



Youth Development Action Plan 2018-2021

A Project of Bundaberg Regional Council

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Youth Development Action Plan 2018-2021

Executive Summary

The Youth Development Action Plan presented in this document, forms an integral part of Council's Community Development Strategy.

This Plan provides an overarching strategy to work effectively in the Youth Sector and is informed by a comprehensive engagement process with the region's young people. The following information will provide an indepth view and action orientated plan of how Council will work with young people and the community to achieve the outcomes highlighted.

Introduction

The Bundaberg Region spans coastal, urban and rural environments covering a total of 6449km².

As at the 2016 Census, the total population was 92,896 with approximately 16,000 (17%), being young people aged 10-24 years of age.

The region's educational opportunities include:

- 40 State Schools –
34 Primary Schools, Five High Schools and one Special School
- Eight Private Schools –
Six Primary Schools and four High Schools (of which two are Prep – Year 12)
- Two University campuses –
CQUniversity and University of QLD
- One TAFE QLD East Coast campus

The community enjoys a wide range of sport and recreational activities with approximately 150 sporting organisations across the region. Council manages 653ha of natural areas and provides 350 recreational parks, 120 playgrounds, seven skate bowl facilities, four swimming pools and five patrolled beaches to name a few.

The Bundaberg Region has a strong arts and cultural community with two Council operated Art Galleries, four Libraries and over 50 arts and cultural organisations.

Council also hosts and directly supports a range of community events across the region

including New Year's Eve celebrations, Chinese New Year, RE:ACT Youth Month, ANZAC Day Ceremonies, Childers Festival, Winterfeast and the CRUSH Festival among others. All of these events embrace the connection to the past and also to the future. They recognise the community's cultural identity and highlight the diversity of the region's horticulture and produce sectors, the seafood industry and the tourism industry.

Youth Development Action Plan perspectives

Council currently has a number of plans and strategic documents that outline what Council is working towards achieving for the region. Council's Corporate Plan and Community Plan are key documents that the community have assisted in developing. These documents present a broad overarching base of the community's needs. For the past four years, Council's Community Development Unit (CDU) has also had in place the Social Development Action Plan (SDAP), which has provided the unit with specific direction in the way in which they worked with the community and services sector. The SDAP laid the basis for the discussion and sharing of ideas at the first Youth Summit held in 2015. The summit provided an opportunity for Council to directly engage with young people and build a partnership which would ensure their feedback was recorded and to hear first-hand what youth felt were priorities. With the SDAP due to expire in 2017, Council's CDU have taken this as an opportunity to engage and develop a new specific Community Development Strategy that will provide a wider understanding and connection to the community.

The Youth Development Action Plan stands as an integral part of the overall strategy. It is the working, living orientated guide book that is broken down into specific ideas and actions as developed in partnership with young people.

Young people are vital assets and contributors to the region today and into the future. The way in which they are embraced and supported



today, lays the foundations for their connection and contributions to the region tomorrow. It is understood that if people feel a strong connection to their community at a young age they have an increased interest and desire to stay or return to that community. This acknowledges still, that many young people will leave the region to take up further education or employment opportunities to gain qualifications and experience. The aim needs to be in how these young people are encouraged to come back to the region with these skills and become a vital part of the community of the future. One step towards achieving this goal is to make young people feel they are valued and a part of the region by providing them with the opportunity to be a voice and contributor to its future.

At a time when many young people are leaving regional areas for further education or employment opportunities in city areas, it is understood that there is a need to be looking

“Engaging youth in the community creates a sense of belonging and purpose”

at ways to provide better choices and options across both of these areas in the region. It is also understood that the region may not be able to provide all the opportunities in educational or employment pathways in all career areas, but an effort should be made to support young people to go and learn these skills across the globe, and then bring them back to the region.

Youth Development Action Plan Governance

Within Council's corporate structure and governance, the Youth Development Action Plan will effectively be reported on and implemented by Council's Youth Development Officer.

The Youth Development Officer sits within Council's Community and Youth Development Unit and is a part of Council's Community Development branch within the Community and Environment Department.

