

TWEED SHIRE SOCIAL PLAN – 2006 REVIEW

CONSULTATION REPORT

Consultation of the Community:

On 29 November community feedback was requested through a full-page insertion in the Tweed Link about the current Social Plan Strategies, and changes to the quality of life being experienced by people in the community. A wide range of community organisations (about 80) were also canvassed directly by letter for feedback. Subsequently, a further notice targeting young people was inserted in Tweed Link to try to attract responses from this group.

Responses at the closing date, 27 January 2006, included 34 submissions by letter, email or telephone.

Major Issues

The separate issues raised in these submissions can be categorised as:

Transport	24 issues
Young People	13 issues
Affordable Housing	10 issues
People with a Disability	10 issues
Employment	7 issues
Older People	5 issues
Children	4 issues
Women	3 issues
ATSI People	1 issue
Cultural & Linguistically Diverse People	1 issue
TOTAL	78 issues

Themes within the Issues

Within the issues, particular recurring themes can be identified that need to be addressed.

Proposed Actions

Actions to address the themes contained in the submissions, are proposed as follows. Some Actions may be already in progress, others may be new proposals for which support, partnerships or funding sources may need to be explored:

Transport

Lack of awareness of information about transport services:

The feedback included people who were unaware of existing services, and this implies need for better ways of providing information.

Actions:

- *Updating and promoting the Network Access Guide more widely,*
- *Promoting 'how to use public transport' to older people no longer able to drive, but unfamiliar with bus systems (currently proposed as a Healthy Ageing promotion during 2006),*
- *Promoting the new regional 'Going Places' website.*

Transport service improvements

Many requested greater route coverage and frequency, and extended hours of operation, particularly for work travel and education, which is a significant problem for young people; and for older people who may rely on public transport for all their travel needs.

Actions:

- *The PTWG will work with operators to encourage new and extended routes, greater frequency, and services at times to meet people's needs,*
- *The PTWG will participate in service planning improvements as opportunities arise, including timetable reviews and Ministry of Transport Bus Reform Implementation,*
- *The PTWG will assist Tweed Shire Council and other Northern Rivers Council's in the proposed Regional Integrated Transport Plan,*
- *The PTWG will facilitate and encourage the development of an internal Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning process.*

Footpath system improvements

Less mobile people are having difficulty accessing public transport and using the footpaths, either in wheelchairs, on scooters or on foot.

Actions:

- *The Social Plan advocates greater investment in the footpath system, and a higher standard of amenity (seats, shade trees), as a higher priority than road improvements for vehicles,*
- *Footpath 'black spots' will be improved with a combination of Council and RTA funding, but progress has been slow due to inadequate funding priority.*
- *CPTIGS funding will be sought for public transport related improvements.*
- *Tweed Shire Council Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan will also be used to guide and plan improvements.*

Improved transport options for non-drivers

Feedback from people no longer able to drive indicated a need not only for user-friendly public transport, but a range of 'mobility management' options such as subsidised taxi schemes.

Actions:

- *Support a mobility management approach to the planning and provision of public transport services, both regular and event based,*
- *Investigation of the feasibility of a subsidised taxi scheme similar to the scheme operated by Gold Coast Council for local trips for transport-disadvantaged people.*
- *Investigate family concession tickets to help mothers with children.*

Assistance to enable sight-impaired and people with other disabilities to use the transport system

People with a disability have special needs that are sometimes overlooked.

Actions:

- *Take advice from representatives of disabled people about design matters to include access to facilities, information and avoiding obstructions in the construction of pedestrian, car parking and public transport infrastructure,*
- *Advocate for local commercial centres within walking distance to residences to give people with a disability more independence to access services (this is part of a wider advocacy for more sustainable urban design).*

Young People

Isolation due to inadequate transport for work, education and recreation

Most young people are seriously disadvantaged by being unable to independently access educational courses, training, work opportunities and social activities and events.

