusion. Mental health remains central.
Nov-Dec 25	Community connection emphasised: social isolation, cultural pride, belonging.
Jan-May 26	Holistic wellbeing focus: integration of mental health, employment, and cultural identity. Collaborative design approach matures with youth input shaping priorities

The team heard that many young people from different cultural backgrounds, their families, and their broader communities did not feel safe to engage with the support they were needing. They also heard there was often a disconnect in the needs they were experiencing (e.g., a desire to reconnect to culture and a sense of belonging) and the support available or visible.

The MYFNS team have integrated these learnings along the way to ensure they are ‘building bridges’ at the right points across the river — the points with the biggest impact that support those struggling to swim the most.

Reaching and engaging young people and families

Lack of information was the most highly reported barrier to accessing support. Young people told us the best communication channels to reach them with information are:

1. **Social media (Instagram, Facebook)** - Most frequently mentioned as the primary way young people want to receive information
2. **Online platforms (websites, apps)** - Second most popular, especially among older teens
3. **Info shared by teachers and peers** - Important for school-aged respondents
4. **Email or SMS messages** - Used by some, particularly for event reminders

Social media is a part of most young people's lives – and they have mixed feelings about this. 78% of young people said they experience both positive and negative impacts on their mental health from social media. There is an opportunity to take up more social media space with positive messaging, content, and access points to support for young people and their families.

Though many young people said social media is the best way to reach them, this was not their preferred way to engage with support (only 1.4% preferred social media). There was a clear preference for peer-led support groups (62%), followed by in-person engagement (34%) and mentoring (28%).

Young people across all three surveys strongly prefer social media and digital platforms for learning about services, but value in-person connection, especially with peers, for actual support.

The Youth Advisory Group

Where the surveys were designed to hear from a large number and diversity of young people, the Youth Advisory Group was designed to go deep with a small group of young people.

Who they are...

This was a group of eight young people, male and female, aged 17-21 years when they started in the Youth Advisory Group. They are from different communities in Logan, Gold Coast, and Ipswich and identify with different cultural backgrounds, including Māori, Pacific Islander, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

What they said...

- Young people want spaces that celebrate cultural identity and inclusivity.
- Trusted mentors are vital for wellbeing.
- Feeling supported isn't just about services; young people often feel most supported by peers, mentors, and family.
- A strong desire for events that connect the wider community, not just youth.

Resource development

There were three key messages from the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) about the resources they wanted to see from MYFNS...

- 
1. **It needs to look like us**
 2. **We want stories that feel real and relatable**
 3. **Make it engaging, make it visual**



3. What were the impacts of working in this way on:

- Young people and their families?
- Community service stakeholders?
- Karakan staff and the organisation?

What impacts were experienced by young people in Phase 1?

There were three key impacts experienced by young people in the Youth Advisory Group (YAG)...

1. Creating connections

While the young people in the YAG spoke about their initial hesitation in the group, the awkwardness of meeting new people, one of the most meaningful parts of being in the YAG was connecting with each other and to a service that felt so supportive.



"Being friends with the people I met."

"It was nice to meet new people and get to know them."

"There are people out there that care. There is support around us."

2. Feeling empowered

Young people talked about feeling like their voices were valued and being used for change and to support other young people. This process was outside their comfort zone, but they felt confident to speak up and give back.

"I think the non-judgment stuff, it was like I just loved knowing I have a voice and people want to listen, and that felt meaningful to me."

"Helping make change - hearing the different struggles that other people go through inspiring to make a change."

"That each of us have potential and gifts that we can use to help others."

"It was nice to get out of my comfort zone every week. It helped me open up."

"Like again at school, if you were to say, like talk to them and say this, they'd be like, oh. Okay, and just sort of brush it off. Whereas you knew in this room, in these sessions, if you said it, they were listening and something would come of it, right?"

3. Building leadership

All young people that took part in the YAG identified that they learned leadership and teamwork skills (100%), and two young people reported feeling like *"I stepped up and felt like a real leader"*, while the others felt they mostly had chances to lead and share. The process showed young people that when they go first and speak up, they were met with acknowledgement and could themselves create a safe space for the others in the room - that is what it means to lead bravely and support growth in those around you.

"I feel like when you'd say anything, and then like people around the room would go, oh yeah, oh yeah. And it's like, oh yeah, that's what I was thinking, but I was too scared to say that, but then someone else had said that."

Since the workshops, some of the young people that were a part of this group have continued to build their leadership skills through opportunities in Karakan through supporting the organisation and delivery of a community event - [the R.I.S.E Walk](#) - and attending the Karakan AGM Meeting to speak to their experience.