Alignment with Council's Corporate Objectives

The Youth Development Action Plan 2018- 2021 aligns with the following Council documents:

- Bundaberg Regional Council Community Plan 2031
- Bundaberg Regional Council Corporate Plan 2017-2021
- Bundaberg Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy 2014-2024

Alignment with Community/Regional/State and/or National Objectives

- The Queensland Plan – Queenslanders' 30 year vision
- Queensland Youth Strategy – Building Young Queenslanders for a Global Future
- Queensland Rural and Remote Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2016-2018
- World Health Organisation
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Planning Intent

Planning Objectives

The objective of the Youth Development Action Plan is to understand and address the ever changing needs of young people across the region, while also planning for the future with them.

This Plan will build on Council's:
Purpose of a shared – Vision – Mission and Values

It also aligns with Council themes:
Our Community,
Our Environment,
Our People and
Our Business.

Benefits for the Bundaberg Region

Ultimately, stronger communities and future leaders are created by embracing and engaging with the young people.

Empowering young people to be engaged in the community has shown to decrease problem behaviours. It is suggested that problem behaviours can emerge as a result of young people feeling disengaged and under-valued in their community. Research has shown that young people who are engaged in their communities are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, drop out of high school, and less likely to be involved in criminal behaviour. Youth community engagement is connected to a wide range of positive outcomes for young people such as higher academic performance, lower rates of teen pregnancy, and lower rates of drug use.

Empowering young people and allowing them the opportunity to participate in the community has shown to benefit their overall personal development. When young people become engaged in community activities they develop the skills needed to be effective leaders. When they realize they have the power to influence decisions at a community level they will rise amongst their peers and begin to show signs of leadership.

Young people who are engaged in community efforts show better problem-solving and decision-making skills when compared to those

youth who are not engaged. Young people who have been empowered by the community are more likely to be future leaders. Empowering young people and engaging them in community activities and decision making allows them to

“Engaging youth in the community creates a sense of belonging and purpose”

interact with adults and have an increased level of guidance as they develop the skills needed to make decisions and solve complex issues.

Engaging youth in the community creates a sense of belonging and purpose. When young people realize their voices and opinions are being considered, they will feel that they are a true part of the community. The community then becomes a place where young people and adults share the common interest of making their shared space a better place. Young people will increasingly become more comfortable with sharing ideas and suggestions because they now see themselves as vital members of the community.

Stakeholders

Council can only achieve so much without the direct input and support of our young people, community services sector and the community members. The key stakeholders of the Youth Development Action Plan will include:

- Young people
- Educations providers – state and private
- Non- government and community organisations
- Business and industry
- Local, State and Federal Government agencies

Council has built many strong partnerships and relationships across the region and sees the Action Plan as a way for Council to strengthen and build on work already being carried out and used to develop new and exciting initiatives and partnerships for the future.

While engaging with young people in the development of the strategy, a youth advisory group has been developed that will assist in the implementation of the Action Plan.

This group of young people will play a pivotal role in keeping the plan on track. Council will bring the group together to provide them with updates on the progress of the strategy and seek their assistance in taking the actions forward where possible. The changing demands that occur for young people as they enter both senior schooling and life after school is understood, as is the need for group members to change over time. Council feels any challenges that this may present could be readily resolved. Council will continue to hold bi-annual Youth Summits directly with young people. These summits will provide an opportunity for the advisory group to give a more in-depth update on what work is being carried out and to also engage with other young people to review the strategy priorities for the future. Council will also be able to gain further insight and ideas to keep the strategy a flexible and living document.

Council will also be providing the youth services sector with regular updates on the Action Plan and overarching Community Development Strategy. These agencies play a pivotal role in the planning and development of partnerships and initiatives and in identifying and meeting the needs of the region’s youth.

Council also sees that some of the areas identified by both young people and the youth services do not directly align with Council’s key functions and responsibilities, but it is understood that Council can be the catalyst in facilitating discussions, making connections and promoting opportunities that can assist in these areas.

Action Plan Development process and actions

For the purposes of this Youth Action Plan, young people are considered those aged 12-25 years.

