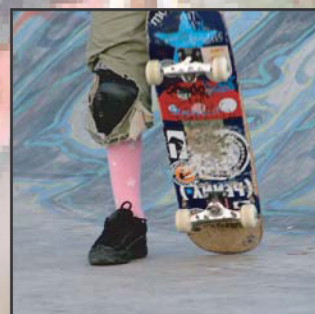
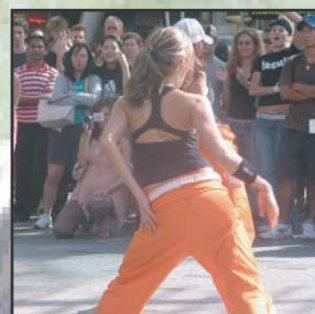




Tweed Youth Needs Analysis

Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

January 2006



plan C

Suite 14, Cameron House, 354 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, 4006
Ph. 07 3852 1211 M 0422794072 planc@bigpond.net.au www.planc.com.au



14 Geelong Street, East Brisbane QLD. 4169
Mobile: 0409 924 233 sandra@fieldworx.com.au

Jointly prepared for the Tweed Shire Council by

Plan C

Suite 11 &12, Cameron House
354 Brunswick St
Fortitude Valley Q 4006
Ph 07 3257 1265
E: info@planc.com.au
W: www.planc.com.au

And

Fieldworx

14 Geelong Street
East Brisbane Q 4169
Ph: 0409 924 233
E: sandra@fieldworx.com.au

Acknowledgements

The consultants wish to thank the young people of Tweed, community organisations, Council staff and residents for openly sharing their experiences in the development of the Tweed Youth Needs Analysis. Appreciation is also extended to the members of the Project Steering group:

Robin Spragg – Social Planner Strategic Planning Unit, TSC
Douglas Jardine – Manager Strategic Planning, TSC
Leigh Abernethy – Landscape Architect TSC
Ron Cooper – Resident
Barbara Carroll – Tweed Valley Respite Services
Mark Madden – Club Manager Tweed Heads PCYC
Jessica Walker – Youth Officer
Gerina Appo – St Josephs Youth Service

Special thanks to the local teachers and students at the Tweed schools who also assisted in our development towards the Tweed Youth Needs Analysis:

Ellain Cunningham and Bronwyn Macneky – Tweed River High School
Roy Pickering – Lakeside High School
Simon Gardener – Tutorial Centre, Murwillumbah
Merideth Burton – Kingscliff High School

Executive Summary

Background

The Tweed Shire Council's Youth Needs Analysis has been developed in response to concerns raised with Council over a lack of facilities and services for young people in the Tweed Shire.

Council is seeking to take a planned approach to their role in meeting the needs of young people. Council's Social Plan identifies youth issues as a high priority, however, at this stage, no comprehensive youth strategy or youth policy exists for the Tweed Shire.

A project steering committee was established by Council to guide the development of the Youth Needs Analysis. The steering committee met at key points during the project and comprised representatives from Council and community.

Young people are generally defined in Australia by local, state and federal governments as being aged 12 to 25 years. However, due to the significant diversity of this age group, the Tweed Shire Council plans to strategically focus its resources and energy on young people aged 12 to 18 years in the first instance. Young people aged 19 to 25 are not excluded; however they are a secondary target group.

This report informs stakeholders about the needs of young people living in the Tweed Shire. It does not include a specific youth policy or youth strategy for Council. Rather it is intended to provide information and options upon which Council can develop policies and recommendations.



Summary of key findings and recommendations

The following summary responds to the key questions provided in the project scope.

Understanding the current and projected demographics of the Tweed Shire

Young people in the Tweed Shire represent 29% of its total population. The greatest proportion of young people aged between 10 and 24 years is in the Tweed Heads district representing 46% of the Tweed Shire youth total.

In 2001, young Indigenous people under 25 years represented 45% of the total Indigenous population in the Tweed Shire. Of these, 42% were aged 10 to 14 years.

Current projections for the Tweed Shire suggest that the population of children and young people 24 years and younger will be 25,811 in 2026. Over the next 10 to 15 years, the actual number of children and young people is expected to continue to be higher than the number of older people aged 65 years and over. However, by 2026 the growth in the numbers of people aged 65 years and over will out-strip the growth in the numbers of young people based on current projections.