CALLOUT: Although engaging families has been a part of the work the MYFNS team have done, there were not formal data capture opportunities for families. The focus was on youth voice.

LE VOYCE Youth Cultural Camp

This camp was co-developed by the MYFNS team and LE VOYCE with the aim to provide a safe and empowering environment where young people could connect with their culture, build meaningful relationships, participate in leadership activities and develop a stronger sense of belonging. It was delivered 29-31st May 2026 in Joyner.

There were **34** young people and **10** staff, facilitators or volunteers assisting at the camp. The three-day camp delivered a combination of cultural workshops, leadership activities, team challenges, outdoor recreation, talanoa sessions and cultural celebrations.

There were 28 attendees that completed the feedback survey.

100% of respondents said they felt more connected to other young people

100% of respondents said the camp strengthened their connection to culture, identity, or sense of belonging

"[The camp organisers] made everyone feel welcome and they gave a sense of belonging." – 19-21 year old young person.

[My favourite part of camp was] getting connected to culture and getting to know other people." – 13-15 year old young person.

"I learnt about Samoan culture, and it was really great to be able to be a part of a culture that is different to me and to feel like I belong in the community." – 19-21 year old young person.



What impacts were experienced by Community Stakeholders in Phase 1?

There were three key impacts experienced by community stakeholders...

1. Expanding and deepening connections

Community stakeholders described feeling more connected to their community, other services, and key information through the MYFNS team. They highlighted a reciprocal and collaborative relationship with Karakan that enhanced support, developed new and deeper networks, enabled easier information sharing, and facilitated joint promotion and coordination of community events. These are the foundations of the bridges built by the MYFNS team.

"When you have that village where everybody contributes something to it, because we know we can't do everything on our own, and gone are the days of working in silos, which is in community. And that's where Karakan comes in."
– Community Service Stakeholder in Logan.

"If I need to know it, I can go back to them [MYFNS], because they are the community connector for me." – Community Service Stakeholder in Redbank Plains.

Relaunching the Logan Māori Pacific Islander Network

An example the work MYFNS has done to deepen connections between community stakeholders is relaunching the Logan Māori Pacific Islander Network, hosted by MultiLink Community Services.

"Patrick contacted me because he knew that I was one of the community leaders that pioneered the network when I was in community. And he reached out to say, there's a need in community, we need to have this network. I'm like, thank you, there's someone that actually sees the need from community."
– Community Service Stakeholder in Logan.



2. Improving cultural capability

The MYFNS team brought cultural capability to community services, through their grounded approach to engagement - their ways of working. Culturally grounded services were identified as a gap by many community stakeholders, both explicitly and also in how often they requested support from the MYFNS team when working with people in community from different cultural backgrounds.

"They're kind of building that cultural capability and that cultural awareness for some of the non-multicultural providers in the room around, hey, this is what as adults, and multicultural people, we want them to know... And I think they're going from strength to strength to be perfectly honest with you. I think that's an asset of theirs".

– Community Service Stakeholder in Ipswich.



Brisbane South PHN Pacific Islander and Māori Health and Wellbeing Strategy Governance Group

One of the ways the MYFNS team are improving cultural capability in Community Stakeholders is through their membership with the Brisbane South PHN Pacific Islander and Māori Health and Wellbeing Strategy Governance Group. The Logan MYFNS Navigator attends meetings for this group to represent community perspectives as someone working directly with Māori and Pacific Islander youth, families and communities through their Karakan role and lived experience. They have a wealth of data to share, and contribute to this group by:

- Bringing community perspectives, lived experience and cultural insights into governance discussions.
- Contributing to discussions on workforce development, community engagement, prevention, health equity and the social determinants of health.
- Advocating for culturally responsive and community-informed approaches across planning, implementation and evaluation activities.
- Strengthening connections between community, service providers and system-level decision makers.

3. Adding capacity to meet community need

Community stakeholders noticed how deeply the MYFNS team understood and were a part of their communities. They noticed that with this deep knowledge and connection, the MYFNS team were incredibly responsive to the need in community, which meant they were filling gaps that they and other services had not. This added a lot of value to community stakeholders' networks and meant they could deliver better on their own work.

"They work so collaboratively and they don't duplicate, and they take advice of their stakeholders and community leaders very seriously. And they deliver, they don't keep delivering the same thing, they adjust to meet the needs or the requests of the particular audience or the community or the stakeholders that are asking them to participate...I don't think Karakan is about just promoting any service. I think they kind of have the relationships, they know who they're referring to and they handle that with care." – Community Service Stakeholder in Ipswich.