To develop the Youth Development Action Plan, a number of activities were undertaken to collect and break down information collected from young people and the youth services sector across the region.

Engagement with young people

Young people 12 - 25 years of age were engaged through two major activities:

1. **Pre-Youth Summit survey** in November – December 2016
2. **Youth Summit 2017** held on 27 April 2017 – day and evening session

Engagement results

All of the information gathered from the surveys and Youth Summit was collated across six common theme areas and broken down into priority areas under each theme:



Community

- Reduce violence
- Reduce drug use
- Reduce bullying



Engaged and Connected

- Assist in decision making
- Develop new life skills
- Showcase our abilities
- Connect with role models and mentors



Social & Emotional Wellbeing

- Acknowledge our diversity
- Increase knowledge and access to services
- Stay connected to community
- Understand our cultural history and future



Physical space and health

- Increase use in park areas
- Increase healthy lifestyle
- Increase sports participation
- Increase access to health services



Education & Employment

- Increase study options
- Increase employment
- Increase work readiness



Environment

- Recognise our natural environment
- Reduce our environmental impact
- Awareness of alternative energies



Under each of the theme areas, on the previous page, a number of suggested actions have been developed. These actions can be found under each theme area of this strategy from page 8 to 13.

Youth Services Sector Engagement

It was very important that the youth service sector was engaged to further develop the partnerships and understanding of the issues and concerns affecting services.

Over several years Council has worked in partnership and collaboration with many youth service providers to develop programs, projects and initiatives to meet the changing needs of the region's young people.

Engagement with the youth services sector was carried out in two ways:

1. An online survey
2. A group discussion format

Some of the key areas that were identified were:

1. **Homelessness** – gaps for those under 15, life skills development
2. **Family relationship breakdown** - parenting and family relationships – physical, social and emotional support, knowledge of available help
3. **Drugs and Alcohol** – education and awareness for parents, cost effective and prolonged rehabilitation programs
4. **Information dissemination** – collaboration and resource sharing across the sector

A number of suggested actions were developed to give some direction to Council on how it can better engage and partner with the youth services sector. It also highlights some of the areas in which Council may look to advocate for further actions, supports and understanding across all levels of government. These suggested actions can be found on pages 14 to 15.

Action Plan Implementation

Actions

Council will work directly with young people, the youth services sector and the wider community in achieving the actions outlined in this plan. By all working together as partners, young people will develop a stronger connection to the region and realise that they are valued members of the community.

Performance Measures

Council will be collecting and analysing a broad range of data and research information to build a baseline picture aligned with the key strategies outlined in the Action Plan.

With the baseline data, each project undertaken will look at what the primary objective is and if there are possible secondary outcomes.

The baseline information will then be used to assess the effectiveness of the work being carried out and if a change has occurred. It is also understood that some changes that do occur may not be apparent in the short term or cannot be based quantitatively. Some work carried out may be measured by the quality of change (deeper connection and desire for change over the long term - life changing) over the quantity of change (short term fix).

The visible face of achieving change

Another way in which performance will be measured will be in utilising:

1. The already existing networks within the community services sector and education and training sector, and holding open discussions on the plan's actions' changes and priority areas
2. The youth advisory group who will be a part of implementing parts of the Action Plan and advising on specific ways in which the youth demographic can be targeted using their medium

Challenges

It is understood that challenges and obstacles will be faced while working with the youth services sector and young people.

With the youth services sector, consistency in government funding and retention of workers within the sector is always a challenge. Over many years the sector has re-shaped its identity and objectives to adapt to the requirements of funding, without losing the reason why they are here – the young people. There is no magic bullets on how to reduce the challenges overall, but Council is open to working with the sector to investigate alternative options and ideas on the long term sustainability of programs and how workers can be attracted and retained.

With young people the challenges will be the changing demands that occur for young people as they enter both senior schooling and life after school and their involvement as advisory group members. To keep participation numbers level, a rolling membership will be encouraged. It is also understood that some people may only have the time or desire to be a part of projects that they feel connected or passionate about. Their involvement in these projects would be encouraged. Council will continue to hold bi-annual Youth Summits directly with young people. These summits will provide an opportunity for the advisory group to give an update on what work is being carried out. Council will also be able to gain further insight and ideas to keep the action plan a flexible and living document.

