

## How can church communities and youth workers respond to this challenge?

We can support young people on this journey if we choose to walk it with them.

### To walk with young people, we must be where they are

We do this by reaching them in their own places and in their own culture:

- go into their environment
- respect their world
- learn about them
- meet their needs

### We must be with them

We do this by getting to know them, caring for them, and being a good example:

- do activities together
- share their struggles
- be a role model

### We must be like a family

We do this by making our communities somewhere that they feel welcome and they want to belong:

- share meals
- celebrate each other
- work together to help others



## To walk with young people is to help them follow Jesus

In all of this, we must talk to young people about what Jesus means in their lives and make opportunities to put this faith into action:

- pray together
- read the Bible
- share faith
- care for others
- work for justice
- reflect on experiences together

The journey of adolescence for young people today is long and lonely. The good news is that we can support young people if we work together and come alongside them on this journey.

### Adolescence is a long and lonely road Walk it with them.



Produced by the Territorial Youth Department, Australia Southern Territory: tsayouth.com

# The Long & Lonely Road

## The Journey of Adolescence



## Summary Report

THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA SOUTHERN TERRITORY \*\*  
**THE DEPARTMENT of YOUTH**



**The journey of adolescence for young people today is longer and lonelier than ever before.**

Adolescence takes twice the amount of time it once did:

- puberty today begins five years earlier than it did a century ago.
- the social markers of adulthood (career, marriage, home ownership) are taking place much later.

Adolescence is also lonelier. Parents are struggling and there are fewer places young people can go for support:

- 1 in 5 parents feel as if they struggle to provide appropriate levels of care because they lack knowledge, skills, or time.
- social institutions like churches and community groups play a smaller role in the lives of young people.
- 70% of young people feel as if they are meant to fix their problems on their own.

**As a result, young people today feel abandoned.**



**Young people today struggle with an adolescence that is long and lonely, and this journey presents very real risks:**

**Bullying:**

- one in four young people are bullied.

**Anxiety and depression:**

- two out of three are stressed about school. One in 16 are depressed.

**Substance abuse:**

- five young people die each week as a result of alcohol abuse.

**Suicide:**

- suicide is the leading cause of death for young people, consisting of 35% of male deaths and 25% of female deaths.

While adolescence is hard for every generation, the long and lonely road that young people face today presents risks to their physical and mental health, and, in some instances, even their lives.

**As a result, some young people are struggling to survive adolescence.**

\* Statistics accurate as of 2017

**For church communities and youth workers who want to see young people grow into thriving followers of Jesus, the long and lonely road of adolescence is also a challenge.**

**How has The Salvation Army tried to support struggling young people?**

Many church communities today do not know how to reach out to young people:

- 36% of our corps do not have teens.
- 54% of corps do not have programmed outreach for young people:

Young people don't come to church and the Church doesn't go to young people. Even the church communities that do engage young people are not supporting them in the right ways.

- only 8% of corps have a clear plan for youth ministry.
- 72% of Christian young people drop out from church before they are 30.

Many churches don't know how to reach out to young people and many lose the ones they have. Church communities can often find it hard to engage young people in the long-term and give up.

**As a result, 90% of young people in Australia don't attend church at all.**