The MYFNS team added capacity to community stakeholders through informal coordination, referral support, cultural consultation and partnership development. This included:

- Strengthening referral pathways across community, education, housing and health services
- Providing cultural guidance to improve culturally safe engagement
- Connecting young people and families with appropriate services and supports
- Identifying service gaps and supporting community-led solutions
- Designing and delivering culturally-safe, strengths-based practice
- Strengthening strategic partnerships to support ongoing collaboration beyond the MYFNS project

These partnerships, referral pathways and culturally responsive practices have strengthened the capacity of community stakeholders and created sustainable networks that will continue to benefit young people and families beyond the life of the ILC grant.

Connecting young people back to culture through Kapa Haka

An example of the MYFNS team adding capacity to community stakeholders ability to meet community need is the development of a youth program through the already established Ngā Mānia Onewhero, a Kapa Haka group (a Māori performing arts tradition) in Ipswich. After connecting with the community leader of Ngā Mānia Onewhero, rather than trying to replicate the incredible community work already happening, the MYFNS team supported them to expand what they offered to community through additional support for resources and implementation of a child safety framework. The youth group now meet monthly, with activities designed by four youth leaders to foster cultural and social connection. They were also part of the development of the Wayfinders videos, taking part as actors in one of the stories.



"We first thought we would deliver the youth group through the school and then [the school] pulled the plug. I said, you know what? I have my Kapa Haka Rōpū, if I created a youth group that'll look like this, I'll still deliver the program, I'll still get those same outcomes. And he goes, yeah, that's really good because now you're not just delivering to one school, you're delivering to a whole community.... [And now when our youth leaders come] to Kapa Haka, I can see them looking, scanning the room and seeing what kind of people are walking through the doors. And when we play our games to break the ice, they're looking at us too and how we facilitate and how we talk, because it shows when they do it. I was like, oh, you guys are neat. I said, I can't wait till I can just leave you to just do it all."

– Community Stakeholder in Redbank Plains.

What impacts were experienced by the MYFNS team in Phase 1?

When talking with the MYFNS team about perceived impacts of their work, they were quick to talk about the impacts on every other stakeholder except themselves. The three different people in the MYFNS team had three different experiences of the impacts of Phase 1, so some of these themes described here were not expressed by all members of the team.

1. Greater awareness of their personal strengths

For some members of the MYFNS team they experienced personal growth in their awareness of their natural qualities and skills at work. One example of this is increased awareness of their leadership role in community and in the workplace, through doing the Phase 1 MYFNS work.

"I think through this whole exercise, it's really invoked a greater awareness of the role that we as leaders play in providing a culturally safe work environment. So I can say to you there are insights that I've gathered... there's a depth of responsibility that has evolved in this space for me personally, that wouldn't have come about without the work that's been done." – MYFNS Program Coordinator

Other team members talked about increased awareness of their skills in public speaking and in adapting their communication skills to meet the audience they're working with (from youth to government representatives).

2. Feeling that their work is meaningful because it impacts their community

There was a deep sense of values-led ways of working in the MYFNS team, which looked like being community-led, relational and inclusive. They appreciated the support from Karakan to work in this way. This has been meaningful work for the team.

"[I do soft referrals to other services] because our multicultural communities have fallen through the cracks before... that has become a pathway in my region... And I'm told 'you're not a case manager', but I'm not case managing everyone, it's case by case, and they [Karakan] get that, and If I have enough time to do it, I'm gonna do it, because that's not only my job - it's my community."

– MYFNS Navigator

As the team have progressed, they have gained more confidence in the way they work. The team spoke about the uncertainty in the process when they first started, however as they have been encouraged by the connections they have made, the impact they are having, and feedback from Karakan, they have grown in both confidence and capacity to work in this meaningful, values-led way.

297	202	391
new connections with community stakeholders	followers on the MYFNS Instagram account	podcast views across 4 YouTube podcast episodes

What impacts were experienced by Karakan in Phase 1?

There are three key organisational impacts...

1. Expanding Karakan's footprint and reputation

This is the first time Karakan are working at this level of community support; their other services are largely direct-to-consumer services. The outreach efforts of the MYFNS team have dramatically increased Karakan's visibility and engagement in community through community engagement and social media presence. The quantifiable impacts look like:

The increased visibility has also come with an expanded positive reputation. Community stakeholders spoke about how much they enjoyed working with the MYFNS team, and the trust they, and their communities, have in them and by association, Karakan.

"Karakan have been a bit of a saving grace and the glue in the region. I think their workers wear their hearts on their sleeve. And I've pretty much thrown them every task I can... I feel like I gave them very baseline instructions and because they've got cultural capability, they're cultural people, they know what relationships are about. Some services you have to have that conversation time and time again, not with Karakan.... I think Karakan and the way they think has the capacity to reinvent things and actually help people get to the services that they need to be engaged with and have meaningful engagement."