Council also sees that some of the areas identified by young people and youth services do not directly fit in with Council's key functions and responsibilities, but it is understood that Council can be the catalyst in facilitating discussions, making connections and promoting opportunities that can assist these areas.

**“Good intentions
are nothing without
actions”**



A region that supports our **Community's Safety**

1 Develop ways to reduce violence of all types across the region

- Assist in raising the communities awareness of the effects that violence can have on others and what types of violence can occur
- Investigate ways to share the stories of those that may have been affected by violence
- Work with young people to develop material and messages to reduce violence of any type in the region
- Support the development of safe spaces and the promotion of services that support and assist those that may be experiencing violence of any kind
- Work with schools to highlight and support students in understanding, reducing and protecting themselves from violence

2 Develop or support ways to reduce drug use across the region

- Promote opportunities and services where young people can report concerns or activities around drugs and their use, anonymously and confidentially
- Promote services and supports that are available to those who may be affected by drug use or in supporting someone who may be using drugs
- Work with young people in the region in the development of awareness materials based on the educational understanding of drugs and their effects on the person, family and community

3 Develop ways to reduce bullying of all types across the region

- Investigate in partnership with young people ways to increase the community's awareness in what types of bullying can occur and how it can be responded to
- Promote services and supports that are available to young people to access assistance, information and reporting bullying
- Work in partnership with schools and the community services sector to develop or promote the delivery of anti-bullying programs or initiatives in the school and the wider community

4 Highlight ways in which the crime rate can be reduced across our region

- Investigate opportunities that may be available to support crime prevention initiatives that work towards reducing the region's crime rate and risk

5 Develop opportunities for young people and Police to connect and communicate

- Work in partnership with young people and Qld Police to encourage and support positive relationships and joint initiatives



A region that supports the **Social and Emotional Wellbeing of our Young People**

1

For young people to be a part of a community that respects others, is accepting of all as equals, is caring and helpful

- Work in partnership with young people to develop activities and events that celebrate the diversity of young people and the acceptance of everyone as equals in our region
- Develop ways to encourage, support and highlight to the community ways people can care, accept and help each other
- Promote opportunities to young people on places and ways that they can get involved in services, programs and activities that help others e.g. Soup kitchens, volunteering etc

2

Increase young people's awareness and access to quality support services that are there when and if they need them

- Work with schools to develop ways for young people to anonymously report concerns for friends and promote the supports available to students in school
- Work with young people to develop local awareness campaigns on mental wellbeing services and supports for the whole of community
- Work with community services, schools and young people to increase the communities understandings of what mental illness is and what treatment and support options are available
- Advocate to both Federal and State Governments in allocating funding, programs and projects in supporting and developing the region's access to a range of quality mental health services

3

Create spaces that are youth friendly where young people can connect safely and without being judged

- Work with Bundaberg Regional Council's Environmental Services Department to identify possible locations or upgrades for the installation of "play equipment" that meets a wider and older age group
- Work with Bundaberg Regional Council's Environmental Services and Planning departments to investigate the viability to incorporate outdoor study spaces for young people that are safe, accessible and include the access to Wi-Fi services
- Encourage the inclusion of technology access or hubs in the development of parks or community space areas

4

Opportunities for young people to embrace and understand the region's cultural history and multi-cultural future

- Work in partnership with young people and the wider community to develop and or support programs, events or projects that help the community embrace our regions cultural history and future



A region that embraces, develops and supports a range of

Education and Employment Opportunities for Young People

1

Develop and support opportunities to expand the areas of study options and subject choice in Schools, TAFE, University and community training organisations in the region

- Work with schools, TAFE, universities and other training and education providers in ways to promote study options, study pathways and opportunities to young people
- Work in partnership with young people to share their stories of transitioning from school to university, TAFE or employment
- Work with industry and schools to identify local skill shortage areas and look at study options available to young people to gain skills in these areas
- Work with universities and TAFE to identify and support the introduction of a wider selection of study options and courses available across the region.

