

Purpose

To provide a policy and a strategic plan for Yarra City Council's future delivery of youth services to young people in the City of Yarra.

Scope

This policy sets the parameters of Council's role and responsibility for young people who live work or study in the City of Yarra. Further more it guides and provides direction for the development and delivery of services to young people by Council's Yarra Youth Services Unit.

The policy applies to services and opportunities for young people aged 10 – 25 years provided by Yarra City Council in the period 2005-2008.

The policy operates with a prevention and early intervention framework, with a focus on reducing risk and increasing resilience and life options for young people.

Young people with limited access to mainstream services are the priority group whose needs are to be addressed by implementation of this policy. A primary focus will be a youth participation model where young people are involved in shaping and contributing to the provision of services and programs.

It is intended that the Yarra Youth Services Unit be responsible for co-ordination, service delivery, and facilitation of partnerships required to implement this policy through the action plan. The policy and action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Definitions

Young people- the World Health Organization defines "young people" as encompassing the ages from 10-24 years with "adolescence" from 10-19 years and youth from 15-24 years.

Early Intervention – the goal of early intervention is to reduce the prevalence of emerging and recently developed risk factors for negative health outcomes among young people. Early intervention occurs after risk factors have begun to emerge but before negative health outcome behaviour appears. (*Valuing Young People's lives- Evaluation of the national Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy 2000*)

Prevention – the goal of prevention is to prevent the development of problems that place at risk the negative health outcomes. (*Valuing Young People's lives- Evaluation of the national Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy 2000*)

Youth Participation – Youth participation is about developing partnerships between young people and adults in all areas of life so young people can take a valued position in our society and the community as a whole as well as young people can benefit from their contribution, ideas and energies. (*Australian Youth Foundation 1996*)

Resilience – an individual's unusual or marked capacity to recover from or successfully cope with significant internal or external stresses. (*Andrew Fuller From Surviving to Thriving 1998*)

Council Policy

Preamble

Yarra City Council recognizes the valuable contribution to be made by young people to the social, economic, cultural and environmental future of Yarra as a diverse, progressive, safe and high functioning community.

At the 2001 Census there were over 16,000 children and young adults aged 6 to 25 years living in the City of Yarra. This comprised 24.2% of the City's total population.

Compared to the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD) with 32.1%, the City of Yarra does not have high levels of young people (10-25 years) however the total number of youth remain considerable. Broken down into six to eleven (6-11), twelve to eighteen (12-18) and nineteen to twenty five year age groups, (19-25) the City's largest youth age group are nineteen to twenty five (9-25).

The population forecasts for the City of Yarra in 2003 projected the number of youth aged 6 to 25 in 2004 at 16,204 (almost no change since 2001). By the year 2016 it is estimated that there will be over 18,236 youth in the City. Both the 6 to 11, and 12 to 18 year old age groups are expected to increase in number inline with the total population, although at a slightly lower rate.

Within the City of Yarra it is expected that the large suburb of Richmond-Cremorne will experience the largest growth in youth, especially those aged 12 to 18 years. Collingwood and Abbotsford will also increase its numbers with most growth occurring in the 19 to 25 year old age group.

Youth aged 15 to 18 years who are still attending secondary school or are TAFE students comprised over 60% of that age group. The number of these youth have declined between 1996 and 2001 which was contrary to the trend in the MSD. Further, Yarra has experienced a decline in the percentage of youth still at school which means retention rates have dropped.

Youth aged 19 to 25 years in the City who attended a tertiary institute in 2001 numbered over 3,200. This comprised over 33% of the total age group in Yarra and confirms the City's popularity with tertiary students.

There has been a large fall in the number of unemployed youth aged 15 to 25 years. This reflects a combination of factors:

- An overall fall in unemployment between 1996 and 2001
- A fall in the number of youth in the City of Yarra
- Unemployed people are more likely to be 'forced' out of Yarra due to housing affordability criteria.

The Department of Human Services 2003 Office of Housing figures show 900 young people aged 10-16 years living in Social Housing in Yarra (11.4% of total Social Housing Population).

(DHS February 2003)

These statistics, alongside projections for growth in the number of births and school aged children in Yarra clearly imply, opportunities for this group of young people cannot be ignored.

Although not a primary target group for this policy it must also be noted that a number of non-resident young people also come into Yarra each day to attend secondary school and/or access services and events.