– Community Service Stakeholder in Ipswich

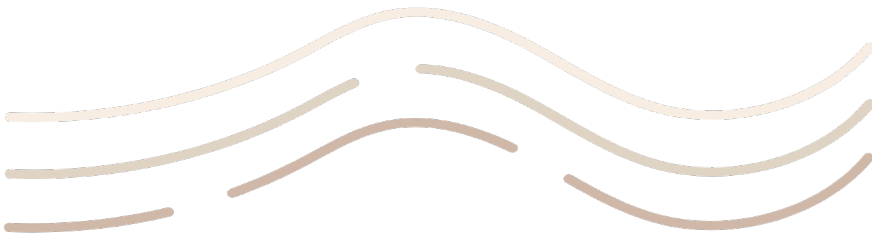
2. Creating partnerships that amplify impact

The MYFNS team have fostered deep relationships with targeted partners. Over time, they have built the foundations for what are now formalised organisational partnerships between Karakan and two community organisations: REKON Youth Foundation and LeVOYCE Youth Services.

These partnerships were intentionally selected to be with organisations that have aligned values and missions but with different strengths or resources that complement Karakan's strengths.

"we're developed some partnerships and we were very selective and purposeful about the partnerships want to ensure that there was trust and values alignment between us and the partner, and the partner and the community. And It's about identifying what are the capabilities or infrastructure or contributions that maybe different but complementary to ours."

- Karakan CEO



Case Study: Partnership with REKON Youth Foundation



Karakan and REKON have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with a shared commitment to working alongside young people in the Logan Community to create meaningful opportunities and impacts. REKON, a youth centre in Logan, have a strongly established connection with young people in Logan and surrounding areas and also have existing infrastructure that allows access and support to be delivered in a place-based way, and

Karakan have resources that can drive and amplify this work. Their shared mission and shared values have created a foundation for sharing resources to expand both organisations' capacity. An initial key focus for the partnership was on supporting the development of StreamLab, REKON's new storytelling initiative that supports young people to tell their stories through video, short films, podcasts and other creative media.

So far, this partnership has created significant engagement and co-hosting opportunities for Karakan, supported the development of the Wayfinder short film series, and expanded access to young people in Logan.

3. Building better organisational practices

The ways of working of the MYFNS team have been acknowledged by other Karakan staff, and especially leadership, as the direction that Karakan want to move in. This grant funding created the opportunity to showcase and learn about a different way of working that is grounded in cultural safety, innovation and collaboration. The tangible changes in organisational practices include:

- **Pacific Islander and Māori (PIM) 3-year organisational strategy.** The first year is designed to start to implement the PIM Engagement Framework in everyday work. The second year is designed to embed cultural capability and capacity building, and year three is about embracing working in ways that enhance our cultural safety as an organisation.
- **Pacific Islander and Māori (PIM) Engagement Framework.** This is complementary to the Strategy and has been an evolution of learning and understanding how best to engage in the communities the MYFNS team, and more broadly Karakan, engage with. Over time, the MYFNS team naturally started leaning on Pacific Islander and Māori engagement models, which led to the decision to develop a Karakan Pacific Islander and Māori (PIM) Engagement Framework. This is being shaped as a practical tool for Karakan and stakeholders, grounded in lived experience, clear pathways, and ways of working that reflect Pacific Islander and Māori values, connection, and everyday realities.

"We've almost finalised the Engagement Framework now, because we've been going through a co-design process for that. But we pushed it back because we were growing our understanding of cultural safety and how we work... The learning that's evolved within the team has shaped how the Framework came together." - Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager

The development of these discrete pieces of work is grounded in the work, knowledge and learnings of the MYFNS team, which makes them more meaningful, relevant and effective.

4. What were the facilitators and barriers to working in this way?



Enablers of Phase 1 work

The enablers of the MYFNS team's work in Phase 1 sit across multiple levels of system influence (Figure 11).