Almost half of Tweed Shire's young people leave the Shire when aged between 20 and 24 years for reasons including pursuing tertiary education, finding employment and personal reasons. It is unclear which proportion of these young people return to the Shire.

Tweed Shire's youth unemployment is twice as high as the state average. Notably, unemployment and full-time employment declined and part-time employment and university attendance increased for the 15 to 24-year age group.



Mapping community and government services and facilities designed to meet the needs of young people

In the main, services and facilities for young people are limited. Community-based agencies are required to service a growing population of young people across a broad geographic area with limited resources. Of particular concern is a lack of adequate emergency, supported and low cost accommodation for young people, particularly those living in inland rural communities.



The Tweed Shire is challenged by limited cross-border state government relationships regarding the provision of state-funded services such as health, housing and public transport. Additionally, intra local government relationships also play a key role in meeting the needs of young people due to the nature of young people's mobility.

The Tweed Shire Council has built several skate park facilities designed specifically for young people. Other open spaces have been designed to meet the needs of the whole community.

The Police Citizens Youth Club in Tweed Heads is a major indoor recreation facility servicing young people. This is complemented by various sporting organisations and facilities across the Shire.

Identifying the needs of young people across the Shire, with an emphasis on Pottsville

A total of 328 young people and 17 organisations were consulted through surveys, interviews and discussion groups. Six key focus areas have provided a framework for identifying key issues, undertaking analysis and the development of recommendations.

The following key action areas are designed to interconnect and overlap in order to provide a holistic approach to meeting the needs of young people living in the Tweed Shire:

- Information and resources
- Learning and work
- Coordination and leadership
- Places and spaces
- Connected and included
- Safety and security

Information and resources – Young people highlighted a lack of access to information. In the main, they do not know where to get information about support services and they find it difficult to get information about events and other activities.

Learning and work – The majority of young people interviewed believe they will need to leave Tweed Shire in order to



further their education or to find work. They suggested that they have limited employment options, particularly if they do not have their own transport. Indigenous young people have a higher unemployment rate than the general population. Community sector organisations also identified limited course offerings available at the university as a barrier to further education

Coordination and leadership – The majority of young people consulted showed little knowledge or understanding of what Council does for the community and young people. Many had indicated that they would like to be more interested and involved in community decision-making but didn't know how to do this.

Places and spaces – Although young people currently find things to do in the places they go, the majority of young people feel there is a lack of adequate and accessible places and facilities to hang out and have a good time. Existing skate parks, local parks and open spaces are not sufficiently set up to accommodate the growing numbers of young people and their requests and preferences in recreation.

Connected and included – Young people's major source for community inclusion and connectivity is through their peer groups at school, sporting groups, church, and local neighbourhoods. The feeling of a small, local town environment has been identified as a way in which young people feel included and connected. However, young people feel that community members often pass judgment and have negative views of young people. Culturally and linguistically diverse young people often feel a social disconnection due to the differences in culture and language.

Safety and security – Young people feel most safe at home, at school and with their family. They also feel safe when with their friends in a public place during the day. They feel unsafe in many outdoor places at night, in unfamiliar places and in places that are unclean and lack lighting. Specific reference was made by young people about violent and intimidating behaviour of people in the streets and in places near local pubs, in places where alcohol and illicit drugs were used and places where homeless people hang out.

A Youth Centre at Pottsville?

A key aim of this project has been to investigate the feasibility of a purpose-built youth centre in Pottsville and to provide Council with some recommendations regarding this proposal.



Overall, young people, service providers and the project team did not support the development of a youth centre in Pottsville, at this point in time.

A committee of young people and interested adults have undergone an extensive research/study which promotes a high need for a youth centre in Pottsville. This work provided a large amount of supportive data for the case to develop a youth centre in Pottsville.

However, as a whole, the Tweed Shire is not currently in a position to develop and manage indoor youth spaces and development of these spaces is presently best undertaken by specialist service providers such as the PCYC.

Young people and the youth sector did not identify the development of indoor youth centres as a priority for addressing the space and place needs of young people in the Tweed Shire at the key forum for the project. Instead they indicated other ideas as immediate priorities to meet young people's space and place needs.