Actions:

- *The Public Transport Working Group will address the issue of adjusting timetables for work and early/late travel, and weekend recreational travel, in contributing to up-coming timetable and service reviews,*
- *The PTWG will investigate in collaboration with Community Transport, the regional PT Development Project and MoT how to better serve youth needs,*
- *Actions proposed for the following issue will also assist this issue.*

Lack of activities and educational opportunities for young people

This issue overlaps with the previous issue; there is inadequate attention given to the funding and organisation of activities that focus primarily on youth, particularly under 18s.

Actions:

- *Investigate with the education sector whether more training courses can be run locally,*

- *Implement the Youth Needs Analysis, particularly regarding the emphasis on promotion of youth events as part of Council's policy,*
- *Develop a stronger focus by local community organisations and employers on engagement and employment of young people (one example suggested was music clubs in the villages).*

Homelessness due to family breakdown or dysfunctionality

Reports indicate an increasing population of young people from age 12 upwards not living at home for a variety of reasons, but living transiently with friends, or independently.

Actions:

- *Advocate for a full time Youth Development Officer or planner position facilitating partnerships or consortiums to raise funds for youth housing,*
- *Seek partnerships with the Office of Community Housing/Centre for Affordable Housing/NGOs for a funded case management position for provision of housing,*
- *Support NGO applications for funded case management positions.*

Anti-social behaviour, mainly by young males

Older people are reporting aggressive behaviour by teenagers in residential areas that creates a perception of insecurity.

Actions:

- *Continue to implement programs in the Community Safety Action Plan,*
- *Adopt the Better Communities Crime Prevention Strategy for the remainder of the Shire and implement its community strengthening programs,*
- *Work with the education sector, youth service providers and community organisations to reduce the proportion of young people not engaged in either education or employment,*

Neglect of young men's issues, and lack of role models for them

Lack of services and information for young men and boys, who often do not have male role models and mentors.

Actions:

- *Work with Education and youth service providers to assist single parent or other families find suitable role models and mentors.*
- *Support community organisations such as 'Uncle' to operate in the Shire.*

Affordable Housing

Escalating prices and rents

Housing stress has increased markedly in recent years in Tweed.

Actions:

- *Facilitate planning provisions to allow splitting of large houses into flats, or addition of 'granny flats', or development of boarding houses, rather than discouraging them,*

- *Lobby for increased housing assistance grants for low-income people and people employed in essential services,*
- *Discourage discriminatory bank and real estate practices that disadvantage single parents wanting to buy or lease housing.*

Lack of affordable housing for low income groups

Combined with the previous issue, there are few developers building for the lower-priced market.

Actions:

- *Seek to increase the proportion of affordable housing in new developments, including duplexes, medium density flats and apartments, manufactured home parks and caravan parks,*
- *Review planning mechanisms to allow affordable housing projects,*
- *Investigate partnerships with community organisations to build affordable housing,*
- *Support NGO lobbying for funded case management positions to assist low-income applicants.*
- *Allow discounts for affordable housing as a % of units in developments,*
- *Lobby to increase the proportion of public housing in Tweed from around 3.5% up to the State average of 5.5%.*

Address the social effects of lack of affordable housing, including longer commuting, less community participation, dysfunctional households or homelessness.

Actions:

- *Ensure new release areas have a mix of housing types, including a large proportion of affordable types, and have mixed-use service centres within walking distance.*

Lack of short-term crisis housing.

Accommodation for individuals, families and children in temporary crisis situations is inadequate.

Actions:

- *Support community organisations and agencies to provide more temporary accommodation options.*

People with a Disability

Insufficient capacity of disability support services such as home care, services for problem gambling, information in forms suitable for the sight-impaired, and adaptable housing.

Actions:

- *Work with the Dept of Ageing, Disability & Home Care and other Government agencies to maintain levels of service for a growing population, many with a disability (23% of total regional population),*
- *Promote opportunities for employment of people with a disability, in Council and elsewhere,*
- *Improve information distribution to sight impaired people,*
- *Consider the effects of widespread availability of gambling machines,*
- *Consider the needs of people who are frail aged, but otherwise do not have a disability,*
- *Promote the adaptable design of affordable housing on a wider scale.*

Accessibility of the transport system, including footpaths; access to buildings, and shopping centres located within walking distance.