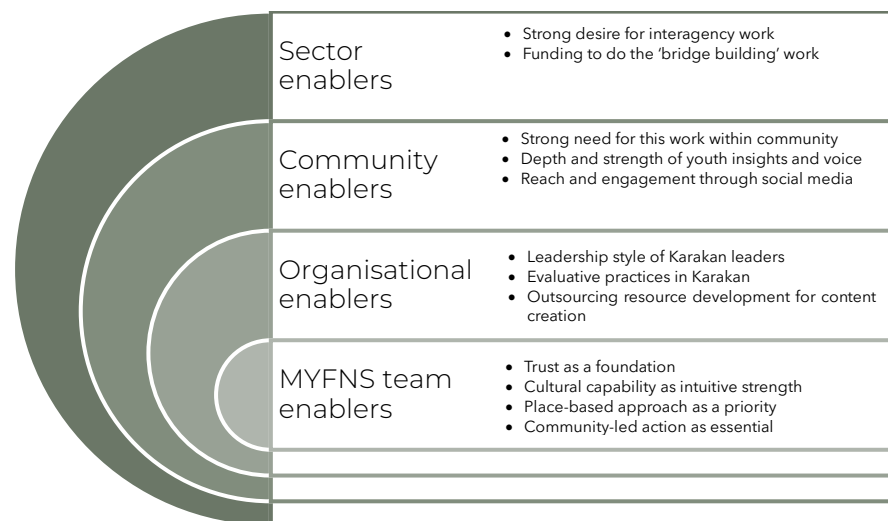


Figure 11. Enablers of the MYFNS Phase 1 work across different levels of the system

Sector enablers

The MYFNS team understood that **service integration** is important, but it was also seen as desperately needed by the sector's community services stakeholders. We heard that there is a strong need to bridge silos among community services, hosting interagency meetings to foster collaboration, and adapting roles to meet evolving community needs, with advocacy emerging as a key function.

"Everyone works in their silos because everyone's looking for funding. But for our program, when we attend interagency meetings, I said to the team, we are hosting some of these interagencies, to get them all in one room."

- MYFNS Program Coordinator

The Phase 1 work undertaken by the MYFNS team was enabled by the **funding for the MYFNS Navigator roles** in Logan and Ipswich. Whilst there are barriers to recognise about the ILC Grant mechanisms, we must also acknowledge that this "bridging work" is often overlooked in resourcing community development work and that these funds were able to facilitate that work.

Community enablers

In Ipswich, Logan, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane there are known gaps in the mental health and wellbeing support landscapes and youth are voicing their needs for better supports. This **demand from community** for help have enabled the MYFNS team to gain traction and enter a space where community resources are stretched.

The **young people** engaged in Phase 1 were insightful, brave, grounded and connected to their cultures. They shared their voices willingly and with strength. This enabled the MYFNS team to learn from them and collaboratively design resources with them.

The MYFNS team **embraced social media** in Phase 1. They used social media platforms to reach young people in engagement opportunities and have listened to the youth about wanting to create resources that are designed with social media platforms in mind as the delivery mechanism. Embracing the reach of social media for young people, rather than shying away from it, has enabled the MYFNS work to thrive.

Organisational enablers

The **leadership styles** and personal attributes of Karakan leaders deeply enabled Phase 1 work. These leaders knew that this MYFNS work was different to their business-as-usual service delivery work and they understood that their leadership approach must also adapt to the needs of the work and the team.

"When I first met Cam [Karakan CEO], he shared Karakan's vision for this work in a way that resonated with me. Our conversation challenged me to think more broadly about how my own values and commitment to community could be applied through this role. That alignment is ultimately what led me to join the program" - MYFNS Program Coordinator

"What stood out to me was Hayley's [Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager] humility and relational leadership style. She created an environment where we felt trusted to lead with our culture, our relationships and our strengths, and that was exactly what this program needed" - MYFNS Program Coordinator

The **evaluative practices** and capacity of the MYFNS team have enabled Phase 1 work to be captured, understood and refined over time. The team established forms for data capture of community development work, carefully crafted youth surveys and feedback forms and refined this over time to capture the shifts in their work. They also valued and reinforced reflective practice in monthly reports and in the way they approached their work as a team.

In Stage 3 of resource creation work, the MYFNS team **outsourced the content creation** to professionals. This enabled them to stay connected to the collaborative inputs of youth and partners but to also create high-quality resources ready for dissemination. Understanding scope of skills and practices is a key enabler to the success of the Phase 1 work for the MYFNS team.

MYFNS team enablers

These four enablers map back to the **four ways of working** described earlier. These are the core values that the MYFNS team bring to their work every day and these have enabled them to succeed in this Phase 1 work.

Barriers to Phase 1 work

The barriers of the MYFNS team's work in Phase 1 also sit across multiple levels of system influence (Figure 12).