This policy is based on the following principles.

Principles

- A youth participation framework will underpin the planning, development and implementation of Council services and activities.
- Council will acknowledge and support young people from a range of backgrounds including cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD), religious, social, sexual orientation, and economic status.
- The need to connect young people to appropriate services and assist in the transition from school into employment or other training opportunities is essential.
- Prevention programs (emphasizing health and well being outcomes) that aim to minimize young peoples exposure to harm and risk will be a priority for Yarra youth services.
- Developing and maintaining working relationships with other service providers, sports clubs, leisure providers, and schools in Yarra is essential.

Youth Services Policy

The key purpose of the policy is to guide and inform the way Council manages and implements programs and/or services. A detailed action plan will be developed and identify opportunities, financial implications and outcomes.

Creating an environment where young people of all backgrounds and diverse life experiences are able to participate in and access a range of recreation, employment, educational, arts and cultural, advocacy and participative democracy activities and opportunities are paramount.

The implementation of this policy will include an emphasis on youth participation and will base the planning of programs and services on the following youth participation methods:

- Support the individual young person's right to participate in decisions affecting them
- Tap into young people's expertise on their own social and cultural conditions
- Assist young people to develop skills, confidence and awareness so they can take initiatives and tackle issues on their own
- Ensure that policies and program incorporating young people in their design and delivery are likely to be more efficient and effective

(Foundation for Young Australian's 1996)

It is important to acknowledge that currently Yarra Youth Services operate and provide youth services using Robert Harts model of participation. The model is one where young people are consulted and informed. This model identifies that young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

The implementation of this policy will enable Yarra Youth Services to further develop youth participation.

Key Strategic Areas

Yarra City Council has identified the following Key Strategic Areas for Youth Services 2005- 2008.

Youth Participation

Council will provide an effective model of youth participation where young people are given the opportunity to develop, participate and shape services and programs for young people. Each key strategic area will be implemented within a youth participation framework.

1. Employment Opportunities

Council is committed to supporting pathways for young people into work and training and facilitating support for marginalised young people. Council is also committed to recognising, supporting and celebrating the vital role all young people play in contributing to the social and economic wealth of the city.

Strategy: Council will liaise with local businesses, the local learning employment network and job placement agencies in Yarra to advocate for employment opportunities for young people. Youth Services will proactively work with Council's Economic Development Unit to assist with linkages to local businesses.

2. Recreation & Culture

Council understands the universal importance of a broad range of activities, leisure and recreation in the creation of healthy communities and linkages to personal health. Council commits to the provision of meeting spaces and recreation opportunities for young people in response to identified needs.

Council recognises and encourages young people's creativity and participation in community arts. Council will facilitate opportunities for young people to engage in arts and cultural activities promoting the positive achievements through Yarra's events and community arts programs.

Strategy: Yarra City Council will coordinate and / or contract for the provision of three major events for young people in Yarra annually. Council will develop activities and events that promote young people and their skills and build upon existing programs such as skate events and breakdancing.

Youth Services will develop program opportunities with Council's Arts and Cultural Services Unit and local providers including theatre companies. Council will establish relationships with community arts providers to provide a minimum of two arts related activities for young people in Yarra annually.

3. Youth Participation & Service Development

Council's energy is focused on partnering young people and their communities in the development of innovative, and practical responses and supporting local youth services to provide a range of programs and activities.

Council will support the development of projects and initiatives which meets the needs of young people, and work collaboratively with other key stakeholders to identify emerging issues and develop appropriate responses. Council will continue to review and evaluate activities and initiatives in relation to young people.

Strategy: Council will identify opportunities to assist in the provision of services at the housing estates, or where there is a concentration of young people and identify appropriate agencies to provide services or will directly fund for the provision of youth workers. Council will investigate opportunities for joint collaboration on programs, services, projects. This will be achieved by forward planning and consulting with existing services. Budget allocations will be developed for 2005-2006.

4. Provision of Holiday Programs

Council will provide effective and accessible holiday programs and recreational opportunities for young people. Active and passive activities will be available and programs will aim to increase skill development and provide opportunities to interact with other young people.

Strategy: Provide holiday program opportunities for young people including an activity programs for school holidays. Youth Services will liaise with Children's Services to develop a vacation care program for young people aged 10- 13 years for 2006-2007.