2

Develop and/or create opportunities or incentives for new local businesses to open, expand or re-locate to the region to create more youth employment opportunities.

- Councils and government to look at possible ways to reduce taxes, rates and red tape to support new business into the region
- To work with Council's Economic Development Unit to assist in the promotion to businesses the available incentives to employ staff and available incentives for starting a new business
- Develop ways to raise the community's awareness in the changes that technology is making to the future of work and highlight the possible careers of the future
- Work with Council's Economic Development Unit to look at new business and employment opportunities that utilise the regions uniqueness within the tourism industry
- Increase the positive image of young people as valuable and contributing members of the community to assist in reducing negative stigmas that may be held

3

Develop and support opportunities for young people to access quality career advice and skills building opportunities from a range of sources

- Work with the region's schools, employment and training services' sectors and local businesses to develop a range of workshops held out of school hours that increase young people's awareness and knowledge of career pathways and options available to them across a range of industries and to gain knowledge in the expectations and responsibilities of the workforce
- Investigate and/or develop in partnership with young people, a range of workshops or resources based on relevant life skills they are seeking
- Work with the region's high schools in identifying opportunities to increase students' knowledge of career pathways of education to work in a school setting
- Develop or promote ways for young people to be informed of available employment opportunities that may become available
- Work with the region's schools, employment and training providers and local businesses to encourage the development of possible work experience opportunities for young people across a range of employment pathways



A region that is

Engaged and Connected with its Young People

1

Opportunities for young people to have a voice and be a part of decision making processes

- Develop a Council supported youth committee that can oversee the implementation of the Youth Development Strategy across the region
- Work with schools to discuss possible opportunities for student representatives from each school to come together to share ideas on a regular basis.
- Work with schools to recognise and promote the achievements of our region's schools to the wider community
- Council to continue to hold bi-yearly Youth Summits, where attendees are provided with updates on the achievements gained and to review the Youth Development Strategy priorities.
- Develop ways to inform and engage young people into the possible opportunities that are available for them to have a voice or get involved in the future of the region

2

Opportunity for young people to develop skills and knowledge outside of school in career development, creative works, technology and life skills

- Work with the regions' schools, the employment and training services sectors and local business to develop a range of workshops to be held during out of school hours that increase young people's awareness and knowledge of career pathways and options available to them across a range of industry areas
- Investigate and/or develop in partnership with young people a range of workshops or resources based on relevant life skills
- Work with the region's high schools in identifying opportunities to increase students' knowledge of career pathways of education to work in a school setting
- Develop or promote ways for young people to be informed of available employment opportunities that become available

3

Opportunities for young people to present and showcase their ideas, talents, diversity and abilities across a range of platforms (Art shows, conferences, awards, competitions)

- Develop events, programs and activities in partnership with young people that are inclusive and showcase their talents, skills and abilities
- Support and promote opportunities that provide young people with the ability to showcase their talents to the wider community

4

Promote and connect young people with local role models and mentors

- Work with the region's schools and community to showcase and share the stories of positive role models both past and present from within the region
- Support and promote existing mentoring programs or projects available to young people



A region that understands both a

Young person's Physical Space and Physical Wellbeing

1

Incorporate natural and manmade park areas that cater for a range of age groups and activities

- Work with Council's Sport and Recreation Unit and Environmental Services to develop areas that incorporate a range of fitness activity equipment and activities
- Assist in the promotion of existing or new services, programs or projects that look at ways to include youth specific boot camps and group fitness activities in outdoor spaces
- Develop a regional map that shows the location of community Wi-Fi hot spots
- Promote to young people the available parks and open space areas that are available across the Bundaberg region

2

Increase young people's understanding of the health benefits of healthy food options and physical exercise, and accessibility to them.

- Develop, support and or promote places that young people can access healthy food options and exercise that are more affordable
- Work with schools to develop and or promote healthy eating and lifestyle programs and materials that promote the benefits of living well that can be delivered in both schools and the community.
- Facilitate a discussion inviting key stakeholders across the region in developing ways to balance the amount of healthy and unhealthy food signage and messages across the region
- Develop workshops and opportunities for young people to learn about healthy food options, the benefits of exercise and how to eat healthy on a budget

3

Increase young people's awareness on the range of sporting groups and clubs that are available and opportunities to try them

- Assist and support the promotion of Council's Sport and Recreation Unit and the resources available to young people to keep updated and get involved in activities and programs they offer

4

Provide young people with an increased awareness, understanding and access to quality health services across the region.