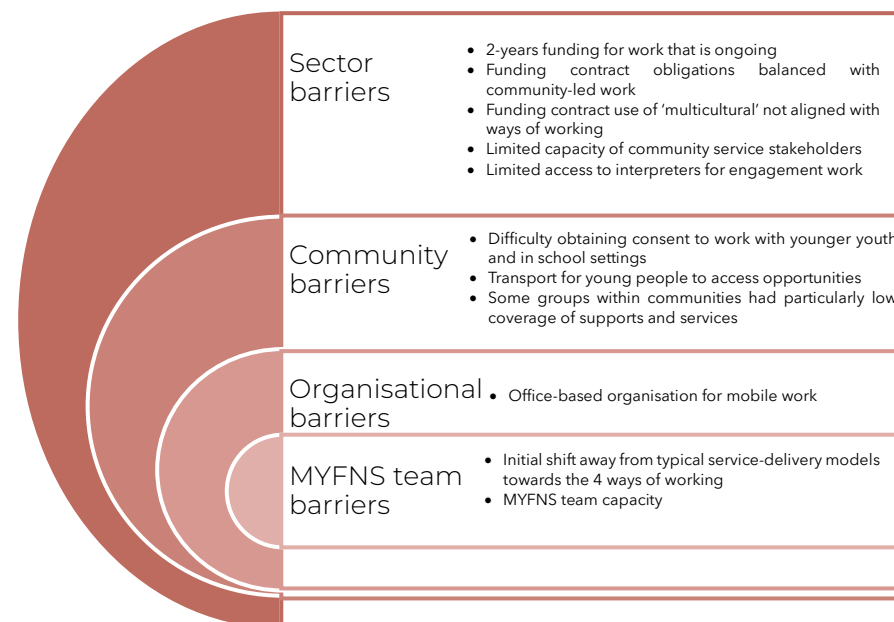


Figure 12. Barriers of MYFNS Phase 1 work across different levels of the system

Sector barriers

Karakan and the MYFNS team understand that the program of work must be ongoing, however the current **3-year funding** agreement ends in June 2027. This is a common, sector problem with funding.

"We don't have the funding for the next three years. Yeah, we've got the commitment. Yeah, that means that there's a genuine buy-in. It's part of the DNA now for us... We can't leave that work, otherwise we add to the mistrust and the marginalization that occurred in the past." - Karakan CEO

The MYFNS team discussed the difficulty of working within **funding contract boundaries** whilst also being community-led and adaptive to their needs over time. This often meant they encountered ambiguous areas that required careful interpretation and soaked up their limited capacity.

"Our objective is community first, but the reality is what we can do with the funding that's provided by the Commonwealth" - MYFNS Program Coordinator

The objectives of the funding contract refer to people from **multicultural backgrounds**. However, the MYFNS team felt that the misuse of the term 'multicultural' meant that their work could not realistically stretch to such a broad focus.

"If we were to honour the lead of the contract around multicultural, we would have to go and do co-design with three staff, all those cultures to bring authenticity to the contract and what we have to do. So when you look at that, that's not achievable. And then when you look at the funding criteria, everything gets bundled under multicultural."
- MYFNS Program Coordinator

We heard from all community service stakeholders that they had **limited capacity** within their roles. There were common narratives from service stakeholders of budgets contracting and of workloads expanding whilst being held by less people within their organisations. This was also seen and felt by the MYFNS team when they were engaging with these partners and trying to progress actions in community, which was often slowed or limited by the capacity of the community service stakeholder.

Community barriers

The MYFNS team value the importance of **gaining consent** before engaging with youth. This was more difficult for younger youth (e.g. aged under 10 years) and for working with young people through educational settings.

For some young people, **transport** is a real barrier to accessing social and community participation opportunities. The MYFNS team experienced

this with young people when they were doing community development work, or arranging people to attend events, workshops and other opportunities. But we also heard this directly from young people in the youth survey. This infrastructure barrier maybe a future focus for advocacy work for the MYFNS team.

In some locations, for some groups of young people, there are **particularly low coverage of supports**. The MYFNS team had experienced this and communicated it in their interviews but did not name specific examples. They did communicate that this low coverage makes their navigation work particularly challenging and again this barrier is a likely future focus for advocacy work for the MYFNS team.

Organisational barriers

The work in Phase 1 was **place-based** and required the MYFNS team to be physically present in Ipswich, Logan, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane frequently. Karakan have a central office located in Daisy Hill, which is where the MYFNS team are located. However, moving forward Karakan may need to consider the costs and benefits of having MYFNS Navigator roles positioned in community, through partnership co-locations or office space facilitated through local government partnerships.

"It comes down to the most important thing, and that's outreach. Right? So we've got the service here, but it's got to be mobile. That service has actually got to be mobile. And that's when the outreach comes in. You've got to be where they are and provide that service there where they are."
- MYFNS Program Coordinator

MYFNS team barriers

In the early days of Phase 1, the MYFNS team and leaders **sat with the uncomfortable feeling** of working in a way that was not typical to Karakan. Being community-led, relying on earning trust from community and partners and being led by intuitive cultural capability all take time to establish and develop. This meant that in the early days there was

uncertainty. However, the MYFNS team and the Karakan leaders grew through this uncertainty and consolidated their ways of working to be successful. So, whilst this is positioned as an initial barrier it did lead to a strength over time.

