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WA youth tackle key issues

Claire Tyrrell | April 16, 2015, 5:42 am

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Growing up in a family where substance abuse was rife was not easy for Taylor-Jane Bellotti.

But the 20-year-old steered away from a troubled life to become a university student and youth mentor.

"I saw how everyone struggled and thought, I don't want that life," she said.

"It deterred me from that path."

Ms Bellotti's story resonates with tens of thousands of young people in WA but few take the approach she did. Drugs and alcohol, family violence, mental health issues and socioeconomic disadvantage are among the factors that lead young people into a life of crime.

More than 100 young people addressed these issues at a youth summit at Government House yesterday.

A WA first, the summit focused on Perth's south eastern corridor, which has a high percentage of at-risk youths.

Representatives from a spectrum of government and non-government bodies took a back seat while young people workshopped ideas.



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Save the Children State manager Juan Larranaga said the aim was to get all youth sector agencies to work together towards goals set out by young people.

South East Metropolitan District community engagement coordinator Sgt Matt Sharp said justice reinvestment was a key objective of the summit. "Money we spend preventing young people being incarcerated is far more valuable than paying for them to stay in jail," he said.

Youth Leadership Roundtable chairwoman Jenna Woods grew up in Gosnells, where she veered off track and into an abusive relationship at 16.

It took her to hit rock bottom to turn her life around. "Nothing was good in my life," she said. "I didn't have an education, any career prospects or a stable place to stay."

At 19 Ms Woods took her son, then two years old, away from his abusive father and started university.

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