Actions:

- *Ensure footpaths are also adequate for scooter travel,*
- *Ensure footpaths are safe for sight impaired people, and not cluttered with signs and poles,*
- *Investigate ways to assist sight impaired people to use public transport,*
- *Investigate housing designs suitable for sight impaired people,*
- *Encourage commercial premises to become accessible for the 23% of people with a disability,*
- *Ensure local shops and services are within walking distance for people with a disability.*

Employment

Restricted work travel opportunities outside main towns.

The public transport network does not enable people to work in other towns, nor adequately serve 'a region of villages'.

Actions:

- *Ensure public transport schedules allow for work travel between all towns in the Shire, especially arrival before 8.00am,*
- *Expand transport opportunities for residents in villages and rural areas,*

Training issues about local availability of courses.

There is limited opportunity for training without re-locating from the Shire.

Actions:

- *Expand the range of work training courses available locally,*
- *There are opportunities to expand environmental work training available in the Shire,*

- *Increase flexibility and support for young people and people with a disability to be released from school to undertake work training in preparation for employment.*

Older People

Limited range of transport options for people who cannot drive

There is a significant problem of reduced mobility for people who can no longer drive, who are cut off from community participation and essential services unless alternative transport is available.

Actions:

- *Ensure residential developments for older people are well served by public transport, eg, Winders Place, Noble Park Estate,*
- *Investigate possible subsidised taxi schemes similar to the scheme operated by Gold Coast Council,*
- *Undertake promotions to increase familiarisation of older people with using public transport (as currently proposed as part of Healthy Ageing),*
- *Establish a 'mobility management' system to coordinate and promote available transport resources.*

High cost of housing and travel

Older people typically have limited disposable income.

Actions:

- *Ensure there is a range of affordable housing options,*
- *Refer to actions in the previous item.*

The Generation Gap.

Insecurity is created for some older people because of anti-social behaviour by teenagers, or lack of communication between younger and older people.

Actions:

- *Ensure teenagers are either employed or in education full time, and not excluded from participation in the community,*
- *Investigate possible ways to increase interaction between younger and older generations, such as 'uncle' and mentoring projects.*

Children

Availability of childcare places.

Places are reported to be difficult to obtain.

Actions:

- *Review the availability of childcare places in Tweed.*

Missing male role models for primary school boys

Some boys do not have influential male contact, leading to social problems.

Actions:

- *Support 'uncle' and similar mentoring schemes for boys.*
- *Investigate the possible role of sporting organisations, or 'music clubs' on a village basis, to increase social participation.*

Family stability issues affecting children.

Children are at risk when family life becomes violent, or families split.

Actions:

- *Ensure there are crisis centres that are safe and peaceful for mothers and kids,*
- *Aboriginal families are sometimes unstable, and need culturally appropriate assistance.*

Women

Availability of support services for women, including crisis centres/refuges.

Council and the Women's Service can work together.

Actions:

- *Promote a 'new mothers package' of information in Tweed,*
- *Council should be represented on the Tweed Valley Committee Against Domestic Violence, and help to carry out safety audits.*

Transport difficulties participating in community activities.

Women's roles are made difficult when transport services are inadequate.

Actions:

- *Ensure community centres, local shopping centres and recreation facilities are well served by public transport.*

Access difficulties to many buildings, and for people with disabilities.

Women are particularly disadvantaged by inaccessible buildings.

Actions:

- *Carry out an audit of buildings not accessible by people with a disability, women with small children, prams or shopping bags.*

ATSI People

Availability of family and child support services.

Families need a wide range of community services, and Aboriginal families need their own style of community living.

Actions:

- *Actions listed under the headings above also apply to Aboriginal communities in many cases,*
- *A project for an Aboriginal meeting place as part of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour development has been proposed, which would be a sacred space in pure Aboriginal style,*
- *An innovative project for 'cluster homes' with shared garden space to enable small community groupings would help to alleviate isolation and be more affordable, and should be investigated.*

Cultural & Linguistic Diversity

Availability of community information.

Access to information is the main aid needed by the CALD community.

Actions:

- *Continue the multi-cultural group established by the CALD project in 2005, and further develop information channels.*