The MYFNS team has **finite capacity**. The team is made up of two place-based MYFNS Navigators (one in Ipswich, one in Logan) and a MYFNS Program Coordinator. These three people have shared an extraordinary workload between them throughout Phase 1, as evidenced by the volume of engagements, the quality of relationships fostered and the breadth of resources created in 2-years. The pace and volume of work held by these three people is not sustainable. It is also not feasible to deepen and expand the community development work in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane without adding additional capacity to the team.

"Karakan and I have been walking alongside each other in this journey, supporting each other, but we, you know, we're both, there's a lot of vulnerability in that for the community right now [if they lose funding]. So I think really that making themselves sustainable and not subject to funding, whether that's through partnerships and collaboration."
 – Community Service Stakeholder in Ipswich

Future recommendations moving forward

From this Phase 1 evaluation we can draw some clear conclusions about recommendations for actions as the MYFNS team and Karakan move towards Phase 2. Most of these recommendations centre on preserving and protecting the four ways of working and these ways of working should serve as key reflective tools for Karakan as they consider each recommendation implementation.

Recommendations for Organisational Actions

Recommendation	Actions
1. Share impacts of Phase 1 with stakeholders and celebrate the work	- Share this report (and accompanying infographic) with stakeholders and young people engaged in Phase 1, funders, potential new partners and Karakan staff and board - Celebrate the work of the MYFNS team visible within Karakan and externally through newsletters, social media posts and your website
2. Attract funding for MYFNS sustainability	- Confirm board support for the MYFNS program of work to be continued beyond current funding - Seek external funding through state or local government funding and philanthropic opportunities - Plan for long-term, sustainable funding channels for this work
3. Articulate MYFNS team roles	Review position descriptions for the MYFNS Navigator and MYFNS Program Coordinator roles, based on the learnings from Phase 1
4. Retain place-based roles in MYFNS with targeted recruitment	- Ensure that all future planning for MYFNS enables a MYFNS Navigator to focus on one geographical community - Prioritise targeted recruitment to future MYFNS roles, ensuring that team members identify as a Pacific Islander, Māori, or First Nations person

Recommendation	Actions
5. Spread work to deepen connections in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane	- Expand the capacity of the MYFNS team (through 2 x new MYFNS Navigators) to deepen engagement work in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane - Allow time for these new team members to do the trust-building, relational work that is required in Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane
6. Ensure support for MYFNS to undertake mobile work in community	Consider opportunities for MYFNS Navigators to sit in place-based co-location offices with community partners for 1-3 days per week, whilst balancing the need for the MYFNS team to still work as a coordinated team from a central location at times
7. Continue to enable flexibility and time for community-led agenda	- Ensure that the MYFNS team continue to have the space to be community-led and not restricted by future contractual obligations on delivering specific activities rather than towards shared outcomes - Keep the narrative open with Karakan leadership and Board members on the direction and impacts of the MYFNS program of work
8. Embed organisational resources into Karakan practices	- Complete the development phase of the PIM Engagement Framework and PIM Strategy - Follow-on from the collaborative design work on these organisational resources to ensure that staff feel ownership over them and see their value in practice - Embed the organisational resources as tools in the Karakan Academy to disseminate learnings to all staff

Recommendation for MYFNS program of work

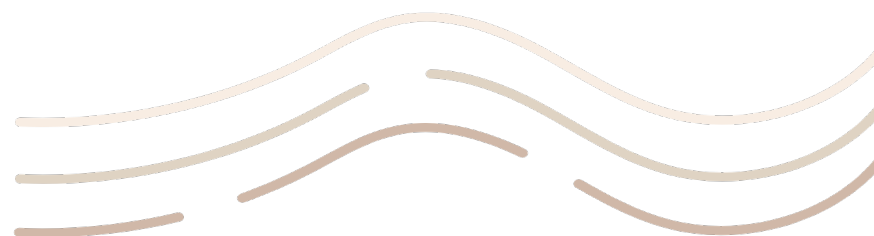
Recommendation	Actions
1. Deepen partnerships with local councils in Ipswich, Brisbane and Gold Coast	Local government places a key role in place-based work. The MYFNS team have an established, effective relationship with Logan City Council. This could serve as a learning point for deepening relationships with Ipswich, Gold Coast and Brisbane City Councils.
2. Maximise the visibility and impact of the Wayfinder series	- Fund and support the widespread dissemination of the Wayfinder film series across social media, partner communication channels, and Karakan communication channels - Broaden the community-facing resource offerings to support the Wayfinder series
3. Formalise reflective practice on the four Ways of Working	- Spend time considering what the four ways of working mean to each MYFNS team member and how they can be enacted moving forward - Create formal and informal opportunities for the MYFNS team to regularly reflect on their own ways of working and how they align to the four described here
4. Expand the capacity of MYFNS team for advocacy	As capacity in the MYFNS team expands, make room for more formalised advocacy work to carry the issues heard and felt in community up through policy and practice decision-makers, especially for systemic barriers to young people wellbeing (e.g. transport issues, support landscape gaps)