- Develop and support programs and projects that assist in the promotion of health services, programs and resources available to young people
- Bundaberg Regional Council to continue delivering programs like the Stress Connection program and the R U Ok? Local Champions initiative
- Bundaberg Regional Council to continue advocating to the State and Federal Governments for fair access and availability to quality health services across the region including – general practitioners, mental health, sexual health



A region that

Protects its environment

1

Develop ways to increase the community's understanding as to why there is a need to protect natural environments, green space and waterways

- Work in partnership with young people in understanding the environment so as to produce awareness material, campaigns or activities on the affects that people have on the environment and what changes need to be made for the future.
- Increase the community's awareness of local community conservation organisations and groups, and how they can get involved

2

Develop ways to increase the community's understanding of the impact people have on the environment now and in the future

- Support and promote initiatives, programs and events that encourage people to reduce their environmental impact like – Clean up Australia Day, World Wetland Day, Earth Day, National Tree Day and others
- Support and promote opportunities to understand the science of the environment in land re-generation, alternate energies and resources use and conservation of coastal, waterway and wetland areas.

3

Develop ways to increase the community's understanding of the impact people have on the environment now and in the future

- Support and promote projects and initiatives that Council is working towards as identified in Council's Clean Energy Bundaberg Strategy in the area of community education and engagement.

How will Council work with the Youth Service's Sector

1 Youth Service Sector Providers

- To work in partnership with the youth service sector (including schools) to identify the services in our region and the possible partnership and networking opportunities to strengthen referral pathways and collaborative projects.
- Advocate to all levels of government to consider incorporating into funding agreements:
 - allowing more time in the delivery of quality services to young people over longer periods of time and with complex needs (homelessness, mental health, family breakdown)
 - consider including travel time and costs in providing services to rural/remote locations under outreach models
 - encouraging more services to be available in rural/remote communities

2 Youth Services Sector workers

- To work in partnership with schools and the youth services sector to identify opportunities to strengthen communication and referral pathways both in and out of school that are timely and appropriate.
- To work in partnership with the youth service sector to identify possible partnership projects, the sharing of resources (transport, outreach, training) and sector professional development opportunities.
- To continue working and supporting the youth services sector in the dissemination of information, facilitating networking opportunities to identify emerging trends and gaps and professional development needs.

3 Young people the sector works with

- Facilitate opportunities with the youth services sector, schools and young people on ways to promote, develop or implement initiatives or programs that support the mental wellbeing of young people with priorities being in anxiety, depression and bullying.
- Promote services, programs and projects that support and work with whole families with priorities in parenting, drugs and alcohol, relationships and social emotional wellbeing
- Investigate, promote or support initiatives and programs that offer free or reduced costs in educational options available after secondary schooling.
- Investigate, promote or support initiatives and programs that provide employment options and opportunities in employment skill development, work experience and career pathways across the region
- Facilitate a connection between the youth services sector the homelessness services sector to discuss identified gaps in housing assistance and support for those under 15years of age and also supported accommodation incorporating life skills development – budgeting, cooking, cleaning
- Work in partnership with schools and the youth services sector to identify programs and projects that look at long term drug education programs and support both in school and the community that are cost effective and accessible

All young people across the region

- To work in partnership with Councils Human Resource department to promote available employment opportunities within Council to young people, but also in promoting Council's already existing workforce
- To investigate and promote available educational options available currently and work with schools, TAFE and Universities to investigate the availability of other study subject choice areas being delivered locally.
- Provide the youth sector with regular updates on the work being carried out to achieve the actions off the youth development strategy and the direct involvement of young people being a valued voice in this.
- Investigate, develop and or support projects, programs and opportunities that promote positive messaging and role modelling of self-belief, motivation, identity and help seeking behaviours to young people