It is recommended that Council capitalise on the existing network of young people in Pottsville and develop a series of youth events and activities for Pottsville as a trial for the Tweed Shire.

There are also possibilities for less expensive and more easily managed spaces (e.g. integrated public spaces for young people) to be developed in Pottsville to meet the immediate needs of young people. Alternatively, the use of the existing community centre in Pottsville for youth activities and events should be considered as a possible short-term option, particularly if managed and operated by an existing service provider such as the PCYC.

The construction of a multi-purpose youth centre would then be a longer term option to be re-investigated in five years or more and/or following the implementation of the other recommendations outlined in this report.

Identifying good practice in youth development, facilities and service provision for local government to provide a benchmark for the Tweed Shire Council

The business of local government is about building communities that are good places to live, and planning for the needs of the whole community. Young people are a significant sector of the community and therefore are part of Council business.

The role Council plays generally relates to the size of the Council, available resources, history of involvement in youth



affairs, community expectations and levels of partnerships available with other sectors and spheres of government.

A significant proportion of Councils employ at least one staff member with a focus on youth development. The majority of Councils target young people in their planning activities and provide recreational services or facilities for young people.

In the main, Councils see their role in youth affairs as coordination and facilitation, with state and federal governments providing funding and support. It is worth noting that councils spend far more on young people than they receive in grants.

Identifying potential state and federal funding sources and resources

Financial assistance and partnerships can be developed with a range of government and non-government agencies. Numerous funding programs are available from state and federal governments as well as independent organisations and philanthropic trusts. A number of umbrella funding websites are particularly useful in identifying potential funding sources.

In order to ensure that Council is responsive to the identified needs of young people, it will need to make some strategic decisions about its policy position and future direction. Council will then be in a position to fully investigate suitable funding partners.



Recommendations

FOCUS AREA 1: COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP

- 1.1. That Council develops a clear policy position on Council's role in youth affairs in response to the issues and recommendations identified in this Youth Needs Analysis. This could take the form of a Tweed Shire Council Youth Policy. The Youth Policy should address the key action areas identified in the Youth Needs Analysis and include measures for monitoring its implementation.
- 1.2. That Council establishes a Youth Development Officer position to work across key internal Council divisions and with external partners and agencies to action the proposed Youth Policy.
- 1.3. That Council clearly articulates the strategic role of the Youth Development Officer through a well-developed position description based on the learnings from other local authorities.
- 1.4. That Council develops and trials a model of youth engagement that is inclusive of young people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles. That the model gives consideration to the differing needs of young people living on the coast and young people living rurally.
- 1.5. That Council includes young people in the development of current strategic and planning documents. These should include Locality Plans as identified in Tweed Futures and the review of Council's Arts Policy. Young people should also be a key stakeholder group in the development of an open space strategy for the Tweed Shire.
- 1.6. That Council seeks to capitalise on state and federal government funding and resourcing opportunities by working collaboratively with the community services sector in identifying and responding to young people's needs.
- 1.7. That Council plays a key role in supporting community agencies to work together through the re-establishment of the youth services network or other appropriate forums.

FOCUS AREA 2: INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- 2.1. That Council develops a youth information strategy that incorporates information exchange between young



people directly and indirectly through parents, carers and service providers.

- 2.2. That Council assesses the risks and benefits of updating its' current website to include youth-specific pages or creating a stand-alone website that targets young people.
- 2.3. That Council creates and approves links from the proposed youth websites or pages to other secure youth website such as www.youth.nsw.gov.au.
- 2.4. That Council seeks to partner young people through educational or training organisations to develop and maintain the youth website or youth pages.
- 2.5. That Council purchases software to enable young people to voluntarily register their mobile phone numbers via the website to allow group texts to be sent regarding coming events and new website features or information.
- 2.6. That relevant information is distributed through paper-based means in mediums such as school newspapers and the Tweed Link.
- 2.7. That Council advocates to New South Wales Health to work with local community agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy to address drug use by young people. The strategy should give consideration to activities ranging from information provision through to drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.