Recommendations for MYFNS evaluative practice

Recommendation	Actions
1. Plan evaluation of Phase 2 processes and impacts	• Create an evaluation plan for the implementation (resource channels and uptake) and impacts of Wayfinder series • Create an evaluation plan for the implementation of Karakan's PIM Engagement Framework and PIM Strategy • Ensure that all evaluation work (including this project) is accountable to a broader evaluation framework within Karakan that demonstrates collective impacts across programs of work
2. Refine monthly reporting templates in MYFNS	• Refine the Stakeholder Activity Report form to include a dropdown categorical field for classifying the organisational type of each stakeholder, standardise the entry of a person's name separate to their organisational name • Isolate numeric fields for counts of the number of engagements with young people, families, number of referrals of young people, and number of events/workshops/ info sessions (all by location) in the monthly reports • Streamline questions in the monthly reports to minimise burden • Update service area locations in all reporting templates to align with Logan, Ipswich, Gold Coast and Inner Brisbane
3. Review and refine the Program Logic Model	• Reflect on the findings from Phase 1 and review the Program Logic Model for the MYFNS program of work to capture this • Extend the Program Logic Model to capture the intended activity, outputs and outcomes of work in Phase 2

"In terms of the Karakan team, I just want to thank them for everything that they're doing. You know, it's been such a blessing to see them in community delivering what they say that they would deliver. And building those relationships that we need."

- Community Service Stakeholder in Logan



APPENDIX A: Program Logic Model of Phase 1 for MYFNS

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS		SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
- DSS Information Linkage and Capacity Building Grant Funding - Karakan Strategic Plan - MYFNS Service Navigator Coordinator 3 FTE Service Navigators - Karakan Innovation and Impact Manager - Existing Karakan relationships in focus communities	- Create and maintain a Stakeholder Map - Create and maintain a Community Profile - Develop Community Engagement Protocols for each community - Outreach to local networks, partners, and local community and cultural leaders - Education and information sharing with local cultural leaders and organisations about the project - Develop a co-design Engagement Framework - Engage young people, family members, carers and community members - Engage key community stakeholders and organisations - Facilitate culturally safe and respectful co-design workshops/groups/events - Develop culturally safe and responsive resources to connect young people and their families to community and support their access to community services and activities.	- Stakeholder Maps - Community Profiles - Community Engagement Protocols # stakeholder outreach # stakeholder engagement - Summary of needs by service area - Summary of insights and ideas by service area - Co-design Engagement Protocol # young people engagement # families and carers engaging # community members engaging # group-based sessions delivered # in-service meetings delivered # community stakeholder surveys # youth surveys # co-design participant surveys - Type and # resources	Young people and their families	- New and strengthened relationships with community organisations - New and strengthened relationships with Karakan	Increased confidence, pride and empowerment	- Co-designed resources that are culturally safe and responsive and meet the identified needs - Increased visibility of leadership skills of young people
			Community Services	- New and strengthened relationships with young people and their families/carers - New and strengthened relationships with Karakan	Improved understanding of local issues, needs, barriers and gaps of community and social participation	Co-designed resources that are culturally safe and responsive and meet the identified needs
			Karakan	- Increased visibility of MYFNS within Karakan - New and strengthened relationships with young people, their families/carers and their communities - New and strengthened relationships with community services - Improved visibility of Karakan in community	Improved understanding of local issues, needs, barriers and gaps of community and social participation	- Improved understanding within Karakan of co-design processes - Improved understanding within Karakan of community engagement with multicultural communities - Improved organisational reputation as leader in cultural innovation and inclusion

Program Logic External Factors.

- The four focus communities all have different contexts, community organisation landscapes, and community demographics.
- In some instances, timing or funding limited the MYFNS staff from being able to engage in full co-design principles (i.e., shared decision-making), and a stepped-back collaborative approach was needed instead.
- YAG recruitment was with young people who were already engaging with services, not with those who do not yet engage

Program Logic Assumptions.

- Young people, their families and communities want to engage in collaborative design of resources
- It is feasible to represent and include different cultures from different service areas in the YAG
- The community organisations engaged are culturally safe and responsive