5. Advocacy & Leadership

Council through its governance role remains committed to issues that affect young people and youth service providers.

Council will work collaboratively with other key stakeholders to identify emerging issues and develop appropriate responses. Council will act as a central resource for local agencies in facilitating the provision of advice on funding and policy issues and provide strategic responses.

Strategy: Council will advocate for improved service delivery options to address youth needs and opportunities. This will be achieved at a local level with the Yarra Youth Executive Committee and Youth Advisory Committee. Further, Council will develop and facilitate mechanisms for quality improvement of youth services and youth networks by coordinating opportunities for planning and implementation of youth partnership programs and services.

Attachment 1

Consultations

The Best Value report identified a number of key issues impacting on Youth Services. The Best Value report detailed recommendations and suggestions for the development and provision of Youth Services. Consultations were held with key service providers and the local community health centres located in the City of Yarra. Outlined below are the findings from these consultations.

1. **Lack of Youth Policy & Strategic Plan** – overriding all of the identified issues is the need for YYS to complete a youth policy and strategic plan.
2. **Role of Council Youth Services** – consultation confirmed that community-based services want Council to take a stronger role in providing leadership, planning and coordination for the youth sector.
3. **Location of the Administration of YYS** – it was identified that the administration of Youth Services is currently an ‘outpost’ location. It is observed that this disadvantages the service from building effective links to other areas of Council, and inhibits the Unit’s ability to work strategically across the organization.
4. **Supporting Young Residents of Social Housing Estates** – young people who reside on social housing estates are more likely than other young people in Yarra to experience issues such as poverty, poor health, isolation from the wider community, and exclusion from mainstream education and employment.
5. **Access and Equity: Balancing the Needs of Yarra’s Diverse Population** – Council needs to be able to balance the needs of high priority groups with those of local residents who look to Council for a range of generalist and information services.
6. **Youth Participation** – Youth participation is an ongoing challenge for Council and requires a corresponding critical reflection by Youth Services to ensure this is meaningful and includes a diverse range of young people. As citizens young people have a right to be engaged and involved in the planning and development of services. Empowering them to be involved in Council decision-making processes that affect them helps build a vibrant, inclusive community.

The City of Yarra commissioned the Centre for Adolescent Health to work with YYS (YYS) to:

- Consider youth service provision in view of the current policy context and demographic data and future projections to 2016
- Consider findings of the Youth Services Best Value review in regard to current activities and possible future activities
- To recommend suggestions for the continuous improvement of cost effective service operation that meets the identified target group.

Outlined below are the findings from these consultations.

1. **Development of a Yarra Youth Policy and Strategy**

To proceed with the development of a Yarra Youth Policy and strategy to provide a framework for addressing the needs of young people in the City of Yarra and to inform the provision of services, programs and activities. Such a Youth Policy will bring together young people, youth service providers, and the community providing a mandate for the role of YYS.

2. Review of YYS Programs and Activities

To expand the use of the Yarra Youth Community Centre as a youth space.

To review the programs and activities of YYS based on the outcomes of the Yarra Youth Policy and Strategy.

3. Opportunities for Developing and Building on partnerships

To actively develop and build partnerships with young people, local youth services and the broader community e.g. increasing support from YYS to the on site youth workers at the Collingwood and North Richmond social housing estates and building on the partnerships with the community health services.

4. Internal Management

To establish, develop and maintain links with a range of Yarra City Council Departments to strengthen YYS's ability to advocate with and on behalf of young people and service providers.

Attachment 2

Supporting Documentation/Evidence Base

This policy has been developed using the following documents.

- Demographic Data
Data provided from i.d.consulting providing demographic data on young people aged 6-11, 12 – 18 and 18 – 25 years living in the city of Yarra. (ABS Census 2001)
- Best Value Review Youth Services 2004
This review provided a review with recommendations on future directions for Youth Services.
- Centre for Adolescent Health Report 2004
Consider findings of the Youth Services Best Value review in regard to current activities and possible future activities and to recommend suggestions for the continuous improvement of cost effective service operation that meets the identified target group.
- Activity Review Findings
The activity review of current activities and programs operating at Youth Services. Recommendations from these reviews have been included in the action plan.
- Council Budget 2004-2005
The 2004 – 2005 youth services budget including council grants is included.
- Policy context State, Federal and Local

A summary of youth policies and future directions for youth providers and young people has been used to develop this policy.