FOCUS AREA 3: LEARNING AND WORK

- 3.1. That Council works collaboratively with the Tweed Economic Development Corporation to develop specific strategies aimed at enhancing employment opportunities for young people.
- 3.2. That Council reviews its own workforce demographics with a view to developing employment strategies for young people through apprenticeships, traineeships and graduate programs.
- 3.3. That Council supports community organisations, educational and learning institutions in lobbying state government for the provision of a range of learning options to meet the needs of all young people.

FOCUS AREA 4: PLACES AND SPACES

4.1. That Council includes a young people's public space strategy as a component of an open space plan or youth strategy for the shire.

4.2. That Council uses the following spectrum as guidance for the development of spaces and places for young people and develops appropriate spaces for young people through **temporary, opportunistic, or strategic** means.



Place and Space Spectrum	Suggested Spaces
1. Creating temporary spaces for young people through events and activities programming;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Local beach environments</i> ○ <i>Skate parks and sports infrastructure</i> ○ <i>Shopping centre areas</i> ○ <i>Local/neighbourhood parks</i> ○ <i>Public swimming pools</i> ○ <i>Community halls</i>
2. Redeveloping existing youth spaces to improve inclusiveness and relevance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Skate parks and youth-centric Infrastructure e.g. Basketball ½ courts</i> ○ <i>Parks and sporting/recreational areas/existing clubs</i> ○ <i>Streets and found spaces</i>
3. Designing and developing Integrated Outdoor Public Spaces for young people; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Skate and youth space</i> ○ <i>Areas with existing catchments of young people e.g. around shopping centres</i> ○ <i>Youth hangout space</i>
4. Purpose-built Youth Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Ongoing partnerships with PCYC proposed</i> ○ <i>No recommendations for new centres</i>



4.3. That council uses the detailed recommendations for creating temporary spaces and events, redeveloping existing facilities and developing integrated outdoor public spaces for young people as outlined in this report.

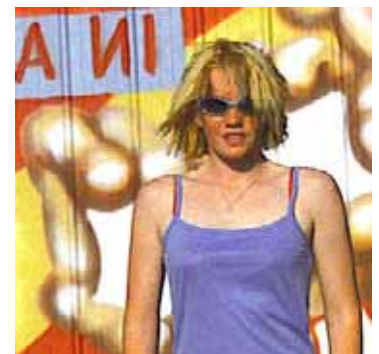
- 4.4. That Council uses the recommendations outlined in this report to develop the Murwillumbah youth space project as a pilot project for meeting the space and place needs of young people in Tweed Shire.
- 4.5. That Council seeks improved partnerships with the PCYC as a youth space service provider with potential to increase service delivery to other Council owned indoor spaces.
- 4.6. That a multi-purpose youth centre at Pottsville **not be** developed at this point in time and be reinvestigated in five years or more and/or following the implementation of the other recommendations outlined in this report.

FOCUS AREA 5: CONNECTED AND INCLUDED

- 5.1. That Council develops a co-ordinated transport strategy with increased and improved bus routes and services (especially in evening and on weekends), co-ordinating fare system across the borders and investigate potential funding subsidies for bus companies. That Council investigates the feasibility of free bus services for major events and festivals from specific locations.
- 5.2. That Council develops a media strategy for the Tweed Shire's young people that includes: Information and promotional resources describing events/ activities/ places within young people's access or interest and types and sources of positive, youth-focused information distribution (media, internet, promotional material etc.)
- 5.3. That Council encourages young people's involvement in organising and programming events and activities to give a sense of involvement and power over what is happening
- 5.4. That Council develops a local and familiar context for activities and events that relate to young people's local lives and cultures.

FOCUS AREA 6: SAFETY AND SECURITY

- 6.1. That Council conducts CPTED (Crime prevention through environmental design) audits of key 'hot spots' and seeks crime prevention funding to improve the safety of these spaces through design, lighting and management solutions.



- 6.2 That Council seeks partnerships with local police to deliver increased presence at these sites identified through CPTED to improve the feeling of safety.
- 6.3 That Council improves the maintenance and management of public toilets through improved lighting, security and more regular cleaning.
- 6.4 That Council combats unsafe/violent behaviour in public places through anti-violence programs and role modelling.
- 6.5 That Council works closely with other levels of government and community sector agencies to coordinate safe and accessible emergency accommodation for young people across the Tweed Shire.
- 6.6 That Council works with the other levels of government and the private sector to encourage provision of affordable housing for young people.

