

Analysis of Youth Council review recommendations

Purpose and process

- That the Youth Council become an advisory committee to Council that meets to discuss and debate matters that have been previously provided to them in reports/information contained within the meeting agendas. These items are to be voted on and the outcomes form recommendations to Council from a youth perspective of the issue.
- Opportunities for Councillors and Council officers to embed Council activities within the community.
- That the Youth Council be requested to identify youth related issues that require advocacy and that these be followed up with a recommendation to Council, or in the case of an external entity the Youth Council to make a written request for action/investigation to that entity.
- That meeting agendas be provided to Youth Council members a minimum of one week in advance of each meeting, with relevant items to have reports or information attached that is appropriate for members to be informed and allow for healthy discussion/debate to take place at the meeting. Due to the level of experience of the participants, a list of optional recommendations may be included for discussion
- That Council investigate ways that the Youth Council program (or other activity) can coordinate with and compliment the state government's program for School Representative Councils.

Response to Recommendation:

To manage the capacity of the Youth Council it is recommended it remains an advisory committee, however that it changes to only consider six pre-selected issues each year. Council officers and guests will present on these issues to the group and they will be given time between meetings to consider and undertake further research. Discussions and feedback from Youth Council sessions will be minuted and provided to Council.

Other opportunities to engage with young people beyond the Youth Council program will be delivered through the Community Development program. Council has existing young people activities and programs delivered by over 10 identified departments e.g. Tweed Schools' Environmental Leadership Program and Council Community Engagement projects. Collaboration on these projects along with others will continue through the Community Development Strategy.

Youth Council will be trained how to run meetings, the responsibilities of various levels of government, the role of advocacy and action groups and democratic processes to affect change. In addition participants can consult with their Student Representative Council (SRC) and feed their views back to the committee. Optional excursions can include visiting Community access and Council meetings, community youth events, conferences and external workshops.

Frequency and location

- That the number of meetings be increased to six meetings per year to allow for more input to Council – with the addition of an induction workshop prior to the first meeting.
- That the first and last official meetings be held at Council facilities (Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads), but the four other meetings are to be held at host schools and within school hours to allow for better engagement with other students and school staff.

Response to recommendation:

Increasing the number of meetings may be difficult due to the young people's availability, the length of school terms and logistics involved in bringing the young people together. The proposed process for identifying issues to manage the scope of Youth Council meeting discussions would allow quality input in a similar same amount of time. It is proposed the first meeting would be an induction meeting increasing the overall meetings per year to five.

When the Youth Council model was initially established consultation with schools and staff identified concerns about impact on curriculum if held within school hours. It is therefore recommended this remains an afterschool activity. The option to hold meetings at host schools will be investigated.

Composition

- That the Youth Council be composed of year 10 students, as they are able to more readily commit the time to the task.
- That Councillors and Council officers are not members (including Ex-Officio) of the Youth Council, they are either invited guests at, or observers of the meeting. The only exception to this should be the program coordinator as that position provides the secretariat role of the Youth Council.
- That Council investigate the possibility of Youth Council members also being sourced directly from the community rather than only as representatives of schools.

Response to recommendation:

The terms of reference state year 10 and 11 students. At times schools have recommend year 12 students and they have been permitted to participate. This practise will be phased out.

The committee will be made up of the program coordinator, a governance representative and the young people participating in the program only. To ensure the young are empowered to have their say and encouraged to take the lead role in this committee, Councillors and all other attendees will be observers or invited guests and will address the committee in an advice-giving capacity.

To maintain age appropriate conversations, connections and safety measures a distinct age group has been chosen. Young people who are not in mainstream education can still participate if of the appropriate age.

Governance

- That voting may be made by consensus, but where agreement cannot be reached a majority vote will be required to pass a resolution. In a case where a vote is tied it will be passed on the casting vote of the Chair.
- That media releases issued by the Youth Council must not be contrary to Council policy, or to any standing Council decision.

Response to recommendation:

Terms of Reference will be strengthened in response to these recommendations.